OBSERVING THE INTERNATIONAL:

GOVERNMENTALITY OF GEOPOLITICS,

VISUAL CULTURE

AND THE SOCIAL LOGISTICS OF WAR MAKING

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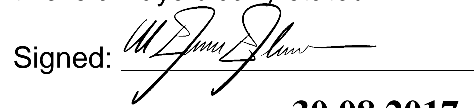
Signed: 

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Abstract:

It is common in International Relations to read that "war made states and states made war". Despite a growing literature on the relationship between visual culture and geopolitics, there is a gap around the manner in which war-making ability of states is dependent upon the population and the conduct of geopolitical subjects. This doctoral thesis interrogates the ways in which the mainstream US visual culture structures the possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations of the population during the Global War on Terror (GWoT) to understand and explain why this gap matters. It analyses how visual culture encapsulates the population as an affective interpretative repertoire and is conducive to the war-making ability of the US. The project contributes to academic literatures on `Governmentality Studies`, `Critical Geopolitics`, `Critical Military Studies`, `Visual Culture ` and `the Sociology of the State` and offers a framework for making sense of the relationship between visual culture, war-making and governmentality. To do so, a new methodological approach, procedural rhetorical analysis is developed to empirically document the ways in which geopolitical subjectivities are produced through visual culture. Following theoretical discussions, there are three case studies, each focusing on a different visual cultural platform to analyse the patterns recurring in these platforms: documentaries; films; and first person shooter video games. Overall, the thesis argues for the significance of visual culture in sustaining the social logistics of war making ability of the population during the GWoT.

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1. Introduction

"When I started doing speaking tours, speaking engagements and going out, that was the thing keeping the memories of my team mates alive. If I told about the story and told about my teammates and they turn around and tell somebody else, memory of my teammates never die. Don `t know how many times I gotta told that story, how many people read that book, nothing compared to how many people watched that film, so my job is done. ... Mission complete"

Marcus Luttrell, 2016

1.1. Introduction

What struck me the most in a National Basketball Association (NBA) match I was at in New York City (NYC) in 2015 was the sudden appearance of military uniforms during the half-time show. With the entrance and welcoming of an Iraq War veteran, the sports event I was present at as a casual tourist suddenly turned into what one might consider a patriotic spectacle. Amid confetti rains, ticker tape parades, and cheerleaders, the biography of a war veteran was being introduced and the crowd was being invited to cheer, applaud and show respect for the service of veterans. I later learned that the *Hero of the Game* shows were commonplace in many sports events in the United States (US). Like a light-hearted kiss cam gimmick, in each game a veteran was being honoured during an in-game feature and shown on jumbotrons. Was this a genuine show of respect embraced by NBA teams, or a paid-patriotism event, or both?

A joint oversight report released by Senator John McCain and Senator Jeff Flake in late 2015 shed new light on my concerns and revealed the governmental origins of such celebratory shows (McCain & Flake, 2015). It turns out, between 2012 and 2015, the Department of Defense (DoD) spent $53 million on marketing and advertising contracts with sports teams, including National Association for Stock Car Racing (NASCAR), NBA and National Football League (NFL) for stadium signs, social media mentions, and for paid-patriotism shows (Janson & Koch, 2016). Similarly, in 2017, we learned that over 1800 popular films, TV shows, documentaries and video games and even bestseller books had been commissioned, supported, edited, or re-scripted via DoD as well (Alford & Secker, 2017; Bonner, 2015; Jenkins, 2016; Mirrlees, 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2017; Wilmetts, 2016).

These were instances of covert, indirect state intrusions into everyday lives through entertainment mediums, which drastically increased during the Global War on Terror (GWoT), to sustain a heroism narrative, a militaristic image, a light-hearted geopolitical appraisal, and a subtle call of duty to boost recruitment (González, 2016). Put simply, the aim of these intrusions was to bring down the ongoing global war efforts to a personal level and to make people feel duty bound to participate in such efforts. It should come as no surprise because, as Campbell maintains, "at no stage in the post-World War II period has the US or the UK military operated without detailed media management procedures designed to influence the information outcomes" (2003, p.102). Nevertheless, the full-extent of such contracts and intrusions are still unknown as the nature of such matters is mostly covered in secrecy:

> *It is impossible to know exactly how widespread this military censorship of entertainment is because many files are still being withheld. The majority of the documents we obtained are diary-like reports from the entertainment liaison offices, which rarely refer to script changes, and never in an explicit, detailed way* (Alford & Secker, 2017, para.35).

In this vein, document-driven explanations can only reveal a small extent of such institutional involvements and they might be far from providing sufficient practical answers on how such intrusions are carried out, and how everyday people have experienced them (González, 2012; Mirrlees, 2017). To discover the wider dimensions of such interventions and to identify the underlying patterns that are revealing those intrusions, we need to implement new theoretical and methodological perspectives. The main quest of this thesis stems from these limitations and challenges to question the ways in which visual culture is brought to bear on the individuals to embroil them in geopolitical struggles and war efforts of states. Why do states subtly intrude and gradually encroach our everyday lives through our light-hearted downtimes for geopolitical purposes, how do they do it, and what do people do with them?

Our everyday lives and practices, given the involvement of state and military, can be regarded as the locus of power. In other words, power is a diffused formation, and it is embedded in everyday practices (Foucault, 1982; 1988). Rather than a top-down agency, or a bottom-up democratic contingency, the scope, character and possibilities of power are circulated and defined, and can be found in everyday lives as 'common sense'. Yet, that does not rule out the existence and authority of the state and the people, the macro and the micro, capillary sources of power. As the above example shows, macro-power structures such as states can and do employ strategies to exploit everyday practices by implanting certain patterns into daily lives of people.

However, how can we identify such intrusions? Do they have commonalities? Do we have a lens to detect them? Governmentality (Foucault, 1982; 1991a) framework offers us a theoretical perspective to argue for these kinds of practices. Yet a renewed methodological endeavour is needed to examine these relations between geopolitics, war-making and visual culture in an empirical way. I argue that it is possible to detect the traces of governmentality by identifying the recurring patterns dispersed in visual

culture and the techniques consecutively devised to lead people into those pattern-laden visual practices. Therefore, we can detect the scope, identify the mentality, and examine the politics behind those underlying patterns via the perspective of governmentality. This research applies this framework to the relations between the GWoT and the visual culture of it to unveil the patterns enabling the population to personally and vicariously enact, embody, experience and reproduce geopolitics.

In this vein, this research project is about connections- namely, visual, narrative and affective connections - that the mainstream US visual culture has paved to elicit the support of the population during the ongoing GWoT (2001-2017). Rather than regarding war-making as a techno-bureaucratically enacted and socially insulated military activity, it aims to understand the societal dimensions which made the GWoT possible. In that sense, war-making is not taken merely as a policy option, or a disembodied institutional activity involving financial burdens and political stakes for a state. It is regarded as quintessentially personal, a social and a political issue, entangling a specific relationship between the micro and the macro power, that allows citizens to personally invest in states` causes, and that allows states to send in their citizens as soldiers to fight their wars to the distant areas of the world (Centeno & Enriques, 2016).

I aim to understand and explain the operation of this specific relationship that enables states to turn their citizens into soldiers and willing participants of geopolitics through visuality and everyday visual practices. To do so, acknowledging the "centrality of visual culture to the GWoT" (Delmont, 2013, p.157), and following Foucault`s enquiry over governmentality, the subject and technologies of the self (1982; 1988), I pose two major research questions:

(1) How does a human being turn itself into a geopolitical subject?

(2) What is the role of visual cultural practices in such transformations?

These questions are crucial in understanding the populist, illiberal security practices of liberal regimes (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008) such as the US-led GWoT, at the micro-level. While at the macro-level such illiberal practices are analysed from military and state-centric dimensions through discipline and punishment (Sylvester, 2010), the ways in which human beings turn themselves into active participants of these geopolitical practices have not been explained through the diffused power understanding of governmentality and its core component of "free subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p.790).

In this vein, this introductory chapter outlines the main tenets of the project. The following section sketches out the theoretical and methodological aims of this thesis, and explains the relations between governmentality, technologies of the self and visual culture. The third section situates the project in governmentality studies by showing why the diffused understanding of power is important to analyse the war-making ability of states, and introduces the objects and constraints of the project. The fourth

section demonstrates the puzzle of war-making ability of liberal states, and tackles various assumptions relegating the issue of recruitment into asocial reasons, and shows how war-making is dependent upon the civilian populations` wilful embodied efforts as in pastoral power (Foucault, 1982). Thereafter, it relates this conundrum to the US to understand how everyday life is channelled through visual culture towards war-making and geopolitics. The fifth section highlights "the subject" gap in the literature by delving into the relations between the free subject, governmentality and technologies of self. It also sketches out how meaning making is a process actuated by the subject and how this has been relatively neglected in the literature. The sixth section introduces the relevance of convergence culture to the project. It presents how various media generates a continuum of intertextual references in everyday lives as an interpretative repertoire. In the following section, case selections and criteria are reviewed. The last section outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Theoretical and Methodological Aims

The theoretical aim of this project is to apply a governmentality (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1982, 1991a) framework to the mainstream US visual culture during the GWoT. The US, as a liberal democracy in war, which is saturated in a convergent media culture, operates the GWoT with an All-Volunteer-Force in overseas territories for over 15 years in a row. Therefore, to understand how such a liberal democracy sustained its extraterritorial practices with a necessary level of social support of its population, I look at various mainstream US visual cultural practices. By doing so, I do not intend to argue that the US population is overwhelmingly pro-GWoT, nor it is purely a militaristic culture of war. Rather, I aim to address, understand, and explain how a necessary level of social support persists through visual culture which is conducive to the making of the GWoT. Hence, I posit visual culture as a practical source that enables everyday people to see and practice geopolitics for themselves. By tracing the ways and detecting the patterns in which human-beings practice, experience and embody the GWoT through visual culture, I aim to address visual culture as a *technology of the self* conducive to the conduct of geopolitics at the level of the population.

In order to detect such aspects, a novel mixed-methodological approach, called *Procedural Rhetorical Analysis* (PRA) is developed. It is specifically designed to empirically document the "horizontally integrated media industry`s" (Jenkins, 2006a, p.96) subjective procedures (Carah & Louw, 2015) a human being might experience in and through visual culture in regards to the GWoT. This method allows me to address what practices are offered and promoted to people, and in turn, how are people enabled to come to recognise themselves as geopolitical subjects, and how they practice and produce geopolitical "domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1977, p.194) through visual culture. This is not a deterministic premise which dismisses other options available to the population to attach themselves different political identities. Yet to focus on the relations set to relate people to certain modalities of geopolitics through the mainstream visual cultural apparatuses during the GWoT, I

pursued to choose the most thematically overt and complementary selections in my analyses. By employing the works of Eco, specifically *the reader in the story* (1974; 1978, 1994; 2011), Jenkins` *convergence culture* (2006; 2008), and Bogost`s (2007) concept of *procedural rhetoric*, the analysis aims to empirically trace the governmentality of geopolitics through the recurring connections and patterns embedded in visual culture. Hence, by following in the footsteps of everyday people and analytically documenting their cross-visual experiences in patterns, I test whether they cohere into a composite narrative whole pertaining to the GWoT that socially buttresses the US foreign policy. As it will be discussed, to attain such data relating to everyday experiences, I use purposive sampling techniques to ground my theory. Therefore, I decide what data to collect based on which data will provide the most useful information to build and expand my theory. In this sense, the project contributes to the international relations and political geography (hereafter IR & PG) literatures with a theoretical and a methodological framework to understand the visual cultural sources conducive to the formation and sustenance of certain geopolitical subjecthoods. Hence by utilising governmentality and its essential component of technologies of the self, which specifically attends to everyday practices of people through which they turn themselves into subjects, I aim to demonstrate how visual/popular culture has a social logistical role in terms of war-making ability of states.

Governmentality

I use governmentality framework as a theoretical perspective to investigate the role of visual culture in geopolitics. By looking at the visual, narrative and affective patterns embedded and encoded throughout such entertainment mediums, I maintain that we can use governmentality to understand how states harness the social and amalgamate the agency of its subjects for war-making purposes in an empirical way. Similar intrusions targeting the regulation of life during the GWoT to understand `the liberal way of war` via governmentality perspective have been studied (Reid, 2006; Burridge & McSorley, 2012b). However, the relations between visual culture, war-making and geopolitics are yet to be explored through a governmentality perspective.

Governmentality refers to "a range of techniques and practices, performed by different actors, aimed to shape, guide, and direct individuals' and groups' behavior and actions in particular directions" (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p.652). It "attends to the role of rationalities and techniques of government in producing subjectivity (Dean 2010; Inda 2005; Pike 2008; Rose 1989)" (Wells, 2014, p.339). Rather than a top-down framework, it underlines both the top-down incision of government intrusions, and the horizontal diffusion and permeation of such intrusions among/within individuals. In that sense, it seeks to replace the focus on institutions with a focus on diffused social practices to examine how "the freedom and agency of those that are governed" (Sending & Neumann, 2006, p.656; Dean, 2010) are harnessed through their own accord. A focus on governmentality, therefore, seeks to analyse the

"relations between individuals and the political order" (Burchell, 1991, p.119), and identify the practices and rationalities regarding the scope and character of governing both through its vertical interventions and through its horizontal diffusions.

Moreover, Foucault`s earlier emphasis on "discipline" should not screen how we understand the way governmentality looks at power and subjects (Collier, 2009). As Neumann puts it, "governmentality, which is radically different from discipline, starts not with having people under your thumb, but having people as acting individuals and trying to orchestrate the way they think by suggesting to them over the long haul, socialising them into thinking that this is the natural thing to do" (2014, para.3). Put differently, governmentality refers to "the orchestration of action, the indirect way of making people do what they would not otherwise have done" (ibid.). How "free will is made" (ibid.) and how the agencies of free subjects are harnessed and amalgamated by liberal governing practices, therefore, lie at the heart of governmentality studies.

Technologies of the Self and Visual Culture

To Foucault (1988), power works over and through subjects, rather than simply operating above them through coercion and discipline. In this sense, *technologies of the self* conceptualisation is a key component of governmentality studies addressing the micro dimension, diffusion and operation of power. And a comprehensive understanding of this micro dimension of power allows us to understand and explain the ways in which liberal democratic societies wage war and socially sustain their illiberal and extraterritorial war efforts. At the micro-level, self-actualisation practices of an era lead human beings to self-subjectivation processes enabling them to relate, mediate and identify themselves with a particular political culture/state identity (Foucault, 1982; 1988; Kelly, 2010). For instance, as Turner (2003) maintains, nomadic plain cultures` spiritual warrior practices can be regarded as military technologies of self-creation which allow them to conduct themselves as warrior subjects. However, similar self-creation/actualisation/improvement practices exercised by individuals through visual culture today have not been studied in their relation to war-making ability of states.

