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**Hollywood's Representation of Arabs and Muslims at the
Aftermath of the Cold War; Case Study: *Navy Seals* (1990)
and *True Lies* (1994).**

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Dedication

We dedicate this piece of research to our dearest families, friends, relatives, and everyone we do know, to all those who gave a hand during the writing of this memoir, and to you passionate reader.

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Abstract

This piece of research deals with Hollywood's representation of Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East in Lewis Teague's film Navy Seals (1990) and James Cameron's movie True Lies (1994) at the aftermath of the Cold War (1945-1989). These movies contain the West's strategy which is used to project racial and stereotypical images and even statements against Arabs and Muslims, who are usually depicted as being anti-American and terrorists. The United States therefore creates via media, in addition to clichés against Arabs and Muslims, degrading images which increase the rate of hatred towards a religion named Islam. To achieve our purpose, we have chosen to link the two American movies Navy Seals and True Lies with Edward W. Said's theory of Orientalism (1978) which is the most appropriate for our subject. The importance of the following dissertation is to bring the reader to understand how the West faces and depicts Arabs and Muslims of the Middle Eastern area. Our aim then goes further to show how America, thanks to her major media, ideology, and power, appears with the highest position of domination in the world. In other terms, our dissertation seeks to find how the Western monopoly, mainly in the East, is applied through American capitalist values and culture extension which are on the whole independently distinctive from the Middle East and its people. We have concluded in this research paper that both Navy Seals and True Lies have the purpose to strengthen racial and stereotypical images of Arabs and Muslims. Also it is realized that behind each Western negative depiction, there are different political, economic and cultural interests that are linked to the Eastern area.

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
I. Introduction.....	01
Review of the Literature.....	03
Issue and Working Hypothesis.....	05
Method and Materials.....	06
a. Theory.....	06
b. Materials.....	08
1. Presentation of Lewis Teague’s Movie <i>Navy Seals</i> (1990).....	08
2. Presentation of James Cameron’s Movie <i>True Lies</i> (1994).....	10
3. Historical Background of the 1990s.....	11
a. War as a Reason for Bad Depiction of Muslims.....	11
b. The Impact of Neoconservatives on the American Foreign Policy.....	12
c. The Western Media and Technology Progress in the 1990s.....	13
d. The Role of the Media in the Misrepresentation of Muslims.....	15
c. Methodological Outline.....	16
Endnotes.....	17
II. Results.....	19
III. Discussion.....	20
1. The Analysis of the Two American Movies and the Impact of Religions and Media in the Western Depiction of Arabs and Muslims.....	20
a. The Analysis of James Cameron’s <i>True Lies</i> (1994)	20
b. The Analysis of Lewis Teague’s <i>Navy Seals</i> (1990)	24
c. The Role of Religion in the Misrepresentation of Arabs in Hollywood.....	30
d. Islam and Fundamentalism	32
e. Political and Cultural Effects of Media on the Public Opinion.....	35
2. The Distinction between the True and the False Images of Muslims.....	39
Endnotes	46
IV. Conclusion	51
V. Bibliography.....	54

I. Introduction:

The high tension between the West and the East is not a recent fabrication. The origins of this clash go back to the first contact between the two poles. Beginning from the Arabs expansion in Europe and the Crusade wars till nowadays, the West promotes almost the same stereotypes and conceptualization of Muslims and Arabs as being the “Other”, and as being totally the enemy. Historically speaking, the attitude of the West towards the Arabs and Muslims involves all forms of discrimination; Arabs and Muslims are considered as a danger and a disastrous threat to the Western countries, particularly the United States of America.

To denounce the American misrepresentation of Muslims, Edward Said has noted how the West issued a deep-rooted hatred for a religion named Islam by saying that the United States’ misuse of the term Islam involves different descriptions and meanings. Hence, the word Islam itself does not mean one common object, but it has been strangely associated with traumatic news in the West, because many Americans believe that most of the U.S. troubles are provoked by Islam. In addition, for the past few decades, the hostage crisis (1979) in Iran had attracted both European and American media. Using other terms, Edward Said emphasizes the role of West’s media in the depiction and the characterization of Islam. This misrepresentation is conducted with a series of lectures and analysis on Islam in order to extend the rate of distrust towards it.¹

Broadly speaking, “the hostage crisis” which is about a group of Iranian students who occupied the American embassy in Tehran in 1979, the Gulf War or what is known as 1990/91 conflict, and the 9/11 attacks were the most prominent events which had increased the phobia of the West, and had given birth to another aversion towards Islam and the Middle Easterners in general. Using scholarship and media, the West has defined the post Cold War events as being too extremist, violent, and terrifying by showing negative and stereotypical

images of Muslims. As media has shown, different forms of Arabs and Muslims' images were presented through Western creative expressions involving literature, theater and so on. So, the American media in fact played an important role during the 1990s by emphasizing the U.S. and Middle East ethnic conflict.²

To support the misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East, the film industry creates cultural products that often reflect all what concerns the Middle Eastern societies. These products are viewed as powerful conveyors of ideology; that is to say, the Western cultural products influence people by reinforcing stereotypes and clichés about Arabs and Muslims. For example, in their edited volume entitled *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in Popular American Film* (1995), Joel Martin and Conrad Ostwald argue that movies are infiltrated with religious values. In addition to entertainment, films involve other cultural forms and they have the power to reinforce, to contest, and to solidify religious perspectives as well as ideological assumptions and fundamental values. Also, the Western movies do sustain society's norms, guiding narratives and accepted truths.³

The Western defamation is characterized by the depiction of Arabs as being bandits or savages. Arabs represent a nomadic race in the World and the most frequent image is that of the Arab with a rifle in the hands.

Through the study of the role of media and film industry and its large contribution to the misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East, this research paper aims to discuss how the West, especially the U.S. depicts Arabs and Muslims. Thus, we will examine the representation of the Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood movies by selecting two American films namely: *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994), where we will discuss the representation of the Middle Eastern groups by analyzing the stereotypes and the clichés which have been promoted.

The West's depiction of Arabs and Muslims is regarded as a means by which the U.S. manipulates the public's view about those groups and makes the American own ideology more extended all over the world. Hence, this representation is manifested through an immense number of degrading negative images serving the Western own political and economic objectives. For instance, the West has depicted Islam as being a faith of terror since many Americans believe that most of the previous world incidents were the result of either Arab or Muslim terrorist attacks.⁴

Review of the Literature

The Western representation of the Middle East in particular and Muslims in general in the two movies *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994), had raised influential debates among different critics all over the world. The debates about the American portrait of Arabs and Muslims involve a set of arguments by which each author attempts to measure and question the American unfair representation of the Eastern world.

Starting with James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard's article "Hollywood and the Spectacle of Terrorism" shows a mixture of patriarchal and military Western values of the demonization of the Arabs in *True Lies*. According to the authors, this misrepresentation in Hollywood was influenced by the growing incidents in the U.S, including the first World Trade Center attack in 1993 and the Oklahoma attack in 1994, as well as the Gulf war and the Palestine-Israel conflict.⁵ In the movie, Schwarzenegger plays a role of a killer robot full of Western values and sense of humor, while the Arabs, in addition to the image of terrorists, are depicted as being cold, rootless, and barbaric.

In addition to Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard's article, Scott J. Simon, in his article "Arabs in Hollywood: An Undeserved Image" (1996), argues that the Arab culture has been the most misunderstood and is supplied with the worst stereotypes. He retraces the U.S.

distortion of the Arabs from the 1920s to the modern era by listing numerous films that hold the same low standard of Arabs. With reference to *True Lies* (1994), the author asserts that the movie does not change the policy of Hollywood in feeding the same stereotypes and clichés promulgating an extreme negative image of the Arabs.⁶

As *True Lies*, Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990) was subject to many critics. Rubina Ramji, in her article "From *Navy Seals* to *the Siege*: Getting to Know the Muslim Terrorist, Hollywood Style" (2005), notes that *Navy Seals* (1990) marked the 1990s by being the first movie depicting the Islamic terrorists as a threat to the "civilized world". It exposes the binary opposition between an Islamic terrorist group and a special elite force aiming to protect defenseless and innocent civilians. She also criticizes the movie by arguing that it links directly terrorism to Islam. She wrote: "although this threat has proven real, not all Muslims are threatening."⁷

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The previously reviewed critics have dealt with the same issue which is the representation of the Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood's movies. The critics have questioned the role and the impact of the American movies and cinema in general on the audience's consciousness by asserting that the West displays the worst representation of the Middle Easterners. However, their arguments are limited and lack clarity because these critics have emphasized only the role of Hollywood and its unfair depiction of Arabs and Muslims. In other words, those mentioned critics should conduct the audience's attention to other crucial and variant circumstances which are linked to the Eastern world. So, the aim of our research paper is not only limited to bring more evidence and examples which shed light on the Western portrayal of the Middle Easterners by taking the two movies *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) as a support to our thesis, but it goes further to seek the real reasons behind such a 'negative' representation. In other words, our main purpose is to shed light on the different circumstances and reasons that motivate Hollywood's portrayal of Arabs and Muslims as being nuclear threatening terrorists who vow to put Americans in permanent scare.

Method and Materials:

a. Method:

The frame of our dissertation stresses mainly some important elements and parameters which will explain our subject of research that is the representation of the Middle East in American popular movies during the 1990s. To deal with Hollywood's representation of Arabs and Muslims, we will rely on Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* (1978) and the analysis he has made on the American representation of the East. Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* (1978) is found to be the most appropriate and useful to our current subject that involves mainly the Occidental vision and depiction of Arabs and Muslims of the Eastern world. Using *Orientalism* (1978), we will shed light on the American paradoxical view about Arabs and Muslims mainly during the 1990s. So, Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* (1978) will be applied on the two movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*.