In this thesis, I analyse the ways in which US visual culture practically transpose, interrelate and dispose citizen and soldier subjectivities in the GWoT, and argue that visual culture functions as a *technology of the self* allowing people to mediate and act upon themselves through observing, practising and embodying distant GWoT narratives[1]. Thereby I contend that a new political subjectivity is being

[1] Following the work of Jonathan Crary, (1990), I use the word 'observing' in its four different but interrelated meanings, instead of the verb 'spectating' which is connoting a rather passive agency. 1. Watch: to watch carefully the way something happens or the way someone does something, especially in order to learn more about it 2. Notice: to notice or see 3. Say: to make a remark about something 4. Obey: to obey a law, rule or custom. In this regard, what I argue is people are not only spectating war and the international without involvement. They are not nonparticipating onlookers or spectators. Rather, they are observers, actively watching, noticing, saying and more importantly obeying.

promoted and promulgated through the lent eye/I of the warrior subjectivities in visual culture (Dalby, 2008). Accordingly, seeing, experiencing, and embodying geopolitics through the eyes/I of the warriors enable and empower the population to assume states` geopolitical stakes, interests and acts as personal issues. Put differently, these practices enable us to see geopolitics for ourselves and "feel like a state" (Mercer, 2014). In this sense, mass communication does not simply "lent itself to top-down rhetoric, manipulation and control" (Carah & Louw, 2015, p.47). Rather, human beings form and adopt a mental picture of the world by vicariously practising the perspective of the state and the situatedness of the warrior. And, while geopolitical issues are depoliticised and distilled into personal narratives through visual culture, in tandem, they also naturalise the cause and effect relationship of war-making as an apolitical, eternal, and immutable issue taking place between *good* and *evil* through reciprocal violence. This brings me to my argument on visual culture as a governmentality tool which is conducive to the structuring of the possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations of the population. Mirzoeff`s (2015) point on the role of visual culture is helpful in this regard:

> *Visual culture involves the things that we see, the mental model we all have of how to see, and what we can do as a result. [...] It also involves what is invisible or kept out of sight. In short, we don't simply see what there is to see and call it a visual culture. Rather, we assemble a world-view that is consistent with what we know and have already experienced. There are institutions that try to shape that view* (p.11).

In this vein, proceeding from a holistic and horizontal approach[2] (by which I mean everyday flows of meaning and intertextual interactions), the thesis interweaves various literatures spanning from cultural theory, visual culture, critical geopolitics, critical military studies, and historical sociology. First, it aims to contribute to the subject and agency discussions in IR and PG literatures by bringing the technologies of the self conceptualisation to `governmentality` debates, as the micro-level "grid of intelligibility" of geopolitics (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983). Second, notwithstanding its limitations, empirical process used within the thesis is a demonstration of how the governmentality framework can be applied to the everyday visual practices of geopolitics in a heuristical way by positing these practices as contemporary geopolitical technologies of self. Acknowledging that power is a diffused formation which resides in everyday practices, by empirically identifying and analysing the patterns found in these practices, this method aims to show how the agencies of the micro and the macro-power blur and how this yields to the diffused operation, organisation and orchestration of geopolitical power. Third, the method used here which is informed by the studies of Eco (1984; 1994), Bogost (2007) and Jenkins (2006a) to elaborate the understanding of technologies of the self in terms of geopolitics is specifically

[2] Horizontality is not necessarily related to any post-humanistic account of IR or PG (Bennett, 2010; DeLanda, 2006). It rather has similarities with Anderson (2006), Kauffman (2017) and Kiersey and Vrasti`s (2015) accounts of horizontal aspects of nationalism and politics. I relate the term both to the diffusion and infusion of practices, and to the ways in which everyday subjects make geopolitical inferences through visual culture.

attentive to the relations between visual culture, convergence culture, procedural rhetoric, readership, and subjecthood. Thus, the incorporation of these studies in IR and PG literatures have the potential to reinvigorate the debates on the role of everyday practices. Lastly, it paves the way for further research in IR and PG literatures in regards to the study of state formation from the dimensions of war-making with a focus on subject(iva)tion processes of individuals. By doing so, the thesis aims to underline the self and society discussions in the state formation and critical war studies literature. In this sense, the following section elaborates on the diffused operation of power in war.

1.3. The War of the People, by the People, for the People

Drawing on the diffused power understanding of governmentality, the main argument of this thesis challenges the asocial arguments that reduce the war-making ability of states to a disembodied material (technological, institutional, and economic) reasoning, as summarised in Charles Tilly's (1975, p.42) famous "war made states, and states made war" quote. Such reasoning takes the everyday individual conducts of citizens for granted and erases their agency. Instead, I try to understand and explain, how do wars become the wars of the people, by the people and for the people, and how do such political acts and stakes of a state become personal. I argue that states did not simply make wars, nor wars simply made states. States did not simply extract financial and `manpower` resources through coercion or discipline to make wars possible either. Rather, states tell stories to draw connections, use emotions to weave and associate territories with their populations, and socialise the people to make them embody and experience states` narratives through common ways and viewing positions. Hence, states carve out meanings for themselves to become socially endorsed entities overlaid with a population that can kill and die in the name of states.

To achieve this level of militaristic readiness, states attempt to entice their populations for their institutional survival as the locus of shared ownership. This shared ownership is manifest in Republican Senator Rick Santorum`s words for the GWoT: "This is truly a modern war, a war fought not just on the battlefield but on the Internet; a war (decided ?) less by armies and warplanes than individuals making individual choices" (Santorum, 2006, p.8). However, to historically situate how this diffusion of power has been maintained from the 18th century, Foucault`s points on the population through biopolitics and pastoral power could be revealing.

The population, especially since the 18th century, has emerged as a specific social problematic for the viability of the modern state (Foucault, 1982; 2008). This bio-dynamic social diversity had to be embedded into and stabilised within the realm of the state. Yet, it was becoming harder to administer this vivacious realm within the static entity of the state simply through coercion. It had to be guided, channelled, organised, and integrated into the idea of the state through its own will. Hence, a new technology of politics, *biopolitics* emerged (Dean, 2010) which refers to "the set of mechanisms through

which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy" (Foucault 2007, p.1). By way of this, the births, deaths, reproduction and illnesses of a population had become a concern for governing, and new scientific techniques, such as, statistics was utilised, to provide the state with new abilities of governance. Nonetheless, to control the behaviour of the population at a distance efficiently and productively, the biopolitical objects of governance should be voluntarily auto-regulating themselves as well. Put simply, the idea of the state should get under the skin of people. Hence, a complementary form of power, which can integrate both the population`s and the individuals` willpowers into the raison d'état, was needed.

Pastoral power refers to this new individualising and totalising form of power which aims to promote a worldly devotedness in people to subject themselves to the modern state. It does not clearly surpass or replace other forms of power, such as the sovereign, or the disciplinary, yet works in tandem with them, by adding a new layer of control, and by further internalising the way power operates through people. To explain this, Foucault (1982) underlines the subtle power network emanating through the role of the pastor in Christian church, and discusses how it expanded and took a new secular shape with the emergence of the state. The role of pastors was to give help and guidance to people about personal matters. But this form of guidance was also attaching a new role to people to recognise themselves anew within the flock. In this way, both each unit of the flock and the flock per se were grasping the nuts and bolts of caring for themselves and for each other. Moreover, as this process was "linked with a production of truth, the truth of the individual himself" (Foucault, 1982, p.783) was amalgamating with the truth of the flock. Therefore, a form of truth was being spread and adopted through the innermost dimensions of people.

To better understand how this pastoral form of power spreads and operates through people, the similarities of it with storytelling might be illuminating (Eberhardt, 1996). As in storytelling, pastors were guiding, grouping and leading people in subtle, didactic and affective ways. What they were preaching was offering people specific forms of guidance to live, care for and fulfil the course of their lives. Teeming with metaphors and allegories, the religious stories they tell were aiding people to better conduct their actions. Therefore, pastors were acting as storytellers, enablers and listeners.

As storytellers, they were speaking of a profound truth through stories, and addressing the innermost secrets of people. And by doing so, as enablers, they were offering a role to their audiences to take part in the stories as well. In this way, they were empowering people to recognise themselves as active subjects within the confines of these stories. And as listeners, pastors were listening to the confessions of people to walk them through those stories, and coach them to fulfil their designated roles. As Tolstoy once put it, "[a]gain and again in history a dominant church has utilised art to maintain its sway over men" (1904, p.v). And as good art emotionally infects and becomes contagious (Tolstoy, 1904) by

turning readers/listeners/viewers into hosts to further spread the infection (Gottschall, 2012), pastoral power can be read as a form of infection spreading through/like stories, leading to "evocation of emotion and to spiritual awareness and conviction" (Eberhardt, 1996, p.23).

Yet, from the 18th century, agents of this pastoral guidance began to appear in new forms and were harnessed by the state (Foucault, 1982), as the state emerged as the main narrator/storyline. As a result, inhabitants of modern states began to be guided to recognise themselves as citizen subjects through various forms of policing techniques, including expert knowledge and education (Foucault, 1982; 1988). Therefore, while sovereign power asks obedience, and disciplinary power requires docility from their subjects to act, pastoral power intents to harness the willingness and devotedness of individuals to act and even sacrifice themselves (Foucault, 1982). Although these modalities of power often dovetail and continue to work together in different combinations, we see the operation of this type of power most vividly in times of war. The gradual military revolution which began to take shape in 17th century Europe was prompting this shift from disciplinary power to pastoral power as well. The massive change from unreliable mercenaries to devoted citizen armies (Duffy, 1981; Posen, 1993), and the mass education techniques instigated for this transformation, in this sense, is instructive to see the modern state`s complex convergence with the population through pastoral power.

In this sense, the main idea behind the emergence of biopolitics and pastoral form of power was the replacement of repression with productive ways of controlling. As mentioned, the growing population was at large and it had to be regulated and predictably contained in a nation-state grid-system. The population had to be educed both for the internal order and for the external disorder of the state, and productively channelled to make itself fit into *the reason of the state* arguments. Accordingly, while everything within the domestic realm of the nation-state was procedurally regulated to maintain its civilised, static and hierarchic order, anything without/outside the state was deemed to belong to the dynamic and anarchic realm of the international. As a result, people should had been convinced to see the state as a necessity for their own benefits and survival needs. They had to become orderly, responsible and even devoted citizens (Rose, 1999, p.154), eager to identify themselves with the nation-state and its causes. Therefore, selves` relation to themselves had to be related and regulated through the nation-state as a new narrative interface.

Put differently, people had to see the world like a state, through the eyes of a state, and mediate their beings through this static viewing position of being part of a state. Ultimately, they should become the "embodiment[s] of the intended goal" (Gallese, 2001, p.36) of the state, and to reach this, states had to maintain what Gallese calls in a neuroscientific context, a "shared manifold that intersubjective communication and mind-reading become possible" (Ibid, p.45). Arguably, what Foucault intended to analyse and mean by pastoral power was the attainment of such an embodiment through which modern

state could be viewed as the population`s main tool to survive and thrive in an anarchic world. Therefore, states started to consider the population at large in different ways "to conduct the conduct" (Foucault, 1982, p.221) of it at a distance both at the macro and at the micro-levels, especially for war-making purposes. In this vein, states made connections, blazed trails, built pathways, structured their "possible field of actions" (Ibid.) and imaginations and thereby enabled the social to embed, relate and identify itself with the state and its demanding causes, such as war.

As war-making entails manning armies with loyal and devoted fighting subjects, the crux of state`s demands surfaces especially in times of war. Those periods are when states ask from their subjects significant bodily participations and even sacrifices in combat zones. Therefore, the war-making ability of states enables us a specific analytic vantage point to diagnose the intimate amalgamation between the personal, the social, and the geopolitical. To understand how this amalgamation was achieved, the role of first compulsory education systems in Europe should be highlighted as a form of pastoral power. Tellingly, the emergence of the first compulsory education systems in Europe and the US derives from the need to instil national cohesion to the population and to educate the "manpower" needs of the nascent standing national armies (Mead, 2013).[3] As Posen put it: "[s]tates promote compulsory primary education to spread literacy in a standard version of the spoken language to enhance the technical military utility of their soldiers. In doing so, they spread the "culture" and the version of history that are central to the national identity" (1993, p.85). Thus, the aim of compulsory education was to enable people to become citizen subjects, to anchor them into certain `possible field of actions`, to make them embrace various story lines, and act accordingly. As a result, states intended to become the hubs to relate, mediate and channel the selves` relations to themselves and to the reality (Boltanski, 2014).

In this sense, war can be regarded as the ultimate litmus test for a state to evince its relationship with the population it administers and to demonstrate its ability to mobilise it towards the conduct and the legitimisation of state violence. Since states mainly cohere through narrative, material, and affective connections that regulate the routine conduct of the population, war obliges states to mobilise these connections in different terms, yet in vivid ways pertaining to war-making. Put differently, states` ability to conduct the conduct of the population becomes highly apparent especially in times of war. Therefore, if "war made states and states made war" (Tilly, 1975; 1993), who are the subjects that fought these wars, why did they do it, and what did the states do to make them do it? Acknowledging that today these relations, once sustained mainly through compulsory education, are mostly enabled by visual culture, I look at how visuality forges the conditions of possibilities necessary for war-making.

[3] Similarly, earlier geopolitical thinkers, such as Ratzel, Mackinder and Cahnman, discussed the role of the population, both in regards to manpower resources, and also social forces as thanks to these factors the conduct of geopolitics is afforded to states. Cahnman specifically underlines the processes that connects geopolitics to sociology, language and culture in the early geopolitical thinking as well (Cahnman, 1942; Kearns, 2009).

The focus of this research, in this vein, is on the willingness of the social that makes the GWoT possible. To do so, the visual cultural practices and processes through which human beings turn themselves into geopolitical subjects whereby they enrolled themselves to the state`s war machine are identified and explained. This limited focus should not be seen as an argument for an unvariegated population assumption nor should be seen as a causal argument between visual culture and war-making. Rather, the limitation on the study is caused in its objective. I do not seek to explain why individuals choose to be a part of the geopolitical narrative, but rather showcase the ways, in which visual culture is conducive to the making of social contours of geopolitics. Although there have always been `deviants` and `passivists` resisting following and living by those connections and stories offered by the state, which are urging and ushering the use of political violence and sacrifices in the name of the state, such cases are beyond the scope of my study. This choice reflects the aim of the research questions and aligns with Foucault`s enquiry on subjects (1982). Following a focus on geopolitical subjectivation processes, new studies on tactical resistances might blossom. However, heralding the possibilities for resistance before examining what subjectivation practices are offered to people might lead to unrealistic expectations (Morris, 1988; Rose, 2012, p.290). In the next section, the puzzle between voluntary enlistment and war-making will be discussed to argue that the role of visual culture is crucial in setting the conditions of possibilities for attracting and channelling the population for war-making purposes.

1.4. The Conundrum: A Rational Army Would Run Away?

As John Keegan once pondered, by referring to Montesquieu, "a rational army would runaway" (1997, p.3). Yet, why does an army choose to fight, rather than flight? Why would they put themselves in harm`s way? Asking this question through the US-led GWoT which has been fought for over 15 years in a row with an All-Voluntary-Force (AVF), in distant geographical spaces is stimulating as it leads to the questioning of the making of the geopolitical subject. Although the image of drone operators, comfortably seated in front of joysticks is the recent fascination of IR and PG literatures, the GWoT has been fought mostly by various enlisted soldiers and special forces operators with boots on the ground. Moreover, the role of direct combat forces, contrary to expectations, is increasing through the mass production (Gallagher, 2016) and utilisation of special operations forces (SOF) (Eken, 2017). Furthermore, as Lewis argued (2011, p.205), the required selfless military service from a society encouraged to construe its life through a selfish "culture of wealth and consumption" in the "pursuit of happiness" produces another problem for the US military. How and why would people quit the culture of selfish consumption and enlist in the military to embark on selfless service journeys in combat zones, for instance in apparently faraway countries of the Middle East and South Asia?

Asking the question in a different way through paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln`s often quoted Gettysburg Address might be enlightening. How does a liberal democratic state`s war turn into a war of the people, by the people, for the people, especially when it is a war conducted in half-a-world away

territories for an unspecified period of time? The idea of *raison d'état* becomes problematic here. If states exist for the protection of their subjects, claiming "to be the space for ensuring citizens' interests and well-being" (Frey, 2009, p.13), why would subjects enlist and risk themselves for the state? The often-neglected internal flaw of this disembodied *reason of state* argument lies mostly at the heart of war-making ability of states as one of the "central antinomies of our political reason" (Foucault, 1988, p.147). As mentioned, the modern nation state has become embodied with standing armies manned by their own citizens (Posen, 1993). Nevertheless, if the fundamental reason of the state is to protect its own citizens against external threats, and in turn, if the citizens of a state accept the sovereign authority for being delivered from such external threats, how does a state persuade its own citizens to go in harm`s way? How does a state find people to go and make war for itself?

Such questioning should not be exhausted by the modernist arguments of capitalism, industrialism, surveillance, or violence (Giddens, 1985; Teschke, 2003; Tilly, 1975; 1992). Not only because these arguments are rationalist and disembodied ones, but also because for soldiers, going to war does not only entail a limited set of rational options of fighting, killing and earning. It also runs the risks of being captured, wounded, tortured, maimed and killed in numerous ways and means in combat zones. In this regard, it can be said that war might be rational for some, but not for the people on the ground (Keegan, 1997). All wars are total war for the individuals participating in them (Lewis, 2011).

Hence, reducing the problem to socio-economic pressures do not explicate all the cultural and subjective processes leading people to enlist, and their behaviour in enrolling to gruelling SOF selection courses, or their active combat engagements. What makes people to covet these physically, mentally and emotionally demanding skills and what makes these occupations popular in culture? What enchants people for enlisting and for war-making? Reducing soldiers into socio-economically choiceless subjects neither allow us to understand the role of the population at large regarding the US-led GWoT, nor do justice to militarisation of the culture and the soldierly agencies who are wilfully embroiling themselves in the war effort (Bourke, 2015; Fletcher, 2002; Gibson, 1994). In the absence of the US population`s supportive role, and again in the absence of a global population`s consent at large, the consequences of the ways in which geopolitical agendas are set and dealt with would have been entirely different. It does not mean that there were no domestic and international objections to the GWoT. Yet, there were enough people supporting and conducting the GWoT in the name of the US too. These subjectivities and the ways in which visual culture is designed for conducting the conduct of those subjectivities for geopolitical proclivities are the objects of analyses for this project.

The draft system in the US ended in 1973 after the Vietnam War, and an all-volunteer military force emerged (Rostker, 2006; Lewis, 2011). The aim and ends of this move were ground breaking. The US, the Cold War super-power, was going to populate its military only through wilful enlistees. Rather than

a top-down dictation drafting and sending people to go to war, it was going rely on wilful citizens to man its armed forces. Therefore, today, the GWoT has been renowned as the longest war ever fought by the US with an AVF. Certainly, it does not mean that every enlisted soldier is keen to go to war, or they volunteered simply for being fond of war or the military. Nor does it mean that people join the military only to be employed. There are many underlying socio-economic reasons encouraging people to enlist in the army. Yet contrary to the popular assumption, "[t]oday's AVF is not predominantly poor, African American, or uneducated; it has likewise proven more militarily effective and (probably) less costly than the conscript force it replaced" (Golby & Liebert, 2016, p.3; Army, 2011).[4]

Furthermore, the military competes with the private sector to attract more qualified people on the market, and also to balance its demographic structure with the society (Golby & Liebert, 2016), as a national fighting force should be representative of its country`s demographic structure for social and political reasons. Otherwise, a socially estranged military force starts to lose its social, political, occupational and mission specific motivations. (Donnithorne, 2013; Liebert & Golby, 2016). In this vein, popular arguments over the race and class based segregation within the military recruitment rates are neither desirable, nor sustainable for the viability of the state`s premium war fighting force. Thus, the US Army`s official commercials try to tap on this diversity issue as well to capture the attention of the "best and the brightest of the country" (US Army, Diversity, 2016).

Moreover, although there is a rise in the use of private military companies (Lewis, 2011), the role of the standing national military forces still reigns supreme over private contractors. Thus, while various generalizations underline the importance of other factors such as drones, Private Military Contractors (PMC), military-industrial complex, wider geopolitical context, among others, they are far from quenching certain practical questions pertaining to the social possibilities of war-making as they continue to skip the role of the subject. Moreover, by taking the subject for granted, these explanations align themselves with a general trend to erase the human factor in warfare that is aiming to deliver politics from the costs of war-making (Lewis, 2011). Also, skipping this question to underline the rise of the outsourcing of war-making through PMCs is another issue, as they are also embodied *paramilitary* subjects. Thus, their embodied warrior subjectivities and the culture offering them certain paramilitary practices through "*warrior dreams*" should not be overlooked (Gibson, 1994). In this vein, to understand the operation of micro-power in terms of geopolitics, instead of simply projecting soldier profiles as needy beings without any agency, we need to understand the ways in which people desire to push their mental and physical limits, for instance, in SOF training courses, or in active combat experiences. And

[4] According to a Department of Defense demographics report (DoD, 2012), minority groups are still underrepresented among officers.

this is a problem going beyond marketing militarism and masculinity. It is about the diffused operation and organisation of state and geopolitics for war-making purposes in a liberal way.

As enlisting entails more than the involvement of personal choices, the military works to evaluate and influence both “rational, irrational and emotion-driven decisions” (Council, 2004, pp.32-33). In other words, as opposition and approval from family and friends are also factors for enlistment (Rostker et al., 2014), the general attitude of the population is officially trying to be influenced (ibid, 2004). Hence, as manifested in a report by the US National Research Council, “*Evaluating Military Advertising and Recruiting*”, the population itself is targeted at large to reach not only the possible recruits, but also their parents, peers, and various signification processes to influence the ways the military and the people who enlist are socially perceived and supported (2004).

Entertainment media and films are one of those areas influenced by governmental agencies to predispose the society for the military and for the militaristic ideals, and this can be understood as the instigation of a form of pastoral power (Foucault, 1982). Although the militarisation of education system continues in surreptitious ways (Beier, 2011; Mead, 2013), governmental intrusions into popular culture sustains this militarisation at the level of the population`s everyday life. As Alford and Secker (2017) and Jenkins (2009; 2016) argue, the DoD’s and CIA`s pro-active influence on popular culture, grant these institutions the same kind of power and authority as major studio executives and they ask producers to implant certain scenes, take out certain conversations, re-write scripts, etc. to sustain US military`s role and image in a desired way. In shedding light on visual culture`s geopolitical role, Halberstram argues that after a decade of its advent, “television had begun to alter the political and social fabric of the country, with stunning consequences” (Halberstam, 1993, p.x). Moreover, as Lewis put it, “[t]elevision influences consumption, and consumption influences every aspect of American life, including the nation`s ability to produce combat soldiers and fight wars” (Lewis, 2011, p.208).

So, we cannot disregard the role of visual culture. Yet how does it help the US in terms of geopolitics? How does it help the US to attract the population to identify itself with its fighting force? What is the role of visual culture in enabling the US to sustain its social war fighting ability? And how do new visual technologies and entertainment mediums connect the population to international politics and in turn how do people embody it? Similar questions have been asked and the relations between the military, industry, media and entertainment have been studied widely in IR & PG. However, what was absent in those studies was the population and the subject. For instance, although Der Derian`s work (2008) has been a seminal one in mapping out the relations between military, industry, media and entertainment complexes, his theory also lacks subjects. While he shows the relations between such institutions and corporations, he does not question this “manpower” conundrum and does not reveal the ways in which

the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment (MIME) network employ, man, and actuate this institutional matrix. Put simply, the population is absent in Der Derian`s studies.

In this sense, while earlier studies focused on the techno-institutional re-organisation of military affairs, I focus on the everyday level of warfare from the perspective of the subject. Thus, my thesis argues that the conundrum regarding manpower issues can be solved through the governmentalization of visual culture for the purpose of war. Applying McCarthy`s (2008, p.131) "interpretation that is informed by governmentality and which looks at media institutions, technologies and programs as pathways through which advanced liberalism's political rationalities take form" to the mainstream US visual culture of the GWoT, I demonstrate the ways through which visual culture enables the diffused operation of power in times of war. This argumentation is based on two tenets on visual culture.

First, visual culture offers the ideas of war-making and selfless service as a way of life to animate and actualise by consumption. People make the most of their selves by practising warrior experiences and mindsets through visual culture. Reminiscent of stoic practices, these self-disciplining techniques encourage people to own/enjoy their lives/roles by offering ways of controlling ones` body and mind as a warrior, with an indispensable threat perception. Hence, I regard visual culture as a site where *technologies of the self* are offered. Beyond Gregory`s institutional "everywhere war" (2011), an intuitional conditioning for having a warrior mindset is socially prevalent. For instance, an omnipresent popular culture offering the experiences of special operations forces to everyday people for their everyday use become widely available (i.e. Courtley, 2012; Willink & Babin, 2015) in various media. Thus, through such reinforcements, everyday people find themselves in a transmedia storytelling atmosphere in which they cannot disentangle themselves.

Second, thanks to this multi-media atmosphere, while visual culture entangling people, it simultaneously frees its audience. It enables the population to be free to move across the designated pathways of war experience like an embedded journalist. By following seemingly varying routes on their own, they infer similar analogies, themes, and motifs, draw on a common affective interpretative repertoire and hence clone a version of the GWoT experience. By being able to see for themselves through visual cultural tools, people surmise what geopolitics and its necessities are without anyone telling or forcing them overtly to what to think or become. Gradually, they pattern themselves on the patterns they practice. However, as in the embedded journalism experience, the course of virtual war they are privileged to experience is pre-designed. A certain cause and effect relationship is offered from a lent eye/I level perspective of the warrior in these experiences. Hence, an assumed to be apolitical constant threat formation which naturalises war as part of everyday life is developed.

To recap, governmentality refers to the "structuring the possible field of actions" (Foucault, 1982, p.221) of the population. Its aim is to govern free subjects through their own initiatives at a distance and it

entails specific modes of technologies and tactics deployed to procure the conditions of possibilities in which citizens become active and responsible subjects (Stern et al., 2015; Hellberg & Hansson, 2015; Cremonesi et al., 2016). In this sense, governmentality of visual culture refers to specific technologies of the self, designed and offered to the population to embroil them in geopolitics, to make it their personal issue. In what follows, the absence and the need to focus on the subject will be discussed.

1.5. The Gap: The Subject in Popular Geopolitics

In this sense, a lacuna regarding the role, the agency and the possibilities of the subject continues to exist both in IR and PG literatures. This study follows the calls in the literature to think of international politics through more embodied, subjective, practical, and corporeal points of views (King, 2013; 2015; Sylvester, 2012). Below, I review how a more ground level focus began to emerge in war studies, feminist IR and popular geopolitics. Each looks at individual level of conduct for different purposes. While war studies` focus is on the soldiers to understand the intimate and intricate details of agency in combat operations, feminist IR`s is on bodies and victimhood to showcase how the personal is political, and popular geopolitics` focus is on the audiences to understand how people visualise and imagine world politics. After briefly charting these turns, I demonstrate how my focus on the geopolitical subject is based on yet differs from these approaches. However, before doing so, a brief discussion on Foucault`s understanding of subjects in regards to control societies would benefit the overall discussion.

Foucault`s studies on power and governmentality encompass a relationship between being controlled and being free. It has "the advantage of allowing for both human agency and structural limitations" (Carah & Louw, 2015, p.21; Cremonesi et al., 2016; Stern et al., 2015). The ostensibly oxymoron position defined through the concept of "free subjects" (1982) refers to the ways in which individuals are simultaneously enabled and constrained. *Technologies of the Self*, in this regard, is the crucial aspect of governmentality studies for it is designed to understand the subjecti(vati)on processes of political subjects (Kelly, 2010; 2014; Paras, 2006; Turner, 2003; 2010). This is why governmentality should not be regarded as a top-down, but a multi-relational approach. As Tynkkynen put it: "[i]n liberal societies, governing operates primarily through biopolitical tactics because disciplinary power contradicts its core principles of individual liberty" (2016, p.78). In this sense, using the metaphor of highways and leeways is suitable to understand the designed flow, regulated mobility, limited agency and liberty of the subject (Seiler, 2008). As Deleuze contends, Foucault`s understanding of power, and controlling of free subjects were inspired by William Burroughs and his piece "*The Limits of Control*" (Burroughs, 1978):

> *He clearly thought that we are entering a new type of society. There have been of course various remnants of disciplinary societies for years. But we already know we are in societies of a different type that should be called using Burroughs` term-and Foucault had a very deep admiration for Burroughs-control societies. We are entering control societies that are defined very differently than disciplinary societies. Those who are concerned about our*

welfare no longer need, ... places of confinement. ... Control is not discipline. You do not confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people travel infinitely and "freely" without being confined while being perfectly controlled. That is our future (Deleuze, 2007, pp.321-22).

In this sense, to understand the doers of international politics and the possible fields of actions structured to conduct their conducts, we should be more attentive to the subjects and their everyday practices at the micro level. Such a focus enables us to see how through everyday practices, individuals are channelled and guided while they are assuming themselves to be free. Acknowledging the importance of this level of geopolitical conduct, as mentioned, war studies, feminist IR and specifically popular geopolitics began to focus on the everyday. Despite differing in their angles, they all visit similar questions and re-scale their foci in regards to the ways in which micro-power operates in times of war as the problem of cohesion and collective action are dependent upon various subjectivities and the coherence of their agencies. Anthony King`s recent studies on the issue is revealing:

Cohesion has fascinated social scientists precisely because, as an extreme form of human activity, combat represents an almost ideal exemplification of the collective action problem. ... The ability of soldiers to create and sustain group solidarity in combat is a specific example of the fundamental phenomenon of human social cooperation. ... Indeed, in order to prevail in battle, armies typically rely on the willingness of some individuals to die, so that the majority of soldiers may survive. It is a surprising fact that even in this situation, individuals are often still willing to cooperate and to contribute to group goals, the benefit of which they will never experience. Social scientists have rightly recognized that the central problem of cooperation and group cohesion is illustrated with particular clarity in combat. Combat serves a useful methodological function; it distils the collective action problem into a pure and brutal form. The frontline is a unique space. Yet it illustrates the general dynamics of group formation with a rare lucidity (King, 2015, p.6).

War studies` focus is on the operation and training regimes of soldiers at the individual level to understand the micro dynamics of battlefield conduct, as they are the perpetrators of state violence itself. These soldiers learn the nuts and bolts of conducting themselves in combat environments during military trainings. Yet as King maintains (2015), it is surprising that soldiers sacrifice themselves for the benefit of what Foucault called *the flock* (1982). In this sense, not only military training regimes, but also *the subjectivity* attracting these human beings to enlist in the military in the first place should be understood and explained through what Foucault meant by the individualising and totalising role of pastoral power (1982) and Technologies of the Self (1988).

Hence, I focus on geopolitical subjecthood itself. It is a situatedness which comes prior to military trainings and goes beyond them. It drives people to put their bodies through such conditions in the first

place. Geopolitical subjecthood is a result of a geopolitical acculturation process, which entails an assemblage of various social entanglements, cultural identifications and national story-lines through which human beings recognise themselves as subjects, and learn to construe the meaning of actions of the self and others. In this sense, geopolitical subjecthood does not only provide people an agency to act in a certain way, it also instils people the consent to be acted upon. Hence, it is a longitudinal process encompassing various social processes, and in this research, I focus on the visual cultural sources of it.

On the other hand, from a dissimilar perspective to that of war studies, feminist IR scholars began to attend the bodies as well. As Feminist IR and PG literatures engage with Foucault`s later works much more effectively, a turn towards the body and the subject started to reverberate across the discipline (Ahall, 2011; Clapton & Shepherd, 2016; Dauphinee, 2013; Inayatullah, 2011; Shepherd, 2012; Sylvester, 2010; 2012; Wilcox, 2014).