In his theory, Edward Said attempts to deconstruct the manner the West conceives the Orient. Among the reasons that pushed Edward W. Said to write his 1978 book is the manner in which the Western media and news are engaged to portray Arabs as being inferior, usually defeated and excluded because of their backwardness, and this was widely apparent during the 1973 post Arabo-Israelite War. To support his views, Edward Said imposes the correction of the Western vision about Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East by revising and analyzing the nineteenth and twentieth century Western artistic works which present especially the Orient as the other.⁸

To support his arguments on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Haddon Lauren sheds light on the Occident's creation of bad image of the Orient aiming to show the difference between the West and the Middle East. So, Haddon's idea is linked to Edward Said's views about the West's depiction of Arabs and Muslims of the East who are commonly apparent in

most American media.⁹ Moreover, in his analysis founded upon *Orientalism* and its significance, Edward Said rejects completely the American permanent representation of the Easterners. He comments: “What was a specialty, relatively innocent of the philology has become a discipline able to control political movements, administrative colonies, and make statements which are almost apocalyptic presenting the difficult civilizing mission of the white man.” From this quotation Lauren shows how the Westerners believe themselves to be superior to Arabs and Muslims. (Lauren Haddon, ‘Fiche de Lecture’ to *Orientalism*, by Edward W. Said (HEC Paris: Major Alternative Management, 2009), 13.

This rejection involves the removal of any cultural difference between the West which remains the elite and the East which is often depicted as being weak and inferior. Edward Said attempts also to correct what is left up from the 1980s, involving the threatening image of Arab terrorists which is commonly shown through the growing xenophobia towards Islam, which is described as a dangerous religion.

The growing xenophobia towards Islam was reinforced after the Second World War (1945), because the U.S. had dominated both political and international relations. This Western domination had raised its influence on political, social, and economic interests all over the world.¹⁰ To illustrate well Edward Said’s theory of *Orientalism*, Haroon Khaled, in one of his articles entitled “An Introduction to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*” (1994), argues that the former’s use of the term *Orientalism* is to question the difference between the Middle East and the United States of America. In addition, Haroon Khaled says that *Orientalism* is coined to analyze all those people and groups who belong to the Eastern civilization, hence to explain how the West rejects all what is contrasted with its culture.¹¹

By emphasizing the large manifested difference between the Occident and the Orient, Haroon Khaled attempts to shed light on each side’s perfections and imperfections. As a

result, the contradiction between the West and the East creates a permanent binary opposition.¹²

b. Materials:

In the following section we are going to present briefly the main events of the stories of the two movies *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994) and the images they bring about Arabs and Muslims of the Mideast.

Presentation of the Two Movies:

1. Lewis Teague's Film *Navy Seals* (1990):

Navy Seals (1990) is Lewis Teague's action movie. Its first prominent actor is Michael Biehn, who plays the role of Lieutenant James Curran and the Navy Seal team commander. The movie starts with the American SEALs who receive a mayday from a Cargo ship which was suddenly attacked and fired on the sea position. Since the attack, the U.S. Navy Seals have sent a Navy SH-3 helicopter to deliver the American crew; however, their adopted mission has failed due to a new strange terrorist gunboat attack which has really succeeded to obtain the U.S. aircrew. After that, another plan and mobilization are traced and taken by the American Navy Seals commanders to go back to the base searching to save the captured western aerial team and Michael Biehn takes the command of this mission.

Moving to the Mediterranean zone, Nicholas Kadi plays a role of Ben Shaheed, a Middle Eastern terrorist leader and the culprit who orders the execution of the American hostages. Simultaneously, the arrival and the intervention of the U.S. crew impede other following terrorist executions. In the same scene, the terrorists' leader Ben Shaheed disappoints the American Seals, who believe that he is just an ordinary Egyptian merchant, but in fact he is the leader of terrorists. Shaheed alerts his terrorist supporters to embark on the

place. Consequently, Hawkins and team chief officer Graham cross the store depository which contains stringer missiles, and at the same moment Hawkins attends on the order from the first captain Curran to return back to the storing house aiming to wreck the missiles. In fact, Hawkins questions the fact of deserting the stringer missiles without destruction, but Curran orders to rescue the aircrew which is the principal stage of the Seals' mission. Then, all the team leaders are gathered and they succeed to identify both terrorist organization Al-Shuhada and the leader Ben Shaheed.

In addition to Shaheed and his followers, another half Lebanese author and journalist named Claire Varrens is identified. She admits that the 1983 marine barracks shelling in Lebanon was the result of Ben Shaheed and his followers' contribution to the terrorist outrage in the country. After the attack, Shaheed confesses that this terrorist crime is the vengeance and response for their homes which are bombed and destroyed by the American Navy ships and warplanes. Most of the crew members' information and orders are thrived for further planning mission, especially when the naval intelligence noticed that stringer missiles were carried on board a merchant ship named the Latanya at the very end coast of Syria. The Seals deploy on the place and neutralize two armed men; meanwhile they realize that the ship contains no stringer missiles at all. As a result of unreliable information, the chief of the Seals thanks Varrens who accepts the cooperation with the American Seals, because she knows clearly that the death of a peace delegation in Lebanon is the consequence of a stringer missile which has been shot and launched by a group of Al-Shuhada terrorists. After the Seals have got the information about the terrorists with Varrens's help, they penetrate the region by crossing water and swimming to shore.

During the firefight, Graham dies. After the clash ended, the Seals enter home and Curran confesses the death of Graham to his fiancée; he gathers numerous military soldiers to glorify Graham's funeral and his heroic death. Curran feels painful because he knows that the

death of his best friend is the result of Hawkins's neglect. So, Curran leaves the house with full distress. After that, the Seals lead another operation to infiltrate the place which controls the missiles and escape after a clash between them and a terrorist group. The team has succeeded to destroy the building containing the missiles and escape to the beach. The terrorist Ben Shaheed goes behind the team by crossing water and after catching the seals, Hawkins kills Ben Shaheed in an under waterfight. Finally, the movie ends with the seals that destroy the boat and take the rest of terrorists with them. Curran's mission has been accomplished.

2. James Cameron's Film *True Lies* (1994):

True Lies is a 1994 American action film written and directed by James Cameron, and starring Arnold Schwarzenegger as Harry Tasker who plays a role of a family man that leads a double life as a secret agent, performing covert missions as a spy while his wife, Helen (Jaime Lee Curtis), and his daughter, Dana (Eliza Dushku), believe he is a computer salesman. Harry's latest mission in Switzerland reveals the existence of a Palestinian terrorist organization known as the Crimson Jihad, led by Salim Abu-Aziz (Art Malik). Tasker's mission is to protect the national security of the United States. His primary enemy in this film is Salim Abu-Aziz, the commander of the Arab terrorist group which is believed to be responsible for smuggling four Soviet nuclear warheads out of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Harry suspects that antiques dealer Juno Skinner (Tia Carrere) has ties with Aziz. After visiting her, Harry is chased by Aziz's men through a shopping mall and a large hotel, missing the birthday party that Helen and Dana have arranged for him. By hacking into computer data at the mansion, Tasker is able to follow the criminal plans of the group Crimson Jihad. The Western global interests are threatened by Crimson Jihad which prepares to use weapons of mass destruction.

The movie introduces also a complicated sexual subplot in which Tasker suspects his wife Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis) of having an affair during his extended absences. The husband's suspicions are borne out by a private investigator, and Helen, thinking her husband was just a computer salesman, learns of his true occupation. When she asks Tasker if he was ever forced to kill anyone, Harry responds: "yeah, but they were all bad." Tasker and his wife link up as a counter-terrorist team and finally succeed to destroy Crimson Jihad after a series of wild military maneuvers but not until the jihadists detonate a bomb on an island of Florida. Before their demise, the terrorists are heard promising to explode a nuclear device in a major American city every week until U.S. military troops are pulled out of the Persian Gulf.

3. Historical Background of the 1990s

a. War as a Reason for Bad Depiction of Muslims

Since the early twentieth century, global power and global capital have been enchanted by the Middle East's oil and its benefits for the United States of America. Huge commercial amounts of oil were largely discovered on the Eastern shores of Saudi Arabia in the 1930s. After the Second World War, the Americans were really obsessed by the rate of oil which has been produced. This oil helps the development of the Western industrial products; hence, the West grants national security in the Eastern region in exchange of oil on which the relationship between the U.S. and the Middle East is based. In other words, oil is truly seen as a main strategy through which the U.S. dominates as well as gains control of the Eastern area. To maintain its monopoly, the West "protects" not only Saudi Arabia but also the entire Persian Gulf zone.¹³

After the Cold War and the defeat of the communists, the West's intention shifted to the Middle East and this led to the beginning of the Gulf War. The American occupation of the Gulf was for aim to safeguard the region of oil as the main source of U.S. benefits. In

other words, the American infiltration in the Eastern zone was not for the reason to stop the war in Iraq, but for the favor and self-interests of the American government.¹⁴