One of the most compelling studies in this field is the work of Wilcox (2014). In her book, *The Bodies of Violence*, she claims that the impetus for her study derived from the absence and the role of bodies in the IR literature. She argues the literature needs to move from a disembodied conceptual framework of the subject, to an embodied one, by documenting its destructive and productive uses in international politics. Yet while her work fills up an important gap in the field, the way she frames and limits the role of bodies as produced subjects through violence are very direct, material and vertical. From the use of bodies as killable or killer objects, to the use of torture and rape, she objectifies the role of the body as objects. Nevertheless, she does not theorize the embodied subject in international politics as she claims.

Rather what she theorizes is victimised bodies as the embodied objects of international politics through the means of violence, and what she dismisses is the subjectivities of perpetrators of war and violence. Moreover, although she constructs her argument through a Foucauldian perspective, this perspective is informed by Butler. As Kelly argues, Butler misreads Foucault`s subjectivation process. Whereas Butler renders subjects as products of external power, Kelly contends that Foucault deemed it as an internally exercised process, as a “relay by which we can be induced to act upon ourselves by external forces” (2010, p.100). Thus, Wilcox does not involve the ways in which a free human-being turn itself into a subject through governmentality at a distance. She also limits her Foucauldian lexicon to the first volume of *the History of Sexuality* (1978), and dismisses its following volumes. In other words, what I underline as a gap is the absence of the subject, who does not subjugate itself for being subjected to violence, but self-subjugates itself as a doer of political subjectivity through its own will as a “free subject” (Foucault, 1982, p.790).

Another nascent sub-field of feminist IR focusing on the lives of subjects is the Narrative IR literature (Dauphinee, 2013; Inayatullah, 2010; Roberts, 2006; Suganami, 2008). They follow a more subjective and horizontal route to document the ways in which international politics effects the personal lives of

various subject positions. Specifically, Wibben (2011) offers a very important approach in regards to narratives, contextuality and temporality.

> *"These frames are shaped by the contexts we find ourselves in: Hearing, seeing, listening, contemplating, and speaking all happen within a particular (temporal, spatial, personal, professional, cultural, linguistic, etc.) context. This context, or horizon (in hermeneutic terms), shapes how we understand a particular situation – how we make it meaningful to us (and, later, to others). It is important to appreciate that these horizons constantly shift as new experiences, encounters, conversations, contemplative silences, and images expand our horizons. (Wibben, 2015, para.8)*

However, while they argue that personal narratives are important elements to challenge top-down, disembodied political views, I argue that contemporary visual culture deploys personal narratives to seemingly transcend, but actually to translate geopolitics to everyday people through the lent eye/I of warrior subjectivities. This translation, arguably, inverts the dictum of the personal is political and spreads the geopolitical to the population. Hence, the geopolitical becomes an everyday, personal, and mundane topic. In this sense, while feminist IR looks at bodies as victims, or deploys personal reflections to disrupt power, they dismiss the very agency and subjecthood of perpetrators and ignore the diffused operation of power. On the other hand, to understand how people decodes international politics, popular geopolitics began look at audiences through everyday practices. And this is an important move towards understanding the emergence of geopolitical subjecthood.

In this sense, popular geopolitics and IR studies that are attentive to popular culture (hereafter PCWP) began to change their attention towards the everyday practices and interactions of people as well. "A focus on popular culture is a response to the call by some IR scholars to shift attention from the state to the individual" (Caso & Hamilton, 2015, p.1). However, as argued by various scholars (Dittmer, 2010; Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Dodds, 2006; Dodds & Dittmer, 2008; 2013) the meaning making role of everyday people is mostly ignored in these studies. To fill this gap, a relatively recent attention has been directed towards active audience theories in popular geopolitics (Dodds & Dittmer, 2008; 2013). Also, some new studies similarly try to capture a more holistic/multi-medium insights into visual culture (Mirless, 2015; Payne, 2016; Stahl, 2010). This is certainly relevant as "the brain is dealing with the world in a much more 'holistic' fashion than previously understood" (Iacobani, 2009, p.14).

As part of these moves, yet instead of a direct focus on active audience theories, this thesis underlines the importance of understanding the formation of geopolitical subjecthood through a governmentality perspective on visual culture. Similar to Müller`s (2011) study focusing on the role of higher-education in Russia in the formation of geopolitical subjects,my focus is on American visual culture as a practical source of geopolitical subjecthood during the GWoT.Yet, as a culmination of these moves, more holistic, multiperspectival and longitudinal approaches are still needed. As an umbrella term, I call it a

horizontal approach, to refer to these approaches by emphasising the multi-media continuum of people through their everyday lives.

As a recent exception, Bos (2015; 2018) analyses "*Call of Duty*" video game series` production, representation and consumption phases to achieve a holistic and multiperspectival approach. To do so, he carries out a single-medium case study approach. In this sense, the scope and focus of this study have similarities with what I would like to do in this research. However, they differ in their theoretical aims,methodological tools, and case selection foci. I deploy a multi-case study analysis of the mainstream US visual culture during the GWoT to push the existing theoretical discussions through a governmentality perspective.. By analysing the intertextual practices and recurrent patterns offered to everyday people though visual culture, I employ a horizontally holistic approach to understand the role of the reader/the subject in-between convergent media flows My main aim is to examine the mainstream US visual culture via a governmentality perspective, and to show how everyday visual engagements can be thought through technologies of the self concept. Hence, my specific focus is on the techniques and practices guiding the formation of the geopolitical subject. This specific focus also brings me to utilise audience/reader research as well.

Aligning myself with the views of Eco (1984; 1994; 2011), Bogost (2007) and Jenkins (2006a), I regard meaning making as a process which occurs rather procedurally and which should be analysed longitudinally. Rather than emerging and influencing instantly, as in rituals, inferential walks, or technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988; Turner, 2003), meaning emerge and influence gradually with the collaboration of the reader, and with the help of other texts available to the reader. In this vein, meanings are not inherent and instant features of media texts. And readers do not extract them instantly in isolation. They rather gradually bind various texts, procedurally weave them together and actuate them. Put differently, the audience actively processes and moves the messages in an intertextual manner. Although in the end those ideas "can metamorphose from the apparently trivial (e.g. the exposure of a plot flaw) to a passionate debate about contemporary global politics" (Dodds, 2008a, p.489), the initiation and internal process of meaning making takes on a longer journey of inter/con/textualizations, and p/re-contextualizations (Eco, 2011; Fairclough, 2003; Oddo, 2013; 2014). Thus, focusing on instances of representations, texts and interviews does not allow us to perceive *the governmental curvature* that gradually entangles, embeds and mobilizes people into a "possible field of actions" and imaginations in regards to geopolitics.

In this sense, my theoretical aim and methodological approach diverges from the three previewed fields in two respects: (1) I want to understand the daily flow of a subject within visual media convergences, and (2) analyse the *geopolitical technologies of the self* human-beings practice. Thereby, I want to understand how micro-power aligns its mentality, reasoning and truth with that of macro-power and

become a part of macro-power. In this vein, I look at the visual cultural sources of geopolitical subjecthood which develops way before human beings become an agent, a victim, and a perpetrator of international politics, and goes on to feed and colour their understanding of the world in their lives.

1.6. Studying the Convergence of Visual Culture, War and the Subject

We live in a highly visual and global age (Bleiker, 2015; Mirzoeff, 2015). Thanks to visual culture, what happens across the world can be simultaneously screened (shown, hidden and examined) and observed (seen, watched, noticed and obeyed) through different media tools. Yet this visual and global age should be understood through convergence culture, as stories are told in a diffused sense through transmedia storytelling, and as we procedurally assemble various story fragments in a continuum (Jenkins, 2006a; 2008; Rose, 2013). This is also important for studying popular culture in IR and PG as the ways geopolitical stories, such as the GWoT are told and consumed have changed as well. People experience geopolitics not as temporary instances within the remits of isolated contents, but through interrelated and consecutive procedures flowing through various media. From TV news and documentary series to films, social media sites and video games, geopolitics and war-making surround, infiltrate and intercontextualise our everyday lives.

Moreover, we do not simply consume geopolitics through top-down stories that are told by statesmen and media pundits. And no one forces us what to believe in a top-down way as well. We experience the micro, embodied dimensions of geopolitics through documentaries, films and video games on our own initiatives. This means that single-media entertainment and direct storytelling are almost vanished. Today, stories are told and the reality of narratives are augmented in diffused and multiple ways. Thus, to better understand how geopolitical stories are told, consumed and conceived, we need to multiply the methods and case studies we use as well. This can allow us to see how power operates in a diffused sense, and how everyday people entangled through it.

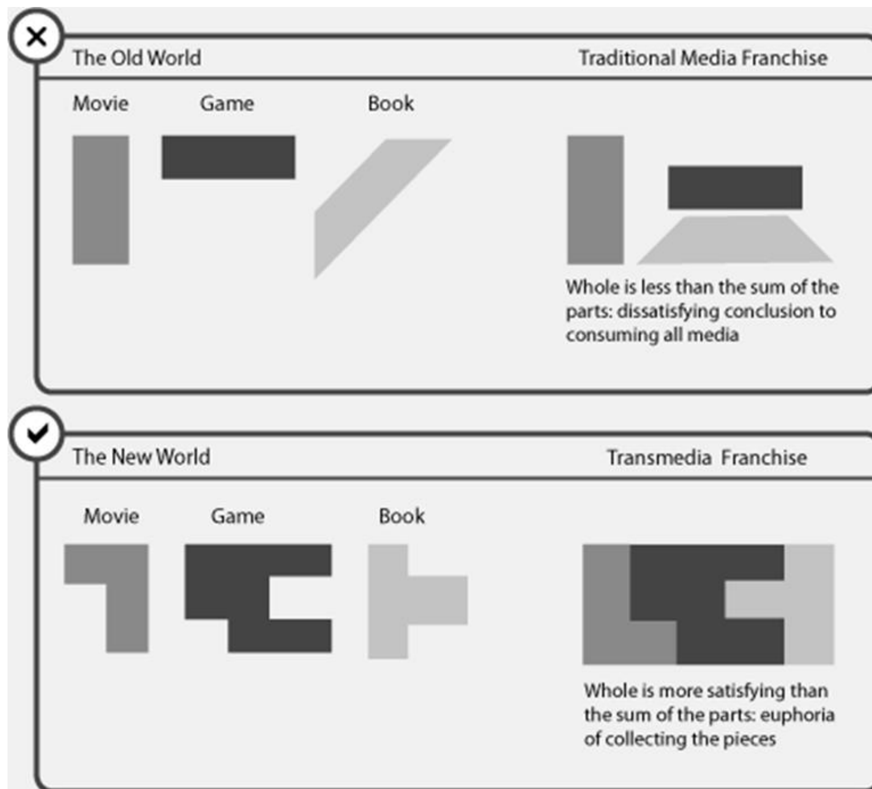

Figure 1 *Transmedia Storytelling (Source: Conducttr, 2017).*

In this sense, transmedia storytelling is a concept that captures the crux of convergence culture. It is a diffused form of storytelling taking place across multiple media platforms (Jenkins, 2006a; 2014). By disseminating the story universe to a wide range of media platforms, it aims to offer the audiences a new form of narrative experience with fragmented story pieces. Each of these pieces is expected to be cohered together through audience participation. And while each media piece functions as a standalone story experience, they all cumulatively contribute to a larger narrative. Through character backstories, flashbacks, secondary plotlines and new heroes, audiences are courted by a number of different media invitations in a continuum in their everyday lives. Moreover, as viewers practically converge fragmentary storylines and viewpoints together, they practice, embody, clone, and multiply various geopolitical experiences.

As noted by Jenkins, “a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (2006a, pp.95-96). Hence, “to fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels” (Jenkins, 2006a, p.21). And as the composition of these fragmentary story pieces depends on the participation of audiences, collecting the pieces together give a more satisfying experience, almost a sense of euphoria. This can be exemplified through Star Wars and Matrix series. While each series initially released as films, their storylines are turned into ever-

expanding universes that can be accessed and composed together through various media platforms and audience participation. As a result, committed consumers, who would like to track down further information, can consult books, comics, animations, short films, and even video games to complement their understanding.

Moreover, although there are incoherencies and gaps in those story worlds, the imperfections within popular culture do not necessarily generate problems. Some imperfections are even valuable assets for audiences who can use them as entry points for their participation into those worlds (Jenkins, 2006c). They step in and fill in these gaps through themselves and their own imaginations. In other words, the incoherencies are cohered through audience participation. The knowledge audiences gather through other referential points found in convergence culture aids them to cohere these imperfections into narrative wholes: "[t]he author introduces a character and never realises her full potential. We get a tantalising bit of backstory and it gets abandoned, and never get fully developed or integrated into the narrative" (Jenkins, 2006c, p.7) until an audience does so. Thus, we must attend to the ways the story worlds are told, felt, amalgamated with and cohered through everyday lives. For instance, recent revelations on the war crimes of US Navy SEALs show how a fictional war novel recontextualised and inspired the battlefield conducts of highly-disciplined real-life geopolitical subjects (Cole, 2017). In this sense, geopolitical subjecthood cannot be limited to discipline, training and education. Its main breeding ground should be seen in everyday cultural practices.

Also, while focusing on one medium has its own advantages, it limits our ability to perceive the overall *governmental curvature* which entangles us to an affective interpretive repertoire in regards to geopolitics as well. Hence, rather than a genre or medium based analysis (such as Bos, 2015; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008), the thesis is built upon multiple cases each focusing on a different visual cultural medium to showcase how everyday lives are enmeshed within geopolitics, and how visual culture functions as a geopolitical technology of the self which gravitates the population towards internalising certain patterns and practices under the guise of "of the people, by the people and for the people" rhetoric.

1.6.1. Methodological Opportunities

Acknowledging the various uses of visual culture for geopolitical purposes, during the last decade, both IR and PG started to produce an ever-expanding literature. From films to video games to social media sites and art installations, many forms of visual/popular culture have been analysed (Dittmer, 2010; Dodds, 2006; 2010a; 2010b; Dodds & Carter, 2011; 2014; Eken, 2016; Hughes, 2007; MacDonald, et al., 2010; Robinson, 2012a; 2012b; 2015). Yet three gaps continue to permeate this literature. First, as argued by both Dodds and Dittmer in various occasions, it is the continuing absence of audience reception approaches, which is led by a representation-focused "methodological cul-de-sac" (Dodds and Dittmer, 2008, p.453; 2013; Dodds, 2006). The attention towards the popular cultural studies in many

academic canons continue to focus either on (a) the ways in which what these mediums are representing, or (b) on the ways in which they are produced and distributed to the public. As a result, these approaches continue to remain as top-down analyses, leaving the actual actuants, the audience, everyday subjects, and their practices out of the discussion.

This is not an issue merely limited to IR and PG literatures. For instance, one of the most important methodology books on visual culture, Gillian Rose`s "Visual Methodologies", incorporated a chapter on audience studies only in its third edition. As she argues, there "is a relative lack of interest in the site of audiencing: that is, in what happens when images are encountered in the social world" (2012, p.262). Although many cultural theorists attended to the role of the audience as the *sine qua non* actuants of meaning making processes, such as Hall (1973; 1980) and Eco (1972; 1984; 1992; 2011; see also, Fiske, 1990; Hartley, et al., 2002), both IR and PG literatures have not paid enough attention to the works of these authors and incorporated them in their studies. As it will be further elaborated in the methodology chapter, both Hall`s and Eco`s works on *decoding* highlight the ways representations and discourses are actuated by the subject. This bears importance for the study of visual culture and war, in regards to understanding the emergence of the geopolitical subject, and the governmentality of geopolitics.