The American military presence in Iraq during the war 1990-1991 involved the growth of different U.S.'s strategies and policies on the possession of oil in the Middle East. The militarization was the result of America's regional confrontation as well as the permanent interconnection between oil and war in the Middle East. Because of the war in the region, the American access to the Eastern oil has been granted. Since the war in Iraq, the West claimed more pursuing security in the world.¹⁵

b. The Impact of Neoconservatives on the American Foreign Policy

It is essential to examine the issues that have influenced the fragile relationship between U.S. and the Middle East. The American global strategy is to maintain its hegemony all over the world to avoid another threat like the Soviet Union. The U.S.'s aim is to establish a new international order by encouraging the countries to actively participate in war against terror. The Neoconservatives, originally a small group of Jewish liberal intellectuals, believe that the idea should be a mixture of morality and force. The Neoconservatives are known for their unwavering support for Israel which is seen as a crucial ally in the region. The Middle East is generally ruled by "tyrants" who, thanks to their religious fundamentalism and dictatorship, have created the rise of anti-Americanism.¹⁶ The Neoconservatives fusion with Israel created a world view that Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism is the enemy, thus, the Neoconservatives declare the "War on Terror". For instance, in one of the main defense strategy objectives for the Planning Guidance for the fiscal years of 1994 to 1999, the pentagon stipulates:

Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor any

hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidate control, be sufficient to generate global power.¹⁷

Considering the quotation, the Neoconservatives aim to spread their values worldwide, and they believe that using their power to do so would be one of the most effective ways. One of their main concerns within the American government are that not enough money or time is being spent on trying to contain and confront the modern threats facing both the U.S. and the 'Free World', the 'Civilized World'. Therefore, the only solution the Neoconservatives find as more suitable, due to the degree of threats they are faced with, is military action. The collapse of the Soviet Union required the American government to find a new rival for global hegemony; a new threat, and the apparent convergence of the American and Israeli interests now enabled Islamic fundamentalism and militant Islam to become the new Soviet Union; the new target.¹⁸

c. The Western Media and Technology Progress in the 1990s

In addition to the Neoconservatives impact on the West's policy, the appearance and the progression of the American media in the Middle East is for the U.S.'s self-concern. To make the subject more evident, for instance one of the Purdue University's professors and the head of the department of Common and Creative Arts, Yahia Kamalipour who studies and tackles Mass Media in the Middle East says: "One of the problems with U.S.'s Media Coverage regarding the Middle East is the Media's tendency to follow the Bush administration's agency."¹⁹ Kamalipour adds: "therefore, the Media is often one-sided. Also, in the mainstream Media you see the Media often consults experts who are numbers [Sic] of the admired or retired politicians. Thus represents a limited diversity of opinion and expertise."²⁰ To clarify his views, Kamalipour claims the obligation to inform and make aware the American public about the democratic process interest, and the necessity for the American

citizens to be familiar with the U.S.'s mass media which involve a remarkable distinction between the two poles, the West and the Middle East.²¹

In addition to Yahia Kamalipour's view on the U.S's media, it is also clear that the progression of the Western electronic and printing news and Media during the 1990s gives the U.S a more entertaining, variant, and optional stance. From the 1990s till nowadays, Media still represent the intrusive and crucial factor within the American society. The importance of media is illustrated through the American workers who devote over nine hours to the Media per day, involving four hours and nine minutes for TV, three hours for listening to radio mainly in automobiles, and reading a daily newspaper consumes nearly twenty five minutes.²²

In other words, the extension of technologies and media during the 1990s goes with the public's growing consumption and access to the West's technological innovations, which facilitate widely the trans-communication and interaction between people all over the world. Beginning from the war in Iraq (1990-1991), the U.S.'s censorship of the mass media restricts information and content.²³ The Cable News Network (CNN) is used as a medium of fresh news reception from the Gulf by the Middle Easterners. In addition to CNN, two Egyptian satellites involving Nile sat one and two are sent into Orbit, while Al Jazeera emerges in the following years, exactly in 1996.²⁴

d. The Role of the Media in the Misrepresentation of Muslims

The progression of media and technology in the U.S. during the 1990s plays an important role in the depiction of Muslims as being a threat to the West. These years were largely characterized by the efficiency and effective power of the American high technology and advanced media. The U.S. invasion in Kuwait and the 1991 Persian Gulf War were the best examples which illustrate the American power and domination in the world. In fact the

progression of technology and mass media during the 1990s has put America in the highest position and the most prevailing force in the world by reporting and showing the U.S. military power.²⁵

Moreover, media have strengthened the Western ideology and numerous racial degrading images of Muslims and Arabs in particular. The American depiction of Arabs and Muslims through media was associated with the views of different Western authors who have enlarged the U.S.'s scope in the portrayal of the Middle Eastern groups. Hence, the East became the center of cultural beliefs and racial clichés that most of the American people believe to be true. In other terms, the Western media is dominated by the U.S.'s negative and complicated Oriental spots, and the best example on that is Hollywood filmmakers' projection of Arabs and Muslims stereotypical images.²⁶

Similarly with the American cinema, the West's media coverage with its set of prejudices directed against the Middle Easterners has even claimed the radicalization of "merciless" and wealthy Arabs. Referring to Michael Hunt's idea of "hierarchy of race", the American historian Douglas Little, in his book *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945* (2008), has dealt with the significance of the third world. He has noted that most of the American policymakers keep putting all the non-Westerners, mainly Jews and Arab Muslims at the lowest position of the hierarchy of race aiming to expose the inferiority of the Middle Eastern people.²⁷

Methodological Outline

This dissertation is an analysis of the two American movies *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) which has for aim Hollywood's representation of Arabs and Muslims in the aftermath of the Cold War. Our study opens with an introduction wherein a review of literature about the topic is included, followed by the raising of the issue and working hypothesis. In the first section of Method and Materials, we have presented on Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and provided the summary of the two movies *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994). We have then summarized the historical background of the 1990s and some factors which characterized that period. In the Results section, we have displayed the general findings that we have reached in our dissertation. In the Discussion section of our work, we have tried to analyze the two American movies in terms of the different images and stereotypes the West promotes about the Arabs and Muslims. The Discussion finishes with the distinction between two types of images, real images of the Arabs and the ones which are conducted by the Western mass media. The work ends with a Conclusion that the West's misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims of the Mideast is for different political, economic, and cultural interests in the area.

Endnotes:

¹ Agha Olfat Hassan, "*Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Image in the Western Media*". Accessed in 24 August 2015.

<<http://bertie.la.utexas.edu/research/mena/acpss/englsih/ekuras/ek25.html#Headings5>>.

² Ibid.

³ Martin Joel and Conrad Ostwald, ed. Preface to *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth and Ideology in American Popular Film* (Boulder: West View Press, 1995), 7-8.

⁴ James Cameron, director. *True Lies*. DVD. United States: Motion Picture, 1994.

Lewis Teague, director. *Navy Seals*. DVD. United States: Motion Picture, 1990.

⁵ Carl Boggs and Pollard Tom, “Hollywood and the Spectacle of Terrorism, New Political Science”, 2006.

⁶ Scott J. Simon, “Arabs in Hollywood: An Undeserved Image”, Emerson College, Retrieved on 17 May 2012.

⁷ Rubina Ramji, “From Navy Seals to the Siege: Getting to Know the Muslim Terrorist, Hollywood Style, the Journal of Religion and Film”, University of Ottawa, 02 October 2005.

⁸ Lauren Haddon, ‘Fiche de Lecture’ to *Orientalism*, by Edward W. Said, *June 2009*, 6-7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12-14.

¹¹ Haroon Khaled, “An Introduction to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*” (New York: Vintage, 1994).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Toby J. Craig, “American, Oil, and War in the Middle East” VOL 99, 2012, 208-2018.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival? America’s Quest for Global Dominance* (USA: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ahmed Mady, *the Roles and Effects of Media in the Middle East and the United States* (Kansas: Fort Leavenworth, 2004-2005), 35-36.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 40.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Frankel A. Jefferey and Peter R. Orszag, Preface and Introduction to *American Economy Policy in the 1990s* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 2002), 11-12.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Douglas Little, Introduction to chapter I: *Orientalism, American Style: the Middle East in the Mind of America* 9. Preface to *American Orientalism: the United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: California Press, 2008), 10-12.

II. Results:

At first look, the two movies *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994) appeared differently from each other. The movies are written by two different filmmakers. But, after we had seen the two movies with a deep analysis of some selected screenshots which are used to depict Arabs and Muslims, the movies allowed us to discover that both of them dealt with the same Western representation of Arabs and Muslims of the Middle Eastern areas.

In fact, the filmmakers James Cameron and Lewis Teague had exposed the negative portrait of Arabs and Muslims during the 1990s. Many events; such as the hostage crisis and the 1993 World Trade Center attack, were the results of both Arab and Muslim terrorist assaults. These attacks are described by the West as a threat to the American New World Order, its political and economic policies. The Americans, then, perceived from the increasing rate of film industry productions different racial views and clichés that are projected against Arabs and Muslims of the Mideast.

From all what has been said, we came to realize that both James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994) and Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990) served the same goal which was the misrepresentation and the depreciation of Arabs and Muslims through the creation and the promotion of daily negative, racial, and stereotypical images about them. We had concluded also that there were different reasons behind such a racial Western representation as it was mentioned in the section of discussion of our research paper. These reasons are mainly political, economic and cultural ones.

III. Discussion:

1. The Analysis of the Two American Movies and the Impact of Religions and Media in the Western Depiction of Arabs and Muslims

In the two movies *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990), we find the West's portrayal of Arabs and Muslims of the Middle East.

a. The Analysis of James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994):

Starting with James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), the image of Arabs is made clear by Hollywood. Arabs are presented as being intolerant, abusers of women, and greedy people. They are also depicted as being terrorists; the most frequent image. To explain the threatening image of Arabs and Muslims of the East, in his edited book *American Cinema of the 1990s: Themes and Variations* (2008), Christine Holmlund argues:

The family referenced in the film [*True Lies*] was patriarchal and nuclear, indeed obsessed with paternity at a time in which, as one end-of-year essay put it, "American families are now in uncharted territory economic and cultural pressures have seen to that. Divorce, single parenthood and the rise of working women [...] have changed the way in which we can respond to the world outside". Several films link this restoration...to the welfare of the nation, none more explicitly than James Cameron's *True Lies*. Here, threats to the father's authority are linked to threats to the whole nation through interlocking domestic comedy and international terrorist plot [...] ¹

Considering the quotation, the Arabs are shown to be obsessed with paternity and women oppressors while the West knew the rise of the working women. So, Holmlund emphasizes the difference between the two poles. According to Holmlund too, the movie *True Lies* shows the Western security which struggles against an Islamic terrorist group called the Crimson Jihad. This group involves a large number of murderous Muslim fanatics who steal nuclear weapons and threaten to detonate them in the United States of America. The movie *True Lies*, then, shows the Americans domination of the whole scenes, that is to say, the Americans do

often represent experts and operation leaders. This portrait refers to the superior Western values which are so distinctive to that of the Arabs who live in the Eastern region.²

Contrary to the portrait of the Americans, in James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), Arabs are depicted as being suspects, stupid killers, cheaters, and nuclear arm sellers. To show the difference between Americans and Arabs of the Middle East, the West is portrayed through numerous better images. The Americans are usually depicted as being smart, good, and merciful guys. Emphasizing the distinction between the West and the East in the way both sides are represented in the movie *True Lies*, Doctor Edward W. Said, in his 1997 book *Covering Islam* argues:

There are now, for example, new wave of large scale feature films such as *True Lies* ... had its villains classic Arab terrorists, complete with glinty [Sic] eyes and passionate desire to kill Americans whose main purpose is to, first, demonize and dehumanize Muslims in order, second, to show an intrepid Western, Usually American, hero killing them off.³

Considering Edward Said's statements, the difference between the two poles, the U.S. and the Middle East in *True Lies* is also manifested through racial and stereotypical language used by James Cameron's film actors. On the one hand, 'Arabic' is used for harsh and vulgar words and expressions such as: 'shut up', 'idiot', 'you are stupid' and so on. These expressions are in fact violently pronounced through the movie. In addition to these expressions, the Arabs' language remains incomprehensible and imperfect to the audience. 'Arabic' has been previously displaced, and it involves no translation either verbal or form of subtitles. However, in *True Lies* when Tasker tells his wife of Abu-Aziz's plan to destroy the United States in "a pillar of holy fire", this gives an Arabic statement that is much harsher than the English quotation. Contrary to 'Arabic', the American language 'English' is used to show politeness and safety of all people through expressions like, 'excuse me' and 'so sorry' which are the most current in *True Lies*.⁴



Picture one. From *True Lies* (1994), Harry Tasker is hold as a hostage by the Islamic Crimson Jihad group.

Using camera gaze, the movie gives also another important image of both Americans and the Middle Easterners. In the first picture taken from *True Lies* (1994), the West reveals innocence and domesticity which both appear on Tasker's face. The ultimate progress of *True Lies* is related to realistic objects for the Arab terrorist group to influence the suppression of the American military force from the Persian Gulf. Using the image of the terrorist group in *True Lies* (1994), the movie portrays the Crimson Jihad as being a range of "raving psychotics". This characterization is effected by relating the psychotics to the numerous existing modern Arab discords. Each Eastern objection group is usually struggling for a cause that is taken to be major priority. By giving a logical cause to Crimson Jihad, *True Lies*, in a small way, has given a slight sense of realism to the terrorists' motives.⁵

In addition to the Crimson Jihad's motivations in the movie, James Cameron's *True Lies* reports the American war in Kuwait, after the Unites States of America has discovered nuclear missiles and arms in the land. Simon, who is an Arab Islamic terrorists' leader and the most suspected man in the country by the Western security, threatens the U.S. authority in Kuwait. Simon blames the American forces which have not only killed the Arab Muslim and

women, and even their children, but also bombed and destroyed the Eastern cities from a far. Hence, the West dares to call the Arabs and Muslims terrorists. To reinforce his threat to the West, Simon pushes the Americans to be given mighty soldiers which straight back their enemies, and he orders the Americans to pull all military forces out of the “Persian Kaoufria” immediately and forever. To show his rage against the West, Simon claims:

Crimson Jihad will rain fire on one of the major U.S. city each week and this remains one of the major Eastern terrorist threats, and especially if our demands are not met. The Arabs want the Americans to detonate one weapon on this uninhabited island, as a demonstration of their power, and Crimson Jihad willingness to be humanitarian. However, if these demands have not met crimson Jihad will rain fire on one of the major American city each week.⁶

From the quotation, it is noticeable that the clash between the U.S. and Simon’s Crimson Jihad is a matter of national security. There is, in fact, a Western need to co-operate with the East and bring some security to the whole American nation which witnesses both terrorist and nuclear threat from the Arab Eastern world. Furthermore, the characterization of the Arabs and Muslims goes deeply with the image of animals to demonstrate their inferiority as well as to show the state of being worse than animals.⁷

James Cameron, in his 1994 movie *True Lies*, shows the Arabs’ misuse of nuclear weapons and other arms. In the movie, the West represents all Arabs as being kidnappers of innocent people and dangerous killers who share one common and particular goal which involves the destruction of America. For instance, in the first screenshot taken from *True Lies* (1994), Harry Tasker is hold as a hostage by the Crimson Jihadists who want him to give enough information about the nuclear missile composition and its functioning. James Cameron shows; therefore, the Arabs incompetence to use nuclear arms. In the movie also, it is exposed that some Arabs are pseudo spies and they work with both poles. Thus, the Arabs’ co-operation with the Western force leaders is another expressive image which manifests the Arabs and Muslims unfaithfulness to each other.⁸

A journalist named Carlos is having an affair with an American seller, Helen Tasker, in aim to construct a well international document about terrorists' crimes, Jihad, and nuclear power. So, Carlos's reason of his document is for the American national security. Throughout the movie *True Lies* also, James Cameron exhibits the West's great hate and desire to avenge the Crimson Jihad terrorists who kidnapped Harry Tasker's wife and his little kid, Dana. For this reason, Harry Tasker would like to kill them all without exception, and he considers all Arabs as being bad, and they still threaten to destroy the whole American nation, which is why Tasker wants to use them as human shields after his rescue.⁹

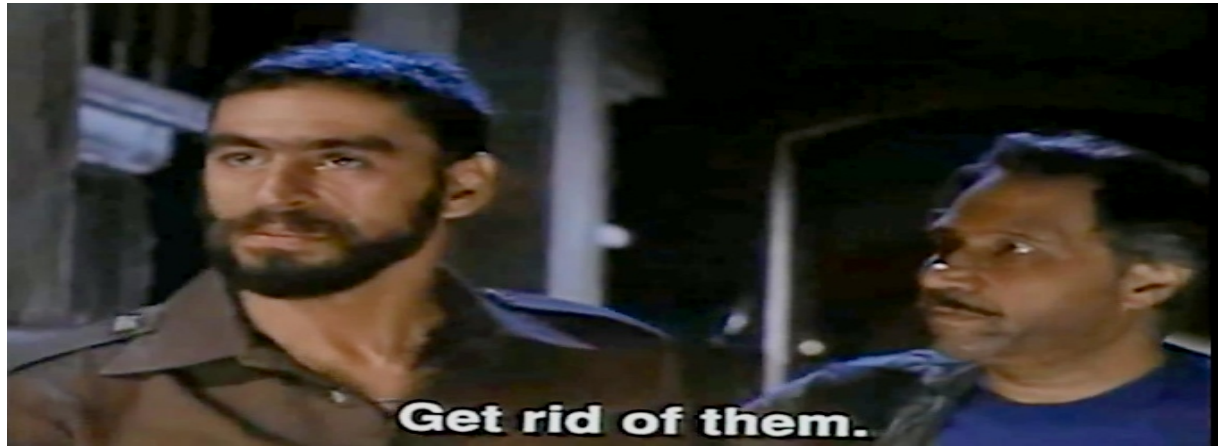
b. The Analysis of Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990):

Similarly with *True Lies*, Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990) is another reinforcement of the Western images and stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. The U.S. portrait of the Middle Easterners is associated with the American war on Lebanon and Syria. Historically speaking, in 1962 President Kennedy, believing that wars of the future would be small conflicts such as Guerilla Wars and acts of terrorism, created an elite Special Forces unit to meet the enemy on his own turf. Experts in sea-air-land operations are known as Navy Seals.