Second is the absence of the holistic and horizontal approaches that value people`s embeddedness into a convergence culture. Thus, since textual, representational, and discursive centric approaches analyse media contents in isolation, holistic and horizontal approaches focus on the subject and its media experiences in their continuum. As the echo chambers of convergence culture allows access and priming between various media contents via different mediums simply on-demand, an analysis referring to this embeddedness is necessary. As Jenkins (2006a, p.243) clearly put it:

> *Convergence does not depend on any specific delivery mechanism. Rather, convergence represents a paradigm shift —a move from medium-specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels, toward the increased interdependence of communications systems, toward multiple ways of accessing media content, and toward ever more complex relations between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture.*

This argument does not suggest that a holistic approach, analysing select themes and references in multiple mediums can fill the gap produced by convergence culture. Employing a horizontal approach is indeed crucial to attend to the audience`s phenomenological flows -streams of consciousness - as converged and affected through various media contents and to reveal the techniques guiding their viewing experience. Therefore, a holistic, multiple-case study approach continues to remain a vertical one unless accompanied by the employment of a horizontal one that follows the footsteps of the audience. For sure, the "audience" here is used from an autoethnographic perspective to stabilise this hypothetical audience position (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010; Bødker & Chamberlain, 2016; Dhoest, 2015;

Jones, 2008). Details and limitations of this choice is discussed in the next sections. However, before doing so, the importance of the audience in regards to convergence culture needs further elaboration:

> *Convergence does not occur through media appliances – however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers. Yet, each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information we have extracted from the ongoing flow of media around us and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives* (Jenkins, 2006b, pp.3-4).

In this regard, while vertical analyses are focusing on certain genres or mediums to extract what discourses and representations are relevant to international politics in the very instances of those popular cultural experiences, a horizontal analysis underlines the importance of the continuous and coterminous procedural flows a person can experience and cross-reference them intercontextually. Hence, what I call a horizontal approach, similar to Radway`s studies (1991), highlights a more audience-centric, phenomenological and longitudinal analysis of everyday life of geopolitics.

The primary focus on the role of the visual culture as a technology of the geopolitical self brings implications for audience studies by charting the territory between the subject and the active audience as well. While I do not intend to equate these two concepts, one thing should be underlined to deter any confusion on the understanding of the seemingly oxymoron Foucauldian concept of "free subject" (1982): neither the free subject nor the active audience refer to defiance. Power requires resistance, yet it does not necessarily indicate defiance, dissent or active opposition. People might actively support, involve, feel responsible or oppose and defy too. When Foucault explained the relationship between power and resistance, his intent was to put a distinction between enslavement and control at a distance. While the former keeps docile subjects on a short leash and maintains close control over their actions, the latter refers to providing the subjects with a field only within which they are permitted to operate freely (Deleuze, 2007, Kelly, 2010; Shannon, 2015). As Dill-Shackleford (2016) put it, a fully-aware, autonomous, active, liberated audience is unrealistic. We are not simply credulous/incredulous subjects, nor are we influenced directly by what we see. In many ways, through -neurological, social, personal, and frequent visual exposure, we are being affected by the media and we compose, relate and cohere them together. Hence, "[f]reedom of choice does not mean freedom of consequences" (p.18) and "[t]he most effective kind of propaganda is that which is not recognized as propaganda" (Kilbourne, 2012, p.27). And as Foucault put it in an interview:

> *My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper- and pessimistic – activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we should make everyday is to determine which is the main danger* (cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, pp.231-232).

In this sense, by analysing visual culture through a governmentality perspective, we can determine our everyday dangers to avoid being entangled into states` geopolitical agendas.

The third absence is related to the use of visual culture as a military education, combat cohesion and motivation tool for the population at large, including both the existing and future military personnel. Despite the fact that governmentality framework is used to analyse TV and media culture`s role in regulating good citizenship in welfare states (Ouellette & Hay, 2008a; 2008b), there is a lack of studies that deal with warfare states. The nascent interest analysing the ways in which popular culture is devised to influence childhood to increase future recruitment rates (Beier, 2011; Derby, 2015; 2016; Huntemann and Payne, 2010; Mead, 2013; Rech, 2012; 2014; Stahl, 2010) continue to lack an overarching theoretical framework. By either analysing the textual, discursive or representational themes that fit into the existing broad concepts of IR and PG, such as militarization, identity, space, place, statecraft (Bos, 2015; Huntemann & Payne, 2010), they reproduce the existing literature through different means. Nonetheless, as Thrift (2003) argues, we need to know the little things about visual experiences beyond the grasp of those aforementioned habitually academic, broad abstract concepts.

> *[T]hose working in geopolitics have, perhaps, taken this definition [of discursive] a little too literally, producing the world as discursive construction in a way which has problematic consequences for understanding how (and therefore why) geopower is actually practised. ... this exercise in literal transcription leaves out a lot of the 'little things' — 'mundane' objects like files, 'mundane' people like clerks and mundane words like 'the'—which are crucial to how the geopolitical is translated into being* (Thrift, 2000, p.380).

I argue that visual culture offers a specific entanglement which embroils subjects in a possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations through the cross-references of convergence culture`s echo chambers. Rather than exposing geopolitics, or imposing what is geopolitics, visual culture confines us in a seemingly open geopolitical enclosure and offers the practices of a select reality. Hence, by experiencing certain possibilities and constraints regarding geopolitics, subjects self-initiate themselves into the world of geopolitics and practice its select cause and effect relationships. This means by cohering our everyday lives through the multiple dimensions and referential inputs of convergence culture, we acquire phenomenological experiences through visual culture. Thus, the reason for such a methodological approach is the fact that the diffused formation, operation and structuring of governmental power of liberal democratic societies cannot be comprehended through merely vertical, disciplining, eventist or medium-centric analyses that permeate the IR and PG literatures. By focusing on the practices and the patterns recurrent in visual culture, I try to identify how those practices are patterned and how certain techniques are employed to immerse the audiences from the perspective of the subject. The details of this theoretical and methodological discussion and suggested approach will be elaborated in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 4).

1.6.2. Theoretical Opportunities

Recent turns towards popular culture both in IR and PG literatures (hereafter, popular culture and world politics as PCWP) (Adams, 2016; Behnke, 2006; Dodds, 2006; Dittmer, 2010; Gray & Dittmer, 2010; Kiersey & Neumann, 2014; Shepherd & Hamilton, 2016) paved a way for studying the relations between the everyday, the popular and the geopolitical by a re-scaling of geopolitical objects of analyses. Yet, this literature is on the cusp of a period of empirical stagnation and theoretical inertia. While much of the innovativeness of the early PCWP literature has been built upon the deployments of post-structural theories, it is hard to see the direct engagements of such theoretical frameworks in many of the contemporary studies today. This leads to various repercussions in the study of PCWP. The first is the partial understanding and deployment of theoretical arguments. The second is the decontextualized uses of concepts uprooted from their theoretical settings.

Since the early 1990s, the top-down way of analysing geopolitics was re-scaled (Shapiro, 1981; 1988; Ashley 1984; 1987; 1988; O' Tuathail and Agnew, 1992; Walker, 1993; Dodds & Sidaway, 1994; O`Tuathail, 1996; Hyndman, 2004; Fregonese, 2012). The context of the study of geopolitics shifted into new frameworks through the means of poststructural re-reading of international politics. A close look over these works reveals constant references to or applications of Foucault`s earlier works to international politics (Dodds & Sidaway, 1994, p.516). Nevertheless, after almost two decades, the same literature, which is theoretically inspired by Foucault`s earlier works, seems to have taken on a life on its own, and has carried on with the conceptual tools uprooted mainly from this early Foucauldian lexicon. However, from the early 1980s, Foucault reinvigorated his agenda, specifically to include the individual conduct of the subject. Rather than a break from his study of power, this was a new dimension (Elden, 2016; Kelly, 2010; Paras, 2006):

> *I tried to mark out three types of problem: that of truth, that of power, and that of individual conduct. These three domains of experience can be understood only in relation to each other and only with each other. What hampered me in the preceding books was to have considered the first two experiences without taking into account the third. By bringing this last experience to light, I had a guiding thread which didn't need to be justified by rhetorical methods by which one could avoid one of the three fundamental domains of experience* (Foucault, 1996, p.466).

Tellingly, Foucault`s last works, especially the *Technologies of the Self*, try to understand and document the ways in which individuals practice and align themselves with power. However, interestingly, the existing PCWP literature not only dismisses what audiences are doing or how are they practicing and actuating certain geopolitical meanings, but also limits their bibliographies with the earlier works of Foucault. While Foucault moved toward the operation of free subjects, current Foucauldian IR and PG literatures are still mostly engaging the problem of the subject with Foucault`s earlier conceptual tools

such as surveillance, biopolitics, docile bodies, disciplining, and power/knowledge. Although these terms are not outdated or useless, Foucault`s later move towards the practices of the self that fit them into a broader political grid is unavoidably important. In this regard, arguably, one of the main reasons for the absences of the subjects/the audiences from the PCWP equations derive not only from a methodological problem, but also from partial engagements with Foucault`s studies.

For instance, Mark Salter (2011), by pinpointing some of the genre-related themes, their moral cartographical features, and rules of engagement issues of game worlds, invites further analytical attention to video games. Yet, as he put it, what he deploys is a "preliminary analysis" (p.384) to video games, and his article should not be taken as a study filling the gap, but as a one underscoring the presence of a gap related to video games. For instance, he does not trace the narrative flow, nor examine the ways the players affectively merge with the game characters, but questions the possibilities of video games and their relations to concepts such as corporeality, identity, affect and experience in popular geopolitics. Moreover, although he refers to the "imaginative premeditations" (p.383) and the role of such video games as "technologies of the self" (p.362), he does not directly expound these terms through Foucault (see Foucault, 2005, p.468). Instead, he sketches out these game worlds from a somewhat techno-political conceptual framework, and concludes that "much more research is needed from both critical geopolitics and IR communities on the politics of the body and the microphysics of corporealism in virtual worlds" (p.384). His argumentation opens the possibilities of a richer theoretical and methodological engagement both with the conceptual terms and with Foucault`s later works. Thus, arguably, the current PCWP literature is overwhelmed with uprooted conceptual interventions and preliminary analyses, finding their expressions under the guise of certain turns. While all these "turns" are significant departure points, in the absence of a guiding theoretical agenda, they continue to be used as proverbial Lego toys, constantly being juggled, assembled and disassembled. Therefore, both a theoretical and a methodological "fragmented adhocracy" continue to be prevalent in these literatures (Oren, 2016; Dunne, Hansen & Wight, 2013), which I aim to cohere through *governmentality*.

1.6.3. Limitations

As with any research project, there have been a number of limitations to this thesis, each of which will be addressed throughout the chapters as they are encountered. However, in particular, there are three interlinked issues that should be addressed beforehand regarding how (1) the method, (2) empirics and (3) case selection criteria limit and support the overall theoretical aim of the thesis. While the first half of the thesis discusses the importance of the subject and theorises the role of visual culture as a technology of the self from the perspective of governmentality, in the second half of the thesis, to empirically substantiate this argument through people`s everyday visual practices, I focus on three case studies. These are films, documentaries and video games covering the mainstream US perspective of

the GWoT. Thus, despite it seems that while the front of the thesis deals with people, and the back half deals with media, the connection between them is set through practices prevalently offered to people in these media.

This choice derives from and emulates Foucault`s data sources and methods in which he examined technologies of the self in everyday practices. He substantiated his argument based on the analyses of certain cultural practices in the form of contemplations, physical and imaginary exercises, and dream interpretations he accessed through, for instance, diaries, journals, and medical texts, (1986; 1988; 2005). Based on these sources, he examined the daily practices, through which, he argued, people come to know, understand and consider themselves as subjects in relation to the wider world they inhabit. In line with this thought, I regard films, documentaries and video games as contemporary knowledge sources through which people continuously practice and reflect upon themselves and their surroundings regarding geopolitics and the GWoT. By emulating his method and data sources, thus, I analyse what people practice daily through visual culture.

Regarding recurring patterns and themes prevalent in these practices as the contemporary technologies of geopolitical self, I heuristically devise a mixed method which is incorporated through various existing analyses in the literature to be attentive to the various segments and procedural phases of the ways in which people practice geopolitics in convergence culture. Thus, the method used here is an experimental one entailing its own benefits and drawbacks. While it mitigates the reliance towards the inaccessible covert official data revealing the governmental intrusions in visual culture, it engenders certain concerns regarding subjectivity, selection bias and randomness. The selection criteria of these cases are designated by the researcher during the process and hence might entail subjectivity concerns. Although these criteria are clearly identified in Chapter Four, it should be noted that, the hypothetical audience position, selecting and interpreting these media is stabilised through my subjectivity for heuristic purposes. Thereby, neither the sample size, nor the cases involved and findings are represented as generalizable and causal factors enabling people to support the GWoT, or gravitating people to recruitment stations. Instead, through this analysis, I aim to demonstrate the conducive function of visual culture in the way it offers people certain daily practices to cultivate and promote possible selves in regards to geopolitics from a governmentality perspective.

Moreover, the mainstream US visual culture is not limited to such geopolitical themes and military practices. After all, it offers more than a warrior culture. Still, the GWoT related media genre is particularly selected as these are the sources best fitting the aims of the thesis and in which the most relevant findings can be found. This led me to choose my cases based on purposive/theoretical sampling techniques which enabled me to focus on cases those are conceptually interesting and theoretically relevant. Theoretical sampling specifies that the researcher decides which cases to look at and what data

to collect out of them based on which data will provide the most useful information to build and expand a theory. Inevitably, for practical reasons of space, also for data saturation limits, I had to limit the number of cases. It would be interesting to see whether the results would be replicated across other popular platforms such as social media and TV advertisements. Also, for thematic reasons, I did not look at any other genre, such as, romantic comedies, science fictions, and super hero series. The selections, hence, are merely based on their direct relation to the GWoT. Although there are alternative media sources critically investigating the GWoT, I wanted to focus on how the mostly available mainstream media products process key themes that propound the phenomena of the GWoT.

Lastly, images are polysemous. They carry multiple meanings that are not inherently stable. The media users decide and stabilise the meaning of images upon practice. Yet it does not mean that users are fully aware or independent in the ways they interpret media. Cultural sources they parse through and the careful anchoring techniques devised by media producers guide the interpretation processes of media users. In this sense, the procedural analysis method is specifically preferred to be attentive to such intertextual-transmedial anchoring processes in a heuristic sense. With different assemblages and through different analytical strategies, the images, texts, procedural rhetorics, affects and hence the overall meanings of these media can be decoded differently.

1.7. The Three Cases

The thesis is grounded in three case studies: documentaries, films and video games. The cases are limited to these three mediums for the constraints of space. Nevertheless, further horizontal inspections might advance the broad converging relations between various mediums. Each case revolves around various US military involvements during the GWoT and generates participatory spaces of geopolitics for the population. While documentaries frame themselves as if they are the real stories, the films offer geopolitical stories based on real events, and video games enable people to be part of those stories through direct combat situations. Thus, they tell geopolitical stories together to be converged by the viewers. The criteria for each selection will be detailed in the beginning of each chapter, yet the main selection principle is their shared patterns and convergences based on purposive/theoretical sampling techniques. In other words, I look at how they generate an overall transmedia practice in terms of geopolitics. This section briefly reviews them.

The first case study contains three documentaries, each of which focuses on a different battlefield setting of the GWoT. The first of these is *Restrepo* (2010), produced by embedded journalists, Junger and Hetherington. It films the experiences of a US Army combat team in Korengal Valley, Afghanistan. The second documentary is the fourth episode from a series produced by Discovery Channel: *Taking Fire* (2016). Similar to *Restrepo,* this one also takes place in Korengal Valley and extends our understanding of war in the valley. Moreover, unlike *Restrepo*, *Taking Fire* uses the helmet-cam footages of the soldiers

themselves. The third is the first episode of another docu-drama series aired on History Channel: *Live to Tell: Charlie Platoon and the Story of Marc Lee* (2016). This one is specifically important in regards to convergence culture, as it covers the story of Marc Lee, whom we know from the film *American Sniper*, as the close friend of Chris Kyle (see Chapter 6).

The second case involves three films. The first one is *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), a filmic representation of the long story of CIA`s Bin Laden assassination. The second one is *The Lone Survivor* (2013), which portrays the intense battle a SEAL team experienced in Korengal Valley, Afghanistan in 2005. The events covered in the film also lead the US to establish the outposts in the valley we saw in the documentaries chapter. The third film is *American Sniper* (2014). It portrays the story of Chris Kyle, who is promoted as the deadliest US sniper in the history. Each of these films is grounded on non-fiction geopolitical events that blur their fictive qualities with those of the documentaries.

The last case is about three first-person shooter (FPS) video games. Yet due to video games` long campaign modes, each case is limited to a specific episode. The first of them is *Battlefield 3 `s* (2011) first episode which takes place in Iraq and has specific resonating similarities with the film *American Sniper*. The second one is *Battlefield 4*`s *Fishing in Baku* episode. It offers a developed game-play experience with new narrative and visceral features, and immerses the player into a new warzone in the Caucasus. The last FPS game is *Medal of Honor: Warfighters*`s (2012) first episode where we embody a SEAL. As the game is developed through the support of ex-SEAL team members, the game is marketed as a way to experience what is it like to be a soldier fighting in the front lines. In each gameplay, at certain moments, the player unintentionally reacts to dodge bullets and other elements, thus the lines between the player, the avatar, and combat zones blur. Hence, they do not only transform geopolitical strife into interactive fun, but also transpose roles, meanings, and subjectivities of people.

The main rationale behind these choices is driven by four main reasons. First, all these media forms frame themselves as either direct narratives, non-fictive stories, or real-war experiences from the combat zones. They purport to offer/translate war experience in its raw, embodied form without the top-down, political and strategic complexities of it. Second, their focus on the daily hardships of US combat soldiers in the frontlines, where they not only fight, but also bleed and cry, enable the audience to see and embody personal stakes of geopolitics through the narratives, bodies and feelings of US soldiers. Third, each medium offers war experience as a daily apolitical activity, as an embodied self-survival practice, hence as a technology of the self. Fourth, with their converging cross-references, each documentary allows the viewers to complement their understanding of war with a new embodiment and narrative layer. Hence, the viewers can horizontally experience and reason about war by following in the footsteps of the combatants, by embodying their stakes, and by enjoying their guns and gears.

Nevertheless, I argue that this seemingly depoliticised ground-level uncomplexity is itself political as it turns war into a personal survival issue for the population in the homefront, bringing it above politics and ordinary procedures. Stripping war from its wider geopolitical causes and effects, reducing it to US soldiers` personal stakes, the mainstream US visual culture renders war as a natural phenomenon caused by inscrutable, asocial, unfeeling enemies and fought by sentient, vulnerable citizen-soldiers, as though the US was caught in the cross-fire of geopolitics despite its best intentions. Thus, rather than exposing what war is, or rather than overtly imposing a certain view of war, they encase the viewing of war in an echo chamber, wherein the population practices war as a technology of the self, to render war as a personally relatable issue of everyday life. Hence, I argue that the mainstream US visual culture structures the possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations of the population through a visceral enclosure. Therefore, self-initiated into geopolitics through those technologies, the selves learn to intuit and reason in the way that the state does.

Overall, each case study is visually, narratively and affectively analysed to document the various dimensions a subject gradually processes and showcase the homogenization of experience in five stages. First their production background and paratextual features are analysed to show the discrepancy in between their purported objectivity claims and political/institutional support they have. Second, their beginning sequences are analysed to identify the initial stages used to immerse the audience by disabling the reflexive mode of the viewer (Pötzsch, 2012). Third, thematic and visual contents are detailed to show the common tropes in each medium. Fourth, affective impacts are analysed to instantiate the embodied impacts in the viewer from an autoethnographic perspective. As I cannot purely extract and "introspect the reasons [the] other actors" (O`Mahoney, 2015) are affected through interviews (Bos, 2015), the concept of the audience/viewer/reader is interchangeably used with my subjectivity to stabilise the hypothetical audience position (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010; Bødker & Chamberlain, 2016; Dhoest, 2015; Jones, 2008). To extract the affective data, I note the sensations I felt and record my facial expressions during the engagements. In this vein, I use affective excerpts of my own body as they are manifested in my face, as an archive/repository of affect. For sure, this is an experimental approach, entailing various limitations, devised only to acknowledge the role of affect as a layer during visual cultural interactions. Lastly, sequences of events are analysed to show how the events are presented in a certain way that composes a certain cause and effect relationship. In other words, adducing of events in a certain line urges the viewers to deduce a certain relationship between them. Hence, while the viewers are not told what to think, marshalling of events in a certain pattern encourages the viewers to reason along the way the events are organised.

Analyses are compared and cumulatively discussed at the end of each chapter. The crux of this approach is about the possibilities of a horizontal approach that enables us to reveal the various procedures a subject goes through convergence culture pertaining to geopolitical vision. Hence, the aim is to

demonstrate the horizontal tracks through which we procedurally (Bogost, 2008) amass inferences as a *lector in fabula* (Eco, 2011). In other words, the purpose is to observe what does "a reader do" in geopolitical "stories". Following detecting such traces and tracks set through visual culture, it will be argued that these embodied thematic convergences structure what Foucault calls "the grid of intelligibility" of governmentality (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983) that we self-initiate ourselves into.

1.8. Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is organised in eight chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter elaborates on the existing body of studies in critical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, critical military studies and visual culture. The third chapter discusses the theoretical framework I employ and argues that visual culture is an enclosure. The fourth chapter introduces the methodological framework and develops a specific method to analyse the theoretical aspect of my thesis. The fifth chapter is on documentaries as a non-fiction visual initiation into the GWoT culture. The sixth chapter is on films, which are based on real GWoT events, and showcases a further distortion between fiction and non-fiction. The seventh chapter is on FPS video games and documents how through interactive games people can participate geopolitics. The concluding chapter summarises the overall findings, methods and arguments of the thesis.

Overall, the aim of this thesis is to show how various mediums of visual culture offer a composite narrative whole on the GWoT in which a free subject takes various self-initiated inferential walks. While the viewers are free to choose what they watch or play, the limits and ranges of their choices are restricted with the given options and delimited with the set tracks of experiences. This does not only entangle or encase them into certain geopolitical feedback loopholes as credulous docile bodies, but also enables them to procedurally make their so-called own meanings of the GWoT on their own initiatives as free subjects. As a result, this thesis provides an interdisciplinary framework to perceive the ways in which free geopolitical subjectivities are procured and hijacked through the use of visual culture.

2. Charting the Field

This research project owes its main theoretical and conceptual framework to the discussions situated in critical geopolitics, critical military studies and cultural studies. This chapter illustrates the main tenets of these literatures and relates them to the overall aim of the research project. In the first section, critical geopolitics and its relations with visual culture and the population will be illustrated. The second section introduces the main queries of popular geopolitics, a sub-field of critical geopolitics, and its recent engagement with the audience. Next, the nascent field of critical military studies and its focus on agency and embodiment in regards to war will be set out. The fourth section outlines Der Derian`s MIME-NET, Stahl`s Militainment, and return to the issue of the subject through contemporary military training regimes.

The fifth section draws on Foucault`s last works and outlines the existing applications of Foucauldian approaches in Visual Culture and the limitations of those approaches. The sixth section documents the conceptual turns focusing on the subject, affects and emotion in IR and PG literatures. The seventh section outlines the narrative turn with regards to metaphors, myths and lay theories. The eighth section illustrates the relations between intertextuality, recontextualization and composite narratives with regards to the "turns" discussed in earlier sections. The following section is devoted to Eco and his ideas on *Lector in Fabula.* Lastly, the final section, outlines the composite relations between these studies to turn the focus to my own approach to visual culture.

2.1. Critical Geopolitics & Visual Culture

In this section, I outline the nexus between Critical Geopolitics and Visual Culture to relate it to the central argument of the thesis that visits visual culture as a tool of governmentality. Critical Geopolitics offers us new analytical departure points to look at everyday life and visual culture as sites of world politics. It considers geopolitics not simply as a top-down decision making process, but also as a bottom-up process, whereby people have a say, especially in liberal democratic societies, such as the US. Yet the process mostly does not work like that. Although people are endowed with rights, some use them to stand against the conduct of geopolitics, while some others actively support and even participate in certain modes of geopolitics.

In this sense, critical geopolitics acknowledges that the actuants of geopolitics are not limited to policy makers, or to counter-conducting subjects. Although mostly inconspicuous, everyday people have active roles in the operation of geopolitics, and we cannot take their participation for granted as if they are simply opponents, victims or cogs in the states` war machines. Either as volunteers manning the

weapons of war, or as peers and parents, lovers and partners supporting their beloved ones in their militaristic decisions, or as children daydreaming their combat experiences, or as some regular people arguing the necessity of certain geopolitical actions in their social settings/media sites, everyday people participate in and run geopolitics itself. In other words, geopolitics, as a social conduct, runs through everyday life and runs on everyday people. In the absence of such participation of the everyday, geopolitics becomes socially unsustainable. Therefore, a compulsory education system that emerged during the 18th century in Europe is used to qualify, cohere and increase the vital participation of the population to geopolitics (Posen, 1993).

This also relates us to the internationally pressing issue of populism. Recent discussions pertaining to media`s role on populism and its foreign policy implications are important aspects of this conduct (Cross, 2007; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Krämer, 2014). As Chryssogelos put it, "populist foreign policies at the very least reflect a preoccupation with popular sovereignty and unmediated projection of popular demands outside of established processes of global governance" (2017). And visual culture, similar to 18th century education system can instil a sense of belligerence to a foreign population, ill-dispositioned towards an Other, and reflect such mediated/simulated foreign policy accounts as unmediated popular demands. In this vein, critical geopolitics affords us a valuable framework to understand the relations between everyday people, populism, media and war-making.

Until the emergence of Critical Geopolitics in the 1980s, traditional geopolitical theories were mainly about statehood, strategic interests, military build-up, and the geographical positions of nation-states. Such geopolitical theories shared a similar realist point of view with international relations (O`Tuathail, 1996, p.17). As O`Tuathail argues, `geopolitics`, as a twentieth century coinage, "was intimately connected with the belligerent dramas of that century ... describe[ing] the geographical base of the state, its natural endowment and resources" (O`Tuathail, 2006, p.1; Holdar, 1992).

However, geopolitical space includes human reality itself, since geopolitical ways of thinking are also shaped by the imaginations envisaged by discourses. Consistently, as Mitchell reminds us, the term `idea` etymologically derives from the Greek verb `to see`, which is also "frequently linked with the notion of the `eidolon`, `the visible image`, that is fundamental to ancient optics and theories of perception (Mitchell, 1987, p.5; MacDonald, Hughes, & Dodds, 2010). In this vein, our ideas are not simply rational choices of which we objectively think and calculate, they are also mental imageries inferenced from our various cultural resources. As such;

> *To study geopolitics we must study discourse, which can be defined as the representational practices by which cultures creatively constitute meaningful worlds. ... [M]ost cultures do this by means of stories (narratives) and images. Since geopolitics is a discourse with distinctive "world" constitutive ambitions –it seeks to make "world politics" meaningful – we must be attentive to the ways in which global space is labelled, metaphors are deployed,*

and visual images are used in this process of making stories and constructing images of world politics (O`Tuathail, 2006, p.1).

In this vein, as "[o]ur seeing is already a writing (i.e. a cultural frame working) of the world" and as "we are all embedded in cultural ways of seeing and constructing" (O`Tuathail, 2006, p.6) this world, "[t]he term `visuality` is used to denote vision as something that is always culturally mediated" (Hughes, 2007, p.978). Visualising something does not occur in a straight line, it comes with an already mediated baggage of ideas. This is why the visualization of international political events not only enables, but also disables certain perceptions; provides certain probabilities and knowledge frameworks; and lays premises to act upon. Moreover, visuality has also another specific role directly related to positionality of subjectivities. Through interfering in what we see, it posits the observer into certain international political identities by way of certain knowledges and belongings that bear out a sense of `us vs. the other`, `civilized vs. uncivilized`, `developed vs. underdeveloped` can be practised. As a result, arguably, visuality clones a form of reality as well. Thus, "geopolitics and visual culture have become co-constitutive" (MacDonald, Hughes & Dodds, 2010, p.2), in today`s highly visual world politics.

Accordingly, most of the people in the world "learn about foreign affairs through the media" (Dodds, 2005, p.73). In the absence of such mediums, lay people would mostly stay incognizant of the world events. Especially in the Western democracies, political actions should resonate with the populace more as the issue of consent is significantly important in the political decision making processes. This is the reason why `manufacturing their consent` through popular media is important, and hence popular geopolitics is focused on the ways in which lay understandings of geopolitical issues are mediated. "Television coverage (and the large corporations which dominate global broadcasting) often unwittingly follows or helps to shape the foreign policy agendas of powerful states such as the USA, France, Russia and the UK" (ibid.). While, on the one hand, this can be regarded as an emancipatory and democratizing possibility for everyday people, on the other, as noted by Carne Ross "government is an information machine" (The War You Don`t See, 2010; Pilger, 2014) and media tools provides the state new tools to totalize the view of the population through specific vantage points.

Thus, recent studies associating geopolitics and visual culture have brought about an important critical development in geopolitical theory and methods (Bleiker, 2015; Campbell, 2007; Dodds & Carter, 2014; Hughes, 2007). As described earlier, geopolitics cannot be discussed merely as an elite political activity influenced by the physical realities of geography, which exist out there in the real world. Rather, physical reality is itself inscribed with social and cultural symbols. This means that physical reality is what we make of it through our human world, which is historically inherited and culturally embedded. Hence, neither physical reality as such, nor visual images we see are not completely indistinct from mental images we have. As Anain Nin puts it, "we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are" (1961,

p.124). Therefore, how we perceive the world actually is not independent of our positionalities, contextualities, cultural representations, perspectives and concepts.

Furthermore, the mental images influencing how we see are not fixed as well as our identity, and we do not simply extract fixed meanings from what we see. As "vision is a skilled cultural practice" (Jencks, 1995) we always practice and acquire certain skills to see culturally what is (not) there. For instance, in terms of geopolitics, we also practice and develop certain visual skills to acquire geopolitical knowledge. Colin Powell's presentation to the UN Security Council on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is illustrative (Saugmann et al., 2015). In 5 February 2003, prior to the invasion of Iraq by the US, Powell made a presentation in the UN, which was broadcasted live on media. His aim was to assure people on the existence of Iraq`s WMD program and hence to justify the US invasion via a particular `ocularcentricist`[5] discourse.

Whereas seeing from above historically was the privilege of decision makers (Adey et al., 2013), to prove the existence of WMDs in Iraq and the necessity of the US conduct unfolding in a certain way, Powell shared these geopolitical rights with the people in the UN - and the global population -, and showed several satellite imageries. As everyday people were previously not privy to such images of the world, initially, the pictures Powell showed could not mean more than a truck and a bunker for their unskilled eyes. However, as Powell cultured people about witnessing geopolitical *facts* and details *existing* in the images, we started/tried to see from his vantage point and contextual position for ourselves. The way Powell takes charge, pinpoints and defines, acutely relates and refers to the small details in the imageries aided people to see what was NOT there:

> *The two arrows indicate the presence of sure signs that the bunkers are storing chemical munitions ... the truck you ... see is a signature item. It`s a decontamination vehicle in case something goes wrong* (Powell, 2003).