In *Navy Seals*, Arabs and Muslims in general are depicted of the same images which are promoted by James Cameron in *True Lies* (1994), involving idiocy, terrorism and other negative pictures. Throughout Lewis Teague's 1990 movie, the main mission is to rescue and protect the Israelis and the Americans by Charlie Sheen, who comes to disarm Arabs and Palestinian fanatic groups, such as Hezbollah, Amal, and Druzel of their U.S. made stringer missiles. However, the Americans are cruelly hijacked by Arab and Muslim terrorist attacks. To show the motives of the American Seals in Lewis Teague's movie, Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard write:

Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990) revolves around the theft by Arabs/Palestinians of US-made Stringer missiles just as an American helicopter crew is taken hostage. Seven SEALs, led by Charlie Sheen, come to rescue: the crew is freed with Israelis

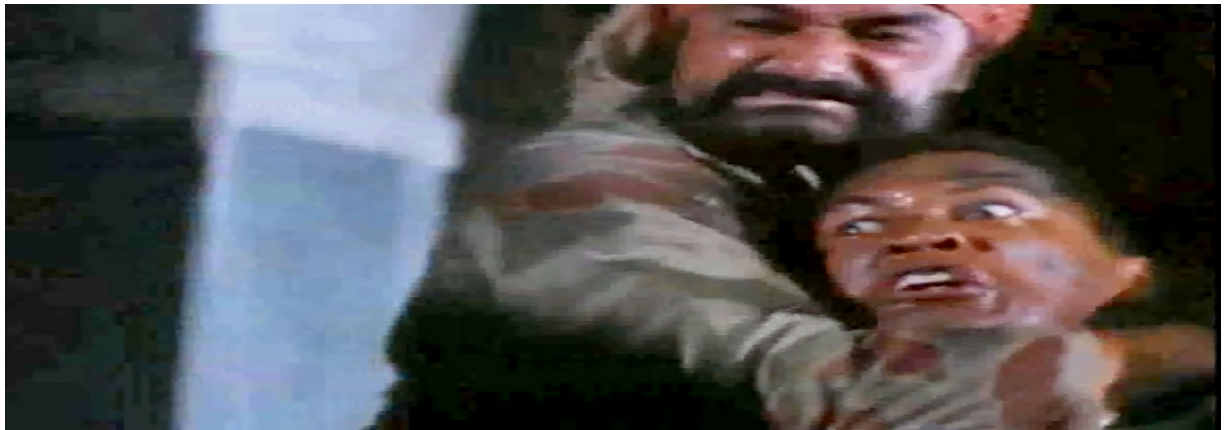
and Americans working in tandem to slaughter dozens of Palestinians. The scruffy sinister-looking Arabs are casually referred to as “scumbags”, while Beirut is described as a “shithole” filled with “ragheads”.¹⁰



Picture two. From *Navy Seals* (1990), Ben Shaheed orders the execution of the American hostages.

Within the movie *Navy Seals*, an Islamic “anti-American” terrorist named Ben Shaheed, who is the leader of a group called Al-Shuhada, addresses the U.S. government; he says: “the Americans have no right to talk about security and human rights, because the American invasion of the country, Lebanon, is truly the main cause which increases the rate of deaths and family’s rights have been ignored”.¹¹ Following his speech and by threatening the West, Ben Shaheed adds: “Arabs and Muslims are ready and furious to revenge if Americans keep murdering their people.”¹² As we see in the screenshot number two, the terrorist Ben Shaheed orders the execution of the American hostages.¹³

In other words, *Navy Seals* exemplifies the ominous threat of Islam, the terror and the death the terrorists inflict within their own city, Beirut. The movie, in fact, links directly terrorists to Islam. So, Islam is portrayed as being an encroaching threat to the whole Western nation and security.¹⁴



Picture three. From *Navy Seals* (1990), the Arab Muslim mistreatment of the American hostage, few minutes before his rescue by the Seals.

Considering the Screenshot image taken from the 1990 movie *Navy Seals*, the director of the film Lewis Teague describes Arabs and Muslims as being intolerant, cruel, and dangerous people. The Western portrayal of the Middle Easterners manifests other views about Muslims and Islam in general as a threatening religion to the West. To illustrate the American false understanding of Islam, throughout the movie the half Lebanese journalist, Varrens, brings other images which are associated to the war in Lebanon. She reports:

True Islam does not preach terrorism. True Islam is one of the most tolerant of the world religions, by exception Christians and Jews as people of the same God. True Islam also preaches equality and justice. The Shiahs Muslims of Lebanon have seen little of either. Fourteen years of devastating civil war have given rise to small but militant groups of fundamentalists who believe the very survival of their faith as a mistake, and intolerant fates, and faith turns to anger. For the Al-Shuhada of Lebanon, it's turned to absolute rage.¹⁵ (38:15 mins)

In Lebanon, Muslims reacted violently towards their Lebanese brothers; men, women, and even innocent children. The new apparent image of Muslims during the war in Lebanon had shocked the American public about how the fundamentalists turn into rage and kill people without any pity. The Westerners are confused by the images of Muslim terrorists that media bring to the audience. As a result, the events that occurred in Lebanon give another racial image and attitude against Muslims in general, and the West raises the hatred of what is

related to Muslims by considering Islam as extremist, Jihadist and intolerant religion. And contrary to all what has been said about Islam, the Americans do not consider Islam as a religion of peace, but according to the West Islam preaches hate, terrorism, horror and all other different bad images.¹⁶

To explain Varrens's statements in the movie about the West's image and view of Islam, Rubina Ramji comments on Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals*. She says:

This movie exemplifies the ominous threat of Islam, and the terror and death they [Muslims] inflict within their own city, Beirut [...] this movie, in effect, links terrorists to Islam specifically. As the image of "terrorist" Islam develops over time in popular film, Islam is depicted as an encroaching threat aimed at getting closer to U.S. interests (in relation to the actual threat perceived in the US and the Western world): although this threat has proven real, not all Muslims are threatening. The Hollywood film industry can be seen as advancing the fears of American viewers regarding this Islamic conspiracy.¹⁷

In addition to the Western images, media during the 1990s help the U.S. to distort and manipulate the Arab and Muslim self-image. The post Cold War years have brought many changes in the world. The West takes the Cold War as a strategy against Islamic Extremism; this is mainly the subject of the two selected and discussed American movies *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990).

Emphasizing the post Cold War features, in his article "Using a Cold War Strategy to Fight Extremism", Steven Stoddard states that the U.S.' struggle against Islamic Extremism is a battle of two different competing Western and Eastern ideologies. For instance, according to Stoddard, James Cameron's *True Lies* demonstrates how the West and the East are struggling for different reasons. The Radical Islamists of the East reject the American ideology because they want to establish their political power by the hands of Muslims and other religious people. In *True Lies*, Harry Tasker engages in a military clash with the Crimson Jihad's leader Ben Shaheed. The conflict between the West and the East involves distinctive images and

values of both sides. So, from the movie, the audience can make the difference between the good and the evil, high and low culture, the superior and the inferior.¹⁸

Similarly with *True Lies*, Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* carries the same issue of what the West aims to realize. Throughout the film, the image of Arabs and Muslims appears more extremist contrary to the Americans. The movie shows the Radical Islamists' failure to improve and find solutions to people's problems and sufferings in life. Radical Islam also shows the same stance with the Atrocities which are previously committed by the Soviet militarism involving domestic political repression and persecution and the legitimacy of the communist ideology in global public opinion.¹⁹ "Both communism and radical Islam share element of authoritarian and a basic disrespect for human rights"²⁰, Steven Stoddard says.

According to Steven Stoddard, the comparison between communism and radical Islam; however, involves also differences which appear in many distinctive ways. For instance, radical Muslims do not possess the power and the ability that the Soviet Union has, so the United States sees radical Islamic terrorists as being fundamentally distinctive in nature compared to the Soviets. To illustrate the issue, in *True Lies* the Crimson Jihadist group is less powerful than the West, so throughout the movie it appears that the Arab and Muslim terrorists do not have the ability to use nuclear arms. Similarly, in *Navy Seals*, the terrorist group Al-Shuhada shows weakness and inferiority in front of the Western Seals with high technology and successful military strategies. In the movie also the East can never be as strong as the West is. Thus, Arab and Muslim Jihadists are completely different from the Westerners.²¹

In addition, the inferiority of Islamic terrorism facilitates and helps the Americans to reduce the Green Threat without more effective strategies to do so. According to Steven Stoddard, the U.S. faces a new dangerous adversary, Islamic terrorism of the Middle East,

which cannot be militarily defeated, so the West uses its own ideology to attain the marginalization of the increasing Islamic threat.²²

To maintain his support to Stoddard's arguments on the American shift from the Red Threat to the Green Threat, or what is named Radical Islamic terrorism, David Satter in his article "Yesterday Communism, Today Radical Islam", argues:

Communism and political Islam are essentially the same. Both are radical ideologies that divide the world into the elect and the profane. Both deny individuality and suppress free will. And both treat man-made dogma as infallible truth and seek to impose it by force.²³

David Satter also emphasizes the need to attack radical ideology which is seen as an insult to the Western security which has been previously threatened by communism, Nazism and other "authoritarian" regimes. Through his views, David Satter finds the West's attack on the Islamic Radicalism as an only way to avoid the extension of the Islamic fundamentalists to the Western world. Satter asserts that radical Islam is based on false ideas and values.²⁴

Similarly to the communist threat, the movies *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) are examples about the terrorism which arises from the Eastern region, and which at the same time, threatens the whole American nation. In *True Lies*, for instance, the Crimson Jihad leader, Abu-Aziz, dares to threaten the Americans by making them feel scared about the dangerous operation the Jihadists plan for, and to gain the confidence of other people, Abu-Aziz orders the Western military forces to get out of the Eastern regions. The same case in *Navy Seals*, the Al-Shuhada of Lebanon shows a clear stance of threat to America. The Arab and Muslim terrorists use cruelty to murder people who do not want to submit to Ben Shaheed's group. Innocent children and women therefore are killed. The U.S. also fears the extension of Islamic terrorism over major and important American cities. Considering the terrorist danger, the West sends the Seals to stop the terrorists spreading pain and fear, and mainly to rescue the Western hostages.²⁵

c. The Role of Religion in the Misrepresentation of Arabs in Hollywood

Following Huntington's conception 'the clash of civilizations', religion does appear to be playing a primary role in current international affairs and politics. Christian Zionism is a growing political and religious movement which thrives during periods of political and economic unrest, characterized by international terrorism, global recession and fear of wars in the Middle East.²⁶ In James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), for example, it is the "Christian Zionists" that form the largest base of support for pro-Israeli interests, and have brought significant political and economic pressures on the U.S. Administration. Throughout the movie, the "Western Zionists" use military forces against the Eastern threatening terrorist group known as the Crimson Jihad.²⁷

To show the role of "Zionism", in Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* the great military support is given to the U.S. Seals to rescue the Israelis from Al-Shuhada terrorist group, so this shows the real American support for the "Zionist movement". "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."²⁸ A literal interpretation of this by the "Christian Zionists" would be a likely explanation of the political, economic, moral and spiritual support that the US has for the state of Israel and the animosity felt towards the Arabs and Muslims.²⁹ The neoconservatives' embrace of Israel has attempted to create a world view that Islamic fundamentalism and Terrorism represent the 'real' enemy. In both movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, the West declares a war on Terrorism', the war against the two Eastern terrorist groups involving Crimson Jihad and Al- Shuhada. The constant support the U.S. gives to Israel and the lack of respect for the lives and rights of the Palestinians have made it easy for America to become the prime enemy of Islam and the Arabs.³⁰

As mentioned previously, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. government needs a new enemy. Paul Warburg considers that the Islamic growing role in world affairs, with the

Arab influence in the oil industry, caught the attention of many leading Christian Zionists who were soon able to link Islam to Biblical prophecies. This means that the Arabs' monopoly of oil bothers the Western leaders. The Muslim declaration of war or what is known the Iranian Revolution against the West and all Christians is nearly the same with the declaration of war against a new Arab Islamic enemy that the two American movies *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994) have shown. Both Crimson Jihad and Al-Shuhada are interpreted by the Christian Zionists as an attempt to destroy the creation of the New World Order and are viewed by the U.S. government as an attempt to threaten their global hegemony or what is commonly known as 'Globalization', an idea of a one-world government, which fit relatively well, since it was a common idea in the prophetic circles of the Christian Zionists.³¹ "We will have a world government whether you like it or not. The only question is whether that government will be achieved by conquest or consent."³² In other words, all parties were now on their way to establish a new and so important enemy.

In addition to Paul Warburg's perspectives on Islam and Muslims' role in the world affairs, W. Shadid and P.S. Van Koningsveld, in their article "the Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions", argue that the West has to maintain the economic and military power necessary to protect its interests in relation to these civilizations. The two movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals* involve a clash between two civilizations, the Western and Eastern civilization. This clash, therefore, requires the West to develop a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests.³³

Emphasizing the clash of civilizations in both movies, other experts consider the hostility between the Muslim world and the West to have been caused by the similarities rather than the differences between both cultures. First of all, both civilizations claim to possess an ideology that is universal in nature. Moreover, Muslims are convinced that their

religious system offers an adequate alternative to Western liberalism and democracy.³⁴

In addition, the different perspective is represented by those experts who explain the hostility of the West towards Islam not from the clash of civilizations, but from the need of the West to have an indispensable enemy, what comes after communism, in order to affirm and define its own identity and ideology.³⁵ To fulfill its main objective and show its existence, the West needs the Middle East to be defined. Showing the necessity of the West to find a new Islamic rival, the modern Western philosopher Sartre in his classical work says: “to obtain any truth about myself, I need the other. The other is indispensable for my existence and for the awareness I have of myself.”³⁶

d. Islam and Fundamentalism and Media’s Role in Emphasizing It

The post Cold War years give birth and resurgence to another “disastrous” and “dangerous” anti-Western rival. Islamic terrorism involves different extremist ideologies which put the U.S. in permanent awareness and conflict against the Middle East. The Eastern region is considered as being a source of thriving terrorism in the world.

Edward Said’s (1997) book *Covering Islam* analyses the coverage of the American media of Arabs and Muslims. Many journalists make extravagant statements which further become the main subject of Western media’s exploration. Emphasizing *Navy Seals* (1990) movie, Lewis Teague uses stereotypes and statements, and at the same time dramatizes them in order to influence the general audience. “Idiots. Who authorized you to shoot down that helicopter and to bring the Americans here?” says Ben Shaheed angrily to his followers. Dealing with the role of the movie in the dramatization of such Arabs and Muslims’ declarations, it has been shown that Western media often associate “Fundamentalism” to Islam which is mostly concerned with the U.S.’s policy in the aftermath of the Cold War era.³⁷

Being influenced by the mass media, the audience confuses between a religion is

named Islam, and “Fundamentalism” as one common and essential thing.³⁸ To illustrate his idea about the Islam-fundamentalism relation, Edward Said says:

Just like Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism, the West gives more importance to reduce Islam to a handful of rules, stereotypes, and generalization about the faith, its founder, all of its people, then the reinforcement of every negative fact associated with Islam- its violence, primitiveness, atavism, threatening qualities- is perpetuated. And all this without any serious effort at defining the term “Fundamentalism” or giving precise meaning either to “radicalism” or “extremism”, or giving the phenomena some context [...]³⁹

Throughout his claims, Edward W. Said sheds light on Islam which becomes a means of specific American project. Contrary to Islam, no workable definition on fundamentalism emerges, and many intellectuals do not find the necessity to define fundamentalism. In James Cameron’s *True Lies* (1994), the Western government describes Islam as a religion that preaches terror and hatred in the world; meanwhile, the only enemies the Americans fight in the movie are Arabs and Muslims rather than fundamentalists. This distinction between Fundamentalism and Islam, therefore, plunges the public into hostility and hate to all Muslim things without exception.⁴⁰

In addition, Edward Said finds the West’s statements on Islam too defensive and even xenophobic. He writes:

Most American spokesmen attack Islam precisely for sentiments of free-floating hostility like these. American current representation of Islam is designed to show its inferiority comparing to the West’s religion, which Islam is supposed to be hell-bent on opposing, competing with, resenting, and being engaged at.⁴¹

Throughout the quotation, Edward Said explains the way the West is well-portrayed; it has gained the position of the elite and the rescuer of innocent people in the world.⁴² For instance, throughout *Navy Seals* (1990), the director of the movie Lewis Teague shows the audience the successful used strategies by which the American Seals have rescued their hostages aiming to expose the superiority of the U.S. marines and sea forces. In addition to the movie’s valorization of the West, Sulaiman Arti, in his article “The Evolution of Hollywood’s

Representation of Arabs Before 9/11: the Relationship between Political Events and the Notion of ‘Otherness’ ”, considers Lewis Teague’s movie *Navy Seals* (1990) as a justification of the American implication in the Lebanese war. Sulaiman Arti shows the American disfiguration of the main setting and oppression of its inhabitants by describing Beirut as a “shithole” filled with “rag heads”, while, the movie demonstrates the Western values such as justice and freedom, which are illustrated in Charlie Shaheen’s liberation of the Americans from the terrorists.⁴³

In addition to Sulaiman Arti’s contribution to the West’s portrait of Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East, some writers give other views about the American representation of the Easterners. For instance, in his reviewed book on the image of Islam “the Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality ?”, John L. Esposito argues that the events including: the Iranian revolution, the hostage crisis in Tehran and Beirut, the Salman Rushdie affair, and ending with the Persian Gulf War have changed the West’s vision on Islam. This religion is seen as the cruel revolutionary force against the West, its values and ideologies.⁴⁴ In both *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, the Americans see the Crimson Jihad and the Al-Shuhada groups as being the source of terrorism and troubles which should be completely eliminated.

After the events in the Middle East, the U.S. has allowed stereotypes and clichés to justify the phobia of Islam, and these images are widely used in media and news. By considering the West’s ramification of Islam, John L. Esposito asserts: “Islam as a world civilization has been reduced to Islamic fundamentalism, and even the West has preferred to cling to political slogans rather than grapple with complex socio-political processes in understanding the ideological and political challenge of Islamic movements.”⁴⁵

To illustrate John L. Esposito’s assertion, from August 1982 through the final pullout in February 1984, Americans watched helpless as U.S. marines died in a country where their government said they did not have an enemy. Many Americans sought to know about the

reasons which pushed the Lebanese to hate and kill the American boys; the folks at home had a hard time understanding the cause.⁴⁶ These are, in fact, the same events that occurred in Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990), where the Western helicopter which was sent for rescue is attacked by a "harsh" Arab and Muslim terrorist group called Al-Shuhada. "It was all too confusing; everybody over there seemed to have a gun and it seemed like they were all aimed at the Westerners. Two decades later, the echoes of those first suicide bombs still resonate; so, too, does the plaintive question, "why?"⁴⁷, Esposito claims. Beirut experience has shocked and scarred the whole American nation. The shock is seen as the anti-Western terror borne in the buildings of Lebanon has enflamed a worldwide jihad that includes in its ranks individuals from every Arab and Muslim society.⁴⁸

According to Lawrence Pintak's views about the Jihad terror which threatens the U.S., there are no simple explanations for the rise of what the West has come to call Islamic fundamentalism: the failure of Arab nationalism, a backlash against the spread of American culture, and the absence of political rights in much of the Islamic world are just some of the contributing factors.⁴⁹

e. Political and Cultural Effects of Media on the Public Opinion

In the United States, there are many factors that determine how news about the Middle East are produced and presented. Ultimately, movies like *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) determine how the Americans view people of Middle Eastern societies and ethnicity within the United States. Hollywood's impacts on the conflicts in the Middle East as a result of the portrayal of both sides and the influences it has on people's perceptions about the situation are very significant. Mass media has its impact on political and on cultural fields.