As a result, albeit we could not make of anything of those images initially on our own, owing to his guidance, gradually a threat formation took shape. Powell`s instructions geopolitically trained and educed uninitiated eyes/Is to see what is (*not*) there. As he initiated us into geopolitics and walked us through these satellite photographs, we re-practiced our geopolitical skills of seeing. Hence, that truck and the bunker started to appear as indicators of WMDs. Therefore, his pointing of the slides with significant poise and certainty allowed the US to clone a vision of geopolitics. He allowed our eyes/Is to be aligned with those of the US satellites and geopolitical decision-makers. We were not only looking at the same photographs but also seeing and extracting them in the same way. The threat was there, and

[5] The term "`[o]cularcentrism`, refers to the privileging of vision at the expense of all other sensory modes in Western modernity" (Hughes, 2007, p.980). Introduced by O`Tuathail (1996) to geopolitics, the concept elaborates and historicizes the importance of vision and imagination nexus in strategic thinking by virtue of maps.

it must be neutralised by violence. Hence, the aim of manufacturing domestic and international consent to provide the support for the invasion of Iraq, as the land of the imminent threat to the civilized West was realised through cloning Powell`s/Power`s vision. After years of geopolitical violence instigated by this ill-defined visualisation of security concerns, his initial confidence on the existence of the so-called `facts`, `conclusions` and WMDs in Iraq were proved to be wrong. Nonetheless, his self-assured ways in which the population is endowed/practiced with certain geopolitical ways of seeing, referencing and meaning making ill-equipped the population, and paved the way for the US to concoct Iraq as a threat (Saugmann et al., 2015).

This example can be related to a couple of important relationships regarding international relations, visuality and geopolitics. First, it reveals how visual images can be used to conjure up geopolitical narratives and mental imageries to act upon. Second, in terms of procedural rhetoric (Bogost, 2008) and convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006a), it exemplifies how the ways we see are procedurally developed through intertextual aids derived from various media sources (Oddo, 2014). Third, it can be related to the illiberal practices of liberal societies (Bigo & Tsoukala, 2008) through Eco`s work on "open text" (Eco, 1992). As argued by Eco, open texts permit different interpretations, while closed texts constrain the ways in which readers participate and interpret the stories. In this sense, Powell`s UN presentation can instantiate the closed geopolitical texts of open societies. His UN presentation should not be taken as a stand-alone activity instructing viewers to see a threat. Both before and after his presentation, many other media outlets supplemented the viewers (Oddo, 2013) with the *acknowledged* way of interpreting those images. As a result, they converged and primed the viewers to look in a certain way, and to see certain details in the images Powell showed. Thus, open societies` (Popper, 2013) possibilities of seeing geopolitics were "closed" through a seemingly open and visible access provided by convergence culture.

As a result, throughout history, particular ways of seeing the world were regarded as a privilege for decision makers. By seeing from certain extracorporeal vantage points, particular political actions seemed clearer and prompted them to readily decide what to do (Mirzoeff, 2015). However, with the advent of new communication tools everyday people started to be endowed with similar extracorporeal vantage points as well. The layman has been enabled to see the bigger picture too. While, on the one hand, this can be regarded as an emancipatory and democratizing possibility for everyday people, on the other, it provided the state with new tools to standardise the view of the population through specific vantage points. In this vein, while compulsory education was once used for the viability of a specific geopolitics, now visual culture and entertainment industry could function in the same way by standardising and channelling perspectives (Mead, 2013).

By enabling the population to see from the eyes of the state/warrior, such activities instil a practical understanding of state practices to the population. A referential framework to understand state activities appears. In this regard, a new modality, a new technology of the self, begins to take shape through visual culture. This new visual technology of the self enables the population to practice, embody, observe, experience and emote the world through designated vantage points and pathways. Thus, rather than dictating the subject, but by walking it through, or by enabling it to walk in the shoes of certain geopolitical subjectivities, visual culture turns into a form of personal geopolitical guide/aide.

2.2. Popular Geopolitics & The Subject

Popular Geopolitics, as a sub-field of critical geopolitics, focuses on the relations between popular culture and world politics. Regarding popular cultural mediums as one of the ways in which world politics is manifested and understood, popular geopolitics directs its attention to everyday people`s engagements with geopolitics through the site of popular culture. Although it is mostly driven by a PG literature, IR`s engagement with popular culture is not so different. Hence the section will refer to those studies together under the broader framework of PCWP and focus on its use of the subject.

Thanks to various popular culture mediums, including films (Amoore, 2007; Behnke, 2006; Dodds, 2006; 2010; 2015; Carter & Dodds 2011), video games (Bos, 2015; Ciută, 2016; Power, 2007; Robinson, 2012a; 2012b; 2015), TV shows (Clapton & Shepherd, 2016) and cartoons (Dittmer, 2005; 2012), everyday people not only entertain themselves, but also connect themselves to certain themes and metaphors used in the operation of world politics. This is important as there are metalepses, continuums, and transgressions between the fictional and the real, between the seemingly civic domain of everyday and geopolitics (Burrill, 2016; Klimek & Kukkonen, 2011). Paraphrasing Eco, through popular culture, people can take strolls outside their lives in and through world politics to aid their understanding in relation to each other. Differently put, they complement their understanding about each other with the aid the other domains provide when the existent one does not (Strathern, 1992).

Also, such transgressions are valued by the US military, and many of them have been devised by the Pentagon. To extend the reach of military recruiters the Pentagon has significantly used video games, Hollywood films, documentary shows and social media (Beier, 2011; Mead, 2013; Robb, 2004; Sirota, 2011). The famous `Beverly Hills Summit` between Karl Rove and the representatives of the entertainment industry took place to discuss if Hollywood can help the upcoming GWoT`s ability to communicate with the people (Dodds, 2015, Mead, 2013; Stockwell, 2005). As it will be a social conduct, entailing bodies and willing subjects, the war needed be communicated with the population to extract its resources. They had to believe in the necessity of war, their role in it, and their desire to be part of it needed to be stoked.

As mentioned, the academic response to these convergences and connections between war-making, geopolitics and popular culture has been very fruitful during the last two decades (Dodds, 2015). PCWP literature has experienced an exponential growth by studying the textual, discursive and representative contents of popular culture to expose the relations between popular and geopolitical culture (Müller, 2013). However, this scholarly focus mostly revolved around the analysis of popular cultural texts, discourses and representations (Dittmer & Gray, 2010). What this entails, while studying the obvious contents of popular culture, we miss "the little things" (Thrift, 2000), the micro processes in and through which people make their own meanings and incorporate their power for geopolitics.

In other words, people are not passive subjects; rather they are active participants of meaning-making processes. Specifically, Hall (1973; 1980) and Eco`s (1974; 1978, 1992; 1993; 2011) works underline the importance of people as the actuants of meaning making. When people encounter with a representation, watch a film or play a video game, they do not absorb what is there as it is. They actively observe, decode, refer and infer meanings. They aid their understanding through other means. Hence, if people are not passive objects, in order to understand their role in world politics we need to attend to their internal active meaning-making processes in different ways. Put simply, popular culture has a role to bridge people into geopolitics. Yet what is the role of people themselves in popular culture (Eco, 1978)? In this vein, despite the developments pertaining the role of pop culture in geopolitics, the role of people themselves in popular culture is underanalysed. To go beyond that, the existing mainstream focus of PCWP studies on discourses, texts and representations needs to be developed to include the ways in which audiences receive, decode, infer and refer the messages they encounter. Noticing the absence of the audience in their studies, especially in recent years, a group of scholars started to develop new approaches in PCWP studies.

> *An overarching theme of the history of popular geopolitics has been a concern over geopolitical representation and discourse, which is only now beginning to shift towards audience interpretation, consumption and attachment. This shift in focus parallels a similar move in cultural studies made several years prior* (Dittmer & Dodds, 2008, p.437).

One of the earliest examples of this more audience centric approach is Dodds` study on James Bond films and the comments made by audiences in the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB). By analysing such internet forums and discussions, Dodds points out what PCWP studies deserted, and also what possibilities the PCWP literature can have by working more diligently on audience dispositions, receptions and fandom identities. Thanks to this seminal work, Dittmer and Dodds continue to explore new engagements with audience reception, consumption and attachments, by deploying interviews with audiences and content analyses of internet discussions, and argue that although geopolitical spaces and topologies are manifested in representations and discourses of popular culture, they are being animated by the constituency of audience power (2008; 2013).

On the other hand, two important studies brought forward similar contributions to the literature. By providing a holistic approach to the study of video games, Payne (2016) attempts to examine the junctures between the military-entertainment complex and gameplays, and argues that "a game does not have to explicitly reproduce our world to comment on it" (2016, p.5). Referring to Jenkins` arguments on convergence culture, he extends his analysis to "what players *do* with shooters before, during and after gameplay" (p.15). Although his approach takes its cues from an audience-oriented approach, by arguing that "media pleasures are experienced subjectively, but they are produced socially" (p.18), he moves towards a framework regarding military shooters as texts, social plays as contexts, and marketing as their paratexts. Hence, his focus is inherently limited to game studies, and not directly related to PCWP. Moreover, as opposed to the aims of my research project, he exclusively analyses FPS video games without using the tools of affective turn and analysing the thematic permeations brought about by convergence culture.

Another similar study is Bos` (2015) study on Call of Duty FPS games. He also argues that popular geopolitics has a fixation on representations and discourses, and provides a more holistic framework by bringing the audience to the equations of popular geopolitical approaches. Analysing not only the sites of production, or representation and texts, he contends that relating these sites to the sites of audiencing benefits the way we understand popular geopolitics. Hence his project brings multi-sites of popular cultural meaning-making processes together. However, despite commonalities, his holistic framework that comparatively studies the sites of audiencing with the sites of production and marketing, and texts varies from this project`s theoretical and methodological foci.

For instance, whereas I locate my work into a Foucauldian understanding of governmentality and the subject, which is informed by various cultural theorists, he moves his work through popular geopolitics with a tripartite focus on production, marketing and audiencing. Second, while his case study entails a single-medium, mine entails various means of convergence culture. Third, whereas he uses video ethnographic analyses to record his interviews and play moments with his research participants, I devise an autoethnographic model. Both models have their own advantages. For instance, while ethnographic approach can deduce its results from interviews, autoethnographic approach reduces the sample into the researchers` own subjectivity and embodiment. Hence, while the former`s samples are limited with what can be extracted from the interviewees in specific times and settings, the latter`s is limited with its own elongated analytic contemplation processes (Rose, 2011, p.279; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2003, p.1).

Thus, not only the absence of the audience, but also the ways in which it becomes a geopolitical subject, continues to exist in the study of PCWP. In the next section, by introducing a nascent field, Critical

Military Studies, and its questioning over agency, the relations in regards to audiencing, subjecthood and agency in IR and PG studies will be sketched out.

2.3. Critical Military Studies & Agency

Thanks to recent turns in social sciences, certain taken-for-granted conceptualizations regarding the military and the ways in which it operates through bodies, experiences and practices started to be questioned in various academic circles. As mentioned in earlier sections, while audience dispositions, receptions, consumptions and attachments were left to lie fallow in PCWP literatures until recently, a similar absence surrounding military power was also existent. Given the huge investments made by governments to calculate and channel the militarization of populations, recruitment of soldiers and entrainings of volunteers in order to administer the state`s overall capability to make wars possible at the social level, the relative disinterest of the scholarly works towards this social aspect of war-making was particularly striking. Put differently, the literature`s analyses on the subjugation practices of the issue of war has never been at a level commensurate with the extreme interests of governments in administering to the soul of the population, or its "conduct of the conduct" for the purpose of war-making. Instead, as Sylvester argued, "to date, much of IR has been operating comfortably in a world of theoretical abstractions – states, systems, power balances, stakeholders, decision-makers, peace, war – tacitly leaving people and war to journalists, novelists, memoirists, relief workers, anthropologists, women's studies and social history to flesh out" (Sylvester, 2012, p.483-484).

Thus, Critical Military Studies (CMS) questions "how military power operates, how it has come to work in the ways it does, and what its limits might be" (Basham et al., 2015, p.2). Hence, taking its cues especially from the works of feminist IR scholars (Managhan, 2012; Sylvester, 2010; 2013; 2015), CMS questions the way the military power operates, from differing approaches enabled by the recent turns in IR and PG studies. Among some of the most influential of those turns include the aesthetic (Bleiker, 2001; Shapiro, 2014), affective (Åhäll & Gregory, 2015; Connolly, 2002; Thompson & Hoggett, 2012), narrative (Roberts, 2006; Sugunami, 2008), and visual (Bleiker, 2015; Callahan, 2015).

The relevance of these turns in regards to the shaping of CMS literature derives from the fact that military institutions, policies, subjectivities, agencies, representation, and victimizations constituted a general framework to apply those diverse series of conceptual turns in IR. In other words, the continuous engagement between IR and social theory provides new frameworks of analysis for both of these domains. Yet under the influence of a wide variety of conceptual turns, IR was moving in diverse directions. The emergence of a direction towards CMS literature enabled this diversity of focuses and turns to be applied into an overall framework. Moreover, while bodies, corporealities and agencies of military personnel and militarism started to construct the new loci of attention of IR studies (McSorley, 2012; 2013), military geographers argued for the importance of a geographically informed CMS

literature (Rech et al., 2015). Hence, CMS, as part of an ongoing questioning of IR and PG studies, paves our way to develop new frameworks and to scrutinize the taken-for-granted relationships between various concepts, processes, and practices. Thus, the framework I propose has significantly benefited from the emergence of this literature.

2.4. MIME-NET, Militainment & the Subject

2.4.1. MIME-NET & Mimetic War

Der Derian has been an influential figure in IR studies during the last decades. His work on the military, industrial, media and entertainment complex ushered in new perspectives in the studies of IR. Through his "virtual theory … for understanding and challenging the power of an all-too-real matrix, the MIME-NET" (2009, p.218), he maps out the complex relations behind IR. Accordingly, thanks to a software-driven revolution in military affairs, the nature of battlefields is virtualized. As the lines between the virtual and the real blurs, so do the distinctive lines specifically between war-making and entertainment. Reminding us of the arguments of Jenkins, he argues for the thematic and mimetic convergences and permeations between war, military, entertainment technology and media (Jenkins, 2006a; 2008). Therefore, thanks to a diverse media environment, a new war can inspire new movies, or movies, in turn, can inspire video games.

> *In the manner of Hollywood follow-up movies, many games have been updated and expanded at least once. Indeed some are based on movies and TV series, and the opposite is also true. As the number of computers used in every field of life grew, the borders separating entertainment from `serious` gaming and `serious` gaming from war became increasingly fuzzy* (Van Creveld, 2013, p.262)

However, convergence culture is not only related to remediations of certain themes across different media sites. As a complementary culture, "convergence represents a shift in cultural logic, whereby consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections between dispersed media content. … Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers" (Jenkins, 2006a, p.3). For instance, while I can play another format of the same game in another medium, or watch the film version of a non-fiction event, I also converge and recontextualize the messages and procedures in and across these channels. A complementary term to understand convergence culture is recontextualization, referring to "the dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context [...] to another (Linell, 1998, p.194). For instance, soldiers in battlefronts can stimulate themselves by playing popular narratives of war-making and international politics. As noted by Power (2007), even some real soldiers imagine themselves as if they are playing a video game during a firefight to morally situate themselves. Recent revelations on the war crimes of US Navy SEALs uncover how they inflicted unnecessary violence under the inspiration of a novel (Cole, 2017). These extremely well-

trained Tier-1 units are expected to exercise great restraint in combat environments. Yet the revelations expose the ways in which a fictional war novel motivated, inspired and conducted the conduct of them in the real combat environment.