Picture four. From *Navy Seals* (1990), the American political government investigates to find solutions to the threatening terrorist group of Al-Shuhada.

Concerning the political field, mass media are known to have the power to influence people's beliefs and opinions. Media is the major source of information, so, it has the ability to shape all what we know about political affairs. Taking Lewis Teague's movie *Navy Seals*, the American government suspects Ben Shaheed of having perfect nuclear terrorist weapons by which he threatens the U.S. mainly in case Americans kill the Lebanese innocent citizens. Considered as being the "fourth estate" in the United States of America, media can criticize, judge, and provide information which helps the public to form attitudes, responses, and opinions about political events and actors.⁵⁰ In *Navy Seals*, for instance, thanks to the Western reporter who is named Varrens (Joanne Whalley), the members of the U.S. government get to know Ben Shaheed's group which belongs to a party called 'Hezbollah'.⁵¹

One of media's roles in the political sphere is propaganda. Used by governments and parties to influence people, propaganda is a policy of controlling masses. It gives the power to influence people by making them think and do what governments want them to think or do.⁵⁰ Governments sometimes use propaganda on their own populations to create public support. In both movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, the West seeks to create propaganda about the Middle

East aiming to convince the American public about the danger of the two militant terrorist groups mainly the Crimson Jihad and Al-Shuhada. Through propaganda, the West wants to persuade people and gain a large public support for the terrorist cause in the East, which is planning to ravage the whole American nation.⁵² Hollywood does the same thing by repeating the same images and stereotypes as a tool for propaganda. All the movies dealing with terrorism target the middle easterners to be the threat, and almost the majority of people believe what they see.⁵³

To illustrate clearly the effects of media on the public audience, Hollywood offers fascinating source material for an examination of what the public may understand by the notion of 'Otherness'. Hollywood films such as *True Lies* and *Navy Seals* are used as a principal means by which the United States has exposed itself to the general world audience. Hollywood movies, indeed, need to appeal to a wide and diverse audience; they could not afford to convey a monolithic message even if their need for broad appeal may in other respects incline them towards homogeneity.⁵⁴

In addition to politics, mass media have also cultural effects. Media has the power to influence and direct people to have the same behavior and thoughts. Research seems to indicate that people are more likely to accept what television conveys as the truth than any other medium. For that reason, TV has the ability of controlling people's lifestyle. Linking terrorism to Islam, Hollywood movies make Americans depict Muslims as a threat and a danger for the Western society.⁵⁵

Moreover, as the prominent popular cinema aimed at an international audience, James Cameron and Lewis Teague need to give expressions to the desires and anxieties of a wide public which do inevitably incarnate and reflect the social and cultural determinants of the era in which they are made.⁵⁶



Picture five. From *True Lies* (1994), when the American military forces located and shot the Crimson Jihadists who kidnapped Harry Tasker's wife, Helen.

In the screenshot, James Cameron shows how Hollywood, thanks to its popular movies, uses images of the Western commercial products or what is called by Adorno 'culture industry' that aims at the vulgarization of culture by using hegemony. The U.S. goal of this innovative creation is to maintain its high position and domination in the world. In addition, the West's great possession of those products leads also to what is known as a global world under the American control. In *True Lies* (1994), the American operation to locate and destruct the Crimson Jihadists and terrorists' vehicles carrying Hellen Tasker is achieved thanks to the West's successful aerial forces.⁵⁷

Focusing on the role of Hollywood in the projection of images and other messages about different people, an international memo in the files of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) of 1928 shows that the cultural impact of cinema was on the agenda early in the history of Hollywood:

Motion pictures are the most conspicuous of all the American exports. They do not lose their identity. They betray their nationality and their country of origins. They are easily recognized. They are all pervasive. They color the minds of those who see them. They are demonstrably the greatest single factors in the Americanization of the world and as such many fairly be called the most important and significant of American's exported products. They are such indirect and undersigned propaganda for the

purveying of national ideas, modes of life, methods of thought and standards of living as no other country in the world has ever enjoyed.⁵⁸

Emphasizing the role of good motion pictures, the American film producers add:

Good motion pictures necessarily have an appeal to all men because good motion pictures, just as good literature and all good art, appeal to the basic human motives. Love of home, love of family, love of children, love of husband or wife, love of parents, worship of a supreme being, love of play, love of sport, love of country, these are the basic elements in the makeup of all men. They mean as much to the German as they do to the American, as much to the English as they do to the Russian. And, on the screen, these basic motives can be presented to all people for the first time in history; a means of universal communication has been found.⁵⁹

The quotations show that from the very beginning of film making in Hollywood, there is usually awareness of the extent to which both films reflect and influence people's attitudes and behavior. The movies also show that the 'Americanization of the world' is at times a consciously elaborated strategy within which film is seen as playing a major part.⁶⁰

Observing the images of Arabs and Muslims in *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, their power lies partly in the fact that both films expose our imagination to what in our daily lives is only an unrealizable potential. Through the movies, the audience can enter a world that is ordinarily closed to it. This opens up a sense of otherness in a broad sense, bringing the viewers into sometimes intimate contact with realities they could not otherwise conceive. So, Hollywood films may allow us to see into the past era or a far distant land in a way that we can understand something of what makes it different from our reality, but it can also allow us to recognize continuities with our own world.⁶¹

2. The Distinction between the True and the False Images of Muslims

The discussion made on Hollywood's shift from the red threat to the green threat creates also a distinction between two main evolved images of Arabs and Muslims in media. Our aim is concerned with the analysis of the way U.S. media and Hollywood in particular

sculptures on the images of the Middle Eastern people including true and false images.



Picture six. From *True Lies* (1994), Ben Shaheed and his group Al-Shuhada threaten the U.S. of devastating nuclear war.

To start with, Hollywood seeks to create a false image of Arabs and Muslims who are mostly victims of the Western cinema and mass media in general. Considering the image taken from James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), the West uses stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims to create a biased opinion or view in the individual's mind. When the audience looks deeply at Ben Shaheed and his actions in the movie, it will take his behavior and state that all people belonging to that particular group which is named Al-Shuhada behave in the same manner as Ben Shaheed. So, the establishment of stereotypes encourages people to react in a way that is both judgmental and biased.⁶² The West's interests in the Eastern pictures increases mainly in the following years since events occur in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and other Eastern countries. Lewis Teague's movie *Navy Seals* (1990), which is about the war in Lebanon, brings a new Western ideology and vision on both Arabs and Muslims. The main reason is that these groups (Arabs and Muslims) are from different countries with diverse cultures, beliefs, and a variety of religions. The Middle Easterners, in fact, are characterized by one term which is Arabs, but in reality Middle Easterners are not all Arabs. The West's

stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims are strengthened due to the increasing rate of Hollywood's movies produced during the 1990s.

To illustrate the image of Arabs and Muslims in both movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, Jack G. Shaheen refers to Sydney J. Harris's "the World Shrinks and Stereotypes Fall" (1986) which involves views on the issued images of Arabs by Western media. Shaheen quotes:

The popular caricature of the average Arab is as mythical as the old portrait of the Jews. He is robed and turbaned, sinister and dangerous, engaged mainly in hijacking airplanes and blowing up public buildings. It seems that the human race cannot discriminate between tiny minority of persons who may be objectionable and the ethnic strain from which they spring. If the Italians have mafia, all Italians are suspects, if the Jews have financiers, all the Jews are part of an international conspiracy, if the Arabs have fanatics, all Arabs are violent. In the world today more than ever, barriers of this kind must be broken, for we are all more alike than we are different.⁶³

This quotation shows that the American misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims is not true. The false image of the Middle Easterners in *Navy Seals*, for instance, is often linked to the terrorist minority groups of Al-Shuhada. So, the West uses stereotypes, negative images, and even racial language in order to mark the characteristics that Arabs and Muslims have. For instance, if Arabs have Jihadists, the West then considers that all Arabs are criminals and terrorists.⁶⁴

In addition to Sydney Harris's statements about the false permanent images of Arabs and minority groups in Western movies, his ideas go hand in hand with Jack G. Shaheen, a professor emeritus of Mass Communication at Southern Illinois, in his book *Reel Bad Arabs* (2006). Shaheen shows how Hollywood, with its major popular movies like *Navy Seals* and *True Lies*, is able to vilify People mainly Arabs and Muslims who represent minorities in the world.⁶⁵ In his work, Shaheen picks up most of perpetuating images, stereotypes and

clichés of Arabs. He emphasizes Hollywood's projection of negative pictures and racial language which are always discriminated against the Middle Easterners.⁶⁶

To support his arguments on the West's misrepresentation of Arabs in media, Jack Shaheen makes the difference between two main concepts about Arabs involving 'Real' and 'Reel'. The first concept means Arabs as they really are or exist, their real nature in life, while the second concept refers to the American distortion of the Easterners' real image as it is presented in James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994) and Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990). In other words, the word reel is a deconstruction of the real image of Arabs; the way they are portrayed by Hollywood and other Western media.⁶⁷

Throughout his perspectives on Hollywood's mythical images of Arabs, Shaheen also explains the high average of negative pictures concerning people of the Middle East that appear daily on the screen. To support his view, he argues:

Arabs are the most maligned group in the history of Hollywood. They are portrayed basically as sub-humans – 'Untermenchen', a term used by Nazis to vilify gypsies and Jews. These images have been with us for more than a century. For thirty years I have looked at how we, particular [Sic] when I say we, image-makers, have projected Arabs on silver screens.⁶⁸

Following his statements, Shaheen attempts to render visible what many Western image makers ignore and are unaware about. Most American filmmakers project certain structured images of hateful Arabs and repeated them over again without observing, therefore, their danger on the whole American people and humanity as well. Interestingly, in *True Lies* for example, the danger of those mythical degrading images of Arabs is that they reinforce political policy one after another, so both Hollywood's images and politics are linked together to serve one common U.S. political goal.⁶⁹

In addition to Jack Shaheen's perspectives on the different images of Arabs and Muslims in Western cinema, in their article "Negative Perception of Islam Increasing", Claudia Deane and Darryl Fears assert that since the war in Iraq, the U.S. expresses unfavorable views of Islam. The majority of Americans say that Muslims call for violence in the world, and everyone sees Arabs and Muslims' acting in both *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) will express the same thing.⁷⁰ Conservative and liberal experts find Americans' attitudes about Islam are fueled in part by political statements and media reports that focus almost solely on the actions of Muslim extremists.⁷¹

To identify Arabs with terrorism is to classify them as enemies. In a research conducted by John L. Martin, results show that the word "terrorism" is used by the press in describing events and individuals they disapproved of. Yet, when describing these same acts by individuals who are not Arabs, the media was careful to appear neutral and unbiased. For instance, in Lewis Teague's *Navy Seals* (1990), when Ben Shaheed appears on the TV screen and reports about the American forces which attack the Arabs' ships that carry dozens of people, the American government removes his confession from media.⁷² This projection of views is further fueled by current events such as the Palestinian Arab-Israeli conflict. American media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict paints a distorted image between victim and aggressor. The unbalanced coverage in the mainstream media places the Arab states in the position of violence and power, while Israel is left as a nation attempting to protect its freedom and people.⁷³

Emphasizing the West's unfair image of Arabs and Muslims, according to Dobkin, the news media allow television journalism to play a major role in setting the political agenda. This explains why Americans fear terrorism from Arab nations, though there has been little evidence to support the justification of these fears. Such fears led the majority of the

American public to view an air raid against Libya in 1986 as justified. “It was judged an appropriate response to terrorism by 71% of the population despite the recognition by many that the bombing might lead to more terrorism.”⁷⁴ As it appears in *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, these types of views allow the general public and public officials to dehumanize Arabs. Yet, those negative stereotypes of Arab nations, societies, cultures and institutions regulate foreign policy and attitude.⁷⁵

This inability to separate stereotypes from reality governs not only political policy, but economic policy as well. Newspapers and television media are always ready to justify high oil price by depicting the Arab nations as money hungry, seeking to control the world’s natural resources. For example, the world perceives OPEC as synonymous with Arabs; however, only seven of the thirteen OPEC members are Arab nations. Furthermore, of the five largest oil-producing countries, only one is an Arab nation, Saudi Arabia. This is validated by statements such as “the world’s supplies of oil and price levels are manipulated and controlled by greedy Arabs” made by an Editor of The Washington Post. Things appear similarly in James Cameron’s *True Lies* in which the Crimson Jihad is represented as a greedy group of nuclear arms which seeks to get the most powerful nuclear position in the world.⁷⁶

While newspapers and television news play a major role in the way we perceive individuals, it is often the characterization of these individuals in the entertainment tools like movies *True Lies* and *Navy Seals*, books and sitcoms that shape Arabs and Muslims stereotypes. As a favorite pastime, the average American watches anywhere from three to five hours of television per day. Television has the ability to enlighten and enrich the lives of all the people it touches, however, it also has the ability to perpetuate and create stereotypes. In an analysis of television shows, Jack Shaheen has formulated the four basic myths pertaining to stereotypes of Arabs.⁷⁷ “They are all fabulously wealthy, they are barbarians and

uncultured, they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery, and they rebel in acts of terrorism”,⁷⁸ Shaheen says.

Keeping the same stance about Arabs and Muslims stereotypes in Hollywood movies, the Westerners believe that Islam helps to spark violence against non-Muslims. To show their belief many American journalists comment, in addition to negative remarks, prejudices and biases seen in both *True Lies* (1994) and *Navy Seals* (1990) against Arabs of the Middle East. One American journalist says: “I do not mean to sound harsh or anything, but I do not like what the Muslim people believe in, according to the “Koran”. Because I think they preach hate.”⁷⁹

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¹ Christine Holmlund, *American Cinema of the 1990s: Themes and Variations* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 124.

² Ibid.

³ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage Books, 1997), 27.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James Cameron, director. *True Lies*. DVD. United States: Motion Picture, 1994.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Carl Boggs and Pollard Tom, “Hollywood and the Spectacle of Terrorism, New Political Science”, 20 November 2006.

¹¹ Lewis Teague, director. *Navy Seals*. DVD. United States: Motion Picture, 1990.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rubina Ramji, “the Journal of Religion and Film, from Navy Seals to the Siege: Getting to Know the Muslim Terrorist, Hollywood Style”, University of Ottawa, 02 October 2005.

¹⁸ Steven Stoddard, “Using a Cold War Strategy to Fight Extremism”, 19 October 2009.

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¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ David Satter, “Yesterday Communism, Today Radical Islam”. Viewed in 25 July 2015. Available at <http://www.forbes.com/2009/10/30ideology-islam-communism-opinions-contributorsberlin-wall-09-david-satter.html>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Weber T. P., “On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend” (USA: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2004).

²⁷ Ibid.

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³⁰ Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival? America’s Quest for Global Dominance* (USA: Penguin Books, 2004).

³¹ Paul Warburg, “as he Testified before the US Senate”, Accessed in 28 August 2015. Available at <<http://www.threeworldwars.com/new-world-order.htm>>.

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³³ Shadid W. and P.S. Van Koningsveld, “the Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions, Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: the Position of Islam in the European Union” (Leven Peeters, 2002), 174-196.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 181.

³⁷ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: introduction to Vintage Books, How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage Books, 1997), xvi.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., xvii.

⁴⁰ Ibid., xxv.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Sulaiman Arti, “the Evolution of Hollywood’s Representation of Arabs before 9/11: the Relationship between Political Events and the Notion of ‘Otherness’ ” (Loughborough University, 2007).

⁴³ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, review of *the Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* By John L. Esposito, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 9-243.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Pintak, Preface to *Seed of Hate: How America’s Flawed Middle East Policy Ignited the Jihad* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), xii.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ahmed Mady, *Roles and Effects of Media in the Middle East and the United States* (Kansas: 2004), 57.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Michael Richardson, Preface to *Otherness in Hollywood Cinema*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), ix-x.

⁵⁵ Mohammed El Nawawy, “West View”, August 2003, 147.

⁵⁶ Richardson, “Otherness in Hollywood Cinema”, ix.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., ix-x

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jack G. Shaheen, “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People”, 2006.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Deane Claudia and Darryl Fears, “Negative Perception of Islam Increasing”, Washington: Post Staff Writers, Thursday 9 March 2006. Accessed in 30 August 2015. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/03/08/AR2006030802221_2.html>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Martin L. J., “the Media's Role in International Terrorism. Terrorism: An International Journal”, 1985, 127-143.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Dobkin B. A., “Paper Tigers and Video Postcards: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Narrative Form in ABC News Coverage”, 1992.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ghareeb E., “Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media” (Washington: D.C. American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983).

⁷⁷ Jack G. Shaheen, “The TV Arab” (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Deane Claudia and Darryl Fears, “Negative Perception of Islam Increasing.”

IV. Conclusion:

In sum, it is essential to notice that the hatred felt between the West and the East is the result of numerous facts. These facts influenced deeply the relationship between the two poles. The mass media in general and Hollywood in particular had played the major role in the distortion of Muslims and Arabs' images all over the world. By the film industry, Hollywood, since the early thirties, had targeted the minority groups to be a subject to stereotypical images. In addition to *Navy Seals* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994), the movies produced and dealt with Muslims and Arabs as a subject of distortion are uncountable.

The repeated depiction of Muslims and Arabs in the Western media as violent persons and terrorists create a certain image in the minds of people that is not true. It is significant to analyze Hollywood's portrayal of the Middle East within its historical framework; this means that the evolution of political events provides different, often contradictory, interpretations in Hollywood's representation of Middle Easterners. It is suggested that this intensification in the Arabs' image over the last century from 'comic villains' to 'foreign devils' is marked essentially by the Arab-Israeli conflict. It should be considered that Hollywood's representation of the Middle East was often negative because of both political and cultural interest in the region. It is also believed that this is indirectly motivated by U.S imperial objectives.

In this dissertation, we have tried to find the real reasons of stereotyping Arabs and Muslims and covered the general historical background of the 1990s by focusing on the relationship between the West and the East in economics and politics. We have tried to analyze the reasons of war between the two poles. Furthermore, we have discussed the impact of Neoconservatives in the American foreign policy by demonstrating its influence on the way the Americans view the Middle Easterners. We have then discussed how religion does appear to play a primary role in the clash between the East and the West, and how both Christian

Zionism and Islamic Fundamentalism influence the two sides. The Hollywood film industry has been responsible for giving many millions of Americans, as well as hundreds of millions more around the world, an image of Muslims and Arabs that is distorted.

This research paper is written to explain how the West's distortion of Arabs and Muslims in the mass media and mainly in Hollywood is big. Such images do nothing except fueling the hatred between the West and the East. Our analysis has also shown how these images and the progression of the mass media in the lives of many people are too influential by making the public opinion biased.

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