Hence, the sandbox environment provided to the player, or the combat zone environment to the soldier can serve as a complementary settings and inspiration for the subject. Both theatres of wars can complement, refer and inconspicuously blend in each other. As a result, soldiers, audiences and players might even embody a film or video game character in the battlefield, or compare their experiences. Similarly, Fairclough refers to recontextualizations between various types of discourses, such as genres, as interdiscursivity. By following similar representational and experiential threads through chains of genres, various texts, and contexts, meanings gradually start to co-produce and depend on each other (Fairclough, 2003). Another related term in this regard is precontextualization. It refers to texts that "introduce[s] and predict[s] elements of a symbolic event that is yet to unfold" (Oddo, 2013; 2014, p.74). Illustrating this through Powell`s UN address, Oddo argues that by precontextualizing his messages on the night before its delivery, journalists "enacted a supportive context" (2013, p.26), whereby people could liaise with and complement their understanding of his messages.

Thus, although Der Derian maps out the ways in which this network functions at the techno-bureaucratic level, the population per se is missing in his theory. In other words, as there is neither agency, nor the population in his theory, his arguments revolve around a disembodied, state-centric, techno-corporate and bureaucratic entanglement. Who are the real subjects of this virtual matrix? Who mans and activates these vehicles? It cannot be argued that MIME-NET is a completely unmanned solution to the problem of war. If this military-industrial-media-entertainment complex simulates an "all-too-real matrix" of warfare, how does this network stimulate and incorporate the population and the bodies to run itself at the social level? Thus, to understand the ways in which the population is immersed and incorporated into this MIMETIC network (Der Derian, 2009), we must delve into the ways in which human beings are turned into subjects of MIME-NET. Therefore, understanding the role of convergence culture can provide us the tools needed to tap into this absent dimension of MIME-NET.

2.4.2. Militainment and the Subject

Roger Stahl`s work, *Militainment, Inc.*, (2010) furthers Der Derian`s approach through focusing on the militarization of the entertainment network. By doing so, he attempts to provide an overall approach in regards to how war today has been turned into an entertainment vehicle that not only invites but also welcomes audiences as interactive geopolitical participants through a variety of media channels. In this regard, his approach has similarities to that of this research project. By analysing a variety of media channels, he also contends the importance of a holistic approach. However, whereas his approach provides a more conceptual framework, enabling us to see how war and entertainment has become

entangled and how as a whole it militarizes us, it does so without tapping onto the affective and subjective dimensions. On the other hand, as opposed to his approach, my major question revolves around the constitution of a geopolitical subjectivity including its affective dimensions, through a theoretical framework inspired by Foucault. To further what I mean by this affective and subjective dimension, in what follows, I will outline the literature on military training.

2.4.3. Military Training & Automatization of Military Subjects

Until recently, the military used to be a concept taken for granted as an automatized, disembodied, and asocial fighting machine. However, following years of war, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, a further interest has recently emerged to understand the various dimensions of military, society, war-making, and agency. Pertaining to the aim of this thesis, below, I will outline this re-emergent literature on military training, combat cohesion and the production of willing fighter subjects for the military. It shows us the ways in which capillary power is enacted in military institutions through practice and simulation based training regimens. By illustrating how war-making, procurement of soldier subjectivities, and training them to be willing fighters are seriously engaged topics in this military literature, I aim to underline the importance of the subject and its relation to visual culture.

S.L.A. Marshall, in his much debated and provocative work, *Men Against Fire* (1947), argued that in WWII, fewer than 15-25% of soldiers fired their weapons (Grossman, 2008; Engen, 2008). Although he initially "explained the poor performance of American rifleman partly by reference to the morals of Western culture" (King, 2015, p.12) as a weakness, after conducting interviews with experienced combatants, he declared that all soldiers, as a general principle, has a natural reluctance to kill (Grossman, 2008, Engen, 2009; King, 2013; 2015; Williams, 1994). Despite his controversial claims, approaches and data, King argues that the anomaly deducted by Marshall was true and striking, at least as evidenced on Makin Island fight on 20-23 November 1943:

> *On the Makin Islands, US defensive positions were directly assaulted by Japanese troops. In this situation, it might have been thought that American soldiers had to defend themselves or be killed by their assailants. However, even on the Makin Islands, only thirty-six men of the 3rd Battalion, 165th Infantry Regiment fired at the enemy. Marshall records how the dead Japanese troops were found in front of those few American positions occupied by willing fighters* (King, 2013, p.45).

These findings significantly influenced the upper-echelons of the US military and altered the way the military trained combatants forever (Engen, 2008; Williams, 1994; Marshall, 1988). Thanks to the training changes Marshall initiated, following WWII, a steep increase in the firing rates was reported. While it was barely above of 15 percent during WWII, it increased to 50 percent in the Korean War, and to a 95 percent in Vietnam War (Dyer, 2006; Grossman, 2008; King, 2013). Hence, the number of willing fighter subjects was significantly increased.

As Grossman states, a resistance to killing has been documented over the centuries in all types of warfare. Although killing at a distance seemingly sanitized the culpability of soldiers and made it easier for them to kill,, the resistance to killing in modern warfare continues (Molloy & Grossman, 2007; Grossman, 2008). Hence, rather than sanitization, the real issue has been achieved through desensitization processes. To overcome "the reality of combat performance among citizen soldiers" (King, 2013, p.48), the military utilized social learning and conditioning-type techniques based on simulators to prevent troops to break down and succumb to trauma during or following combat.

> *The introduction of training simulators changed history. [...] The army`s first simulators used "simulated people or silhouettes as targets, and 75-80 percent of the killing on the modern battlefield is a direct result of training with simulators. There are three things you need in order to shoot and kill effectively and efficiently. [...] The gun, the skill, and the will. Of these three factors, the military knows that the killing simulators take care of two out of three by nurturing both the skill and the will to kill a fellow human being. Improved technology now allows the military and the police to train on computer simulators—to learn how to shoot, where to shoot, how to maneuver through possibly deadly combat situations, how to tell enemy from friend, and, most important, how to kill. The entire event of killing in combat can now be simulated by a computer. The primary value of this simulation is in developing the will to kill by repeatedly rehearsing the act until it feels natural* (Grossman, 2014, pp.92-94).

Correspondingly, as argued by Protevi, in order to train and "micro-manage" the killing ability of future soldiers;

> *"Contemporary military training cuts subjectivities out of the loop so that most soldiers` bodies are able to temporarily withstand the stress of the act of killing. The first aspect is affective: soldiers are acculturated to dehumanize the enemy by a series of racial slurs. ... At the same time as the group subject is constituted, the act of killing is rhetorically sterilized by euphemisms"* (Protevi, 2013, p.133).

Hence, these acculturation processes are designed to desensitise and inoculate future soldiers to the horrors of combat through dehumanisation, euphemism and simulation (Bull, 2004; Fennell, 2011; Griffith, 1989; Halliday, 2011; Moreman, 2013). In this sense, instead of blaming training simulations and visual cultural practices for sanitizing the issue of killing for the soldiers, they should be understood as desensitization tools. This means, although many forms of bodily effects of war are displaced from mainstream TV programs, military trainings do not hide them. They acutely show the gruesome details of combat-zones to desensitize and to prime soldierly subjectivities. Moreover, as will be exemplified in case studies, killing and the bodily effects of combat are not hidden from view in the entertainment industry (Eken, 2017) as well. Hence, the discussions over the sanitization of war needs

to be developed in a more nuanced way. Yet, pertaining to the training of soldiers two further issues should be mentioned.

The first is the governmentality of the modern battlefield environment, or the micro-governance of soldiers at a distance. Stemming from the necessities of changing battlefield environments, states had to find new ways of conducting the conduct of military personnel in combat situations. While earlier, the existence of clear troop lines, trenches and stable firing positions were enabling commanders to discipline, punish and surveil their soldiers during combat activity, today`s battlefields necessitate more reliable, self-initiating, agile and willing fighters. In this sense, Foucault`s early analysis on military power needs to be challenged. In *Discipline and Punish* while Foucault suggested that through drills and surveillance military replaced the self with the automaton, this argument does not answer the dualism between the "deep individuation and increasingly local autonomy of action" required from soldiers and their ordered "passive dependence upon authority" (Smith, 2008).

Following Smith (2008), I argue that a late governmentality approach would enable us to understand the military power`s capillary sources. "In contrast to the corpus on discipline", explanatory framework of governmentality and later Foucault "has a stronger and more pluralist emphasis on social control at a distance through norms and ground rules that shape efforts at self-regulation by individuals and groups" (2008, p.287). However, as mentioned earlier, this governmentality approach should be considered through *technologies of the self* conceptualisation as it allows us to relate the training regimes of soldiers, including mental visualizations, battle inoculation, desensitization, and drilling to the issue. Simply put, such simulation-based visual drills do not turn civilians into automaton-soldiers. Rather, by practising them, enlisted soldiers gradually instil certain muscle memories into their bodies and also acquire a certain military logic allowing them to reason on their own initiative in combat zones.

In this sense, how do soldiers and yet-to-be-soldier civilians take care of themselves in terms of military logic? How and why do they volunteer, and allow the institutions to imbue their bodies? How and why do they enrol in SOF selections and withstand months-long deadly courses? Such questions entail the incorporation of *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988) to understand the introspectional and extrospectional dimensions and practices designed to be applied by human beings to turn themselves into military subjectivities. In this sense, apart from visual culture, book markets around the world are also replete with military autobiographies and self-help books, specifically written by ex-SOF operators (Bonner, 2015; Gallagher, 2016) offering combatant advise to civilians to apply should a need occurs. In this sense, such practices can be regarded as the recommended technologies of the self both for the military and civilian populations to conduct themselves physically and mentally. In *Hermeneutics of the Subject,* Foucault mentions a similar Stoic practice: *preameditatio malorum* (2005):

> *The function of the ... exercise, is to provide man with the equipment of true discourse on which he will be able to call for aid, for assistance (the logos boithos), should the need arise and an event occur that might, if he is insufficiently attentive, be thought an evil, but which is just an episode in the natural and necessary order of things. One should then equip oneself with true discourse, and this is precisely the meaning of the premeditation of evils. Actually, the Stoics say, a man who is suddenly surprised by an event is really at risk of finding himself in a weak position if he is not prepared for it and the surprise is great. This man does not have the discourse aid available to him, the discourse-recourse that would enable him to react properly, not letting himself be disturbed and remaining master Of himself. In the absence of this equipment he will be permeable to the event, so to speak. The event will enter his soul and disturb and affect it, etcetera. Thus he will be in a passive State with regard to the event. We must therefore be prepared for the events that occur, we must be prepared for evils (p.469).*

Similarly, an ex-SEAL veteran, Cade Courtley`s book, "*SEAL Survival Guide: A Navy SEAL`s Secrets to Surviving*" is telling. Written for civilians so that they can apply SEAL skills and knowledge in everyday contingencies, he recommends two sets of training to its readers: physical training regimes and visualisations for corporal and mental readiness. He contends that apart from physical training, SEALs also practice visualisations by contemplating on possible emergency situations. This allows them a sense of mental clarification to execute necessary tasks. In other words, as if making their own movies in their minds, soldiers are recommended to mentally visualise themselves in certain situations. He argues that through mentally preparing and conditioning the self, people can also rehearse their moves and encounters, and "make the unknown familiar" (Courtley, 2012, p.%8).

> *Physical training is critical to developing the right mindset but, once the skills have been learnt, performance can be improved by purely mental techniques of visualization and attitudinal conditioning. Visualization of combat techniques improves execution by sensitizing individual response to external cues and ingraining reactions physiologically; it has been proven to increase sporting performance. Visualization might perhaps be seen as the individual equivalent of the rehearsal process in which individual soldiers run through a sequence of actions in their own minds in order to expedite their subsequent performance of these actions* (King, 2013, p.325).

As a result, in order to make soldiers readily do what they need to do in such situations, they need to be properly trained. Yet to augment this training, apart from physical practices, they need to make themselves imagine in various combat situations, as "only knowing almost from rote what to do, can men carry out their tasks come what may" (Fehrenbach, 1963, p.246). Thus, the roles of both physical and mental training and imagining are "central to combat performance" (King, 2013, p.266).

Through repeated training, professional soldiers develop a common set of drills which they are able to reproduce instinctively and without recourse to contemplation, discussion, and extensive coordination in combat. Through training, drills become automatic not just for the individual but for the platoon as a whole. Having trained for long periods together, shared drills become deeply ingrained; soldiers are united around common practice and are finely tuned to even small cues from their colleagues. The shared experience of past training induces common and instinctive responses from these troops when they are on operations (King, 2013, p.272).

For instance, as will be seen in the films chapter, in *The Lone Survivor*, combatants experience "condition black" in which they are physically and mentally inundated. Yet they will be seen repeating certain tasks almost by rote that were inculcated into them through training. Thus, physical and mental training are central for the cohesion and the conduct of military power in its capillary level (Smith, 2008). Yet as Grossman argues: "now these simulators are in our homes—in the form of violent video games" and films (Grossman, 2014, p.94; 2016). Therefore, on one hand, through training, soldiers physically, socially, mentally, visually, and affectively turn themselves into inoculated combatant subjectivities and initiate themselves into the grid-system of military forces. On the other hand, through books, films, documentaries and video games, entertainment culture allows civilians to vicariously practice such training regiments and simulations in their civilian settings as well (Grossman, 2016). Arguably, visual culture also provides a set of relations, pathways, and everyday practices in the form of mental visualisations for the population to connect itself to the military and geopolitics.

2.5. Governmentality & Technologies of the Self

As Gros contends "Foucault does not abandon politics to dedicate himself to ethics, but *complicates* the study of governmentalities through the exploration of the care of the self" (2005, p.512). In that respect, the concept of *governmentality* emerged not as part of a diversion, but as part of a more complicated involvement with the micro-level operation of power (Elden, 2016). By governmentality, Foucault specifically refers to a problem of governance of free subjects at a distance (1982). Accordingly, since the 18th century, the steep growth in the number of people living and moving upon the vast territories of nation-states emerged as an issue of governance. The irregularities, peculiarities and precarities of their movements and actions could destabilise the governance of territorial states. Hence, for stable governance, "[t]he model of the city became the matrix for the regulations that apply to a whole state" (Foucault, 1996, p.336).

The emergence of statistics was one way of doing so. It allowed states to calculate, design and forecast certain flows, trends and fluctuations regarding the population. However, the population was composed of free subjects and their micro-regulations were beyond the practical reach of bureaucratic governance. How could human beings, the capillary sources of power, be governed at a distance, without direct

intrusion? A new understanding of power, beyond direct control, was needed to solve this problem at the level of the subject, without causing harm to the idea of their freedom. This means, they need to be feeling free while operating within the limits of a certain liberty, without anyone overtly forcing them to conduct themselves in certain ways. By acting on a common knowledge, by participating to a society, they were acknowledging and adopting to live through a "possible field of actions" (Foucault, 1982, p.221).

> *Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint)* (Foucault, 1982, p.790).

Hence, what were the possibilities that a human being can have, move, operate, realise and even imagine? Could these, although to a degree, be stabilised and governed at a distance? By synchronising people`s mentalities with that of the state, and by keeping the idea of freedom uninterrupted, can people be governed without the need for coercion? For this logic, people could be governed at a distance by setting the standardised legal, material, social, political and economic tracks they can follow. In this way, while feeling free, people could be institutionalised, socialised and hence normalised through common procedures.

Therefore, subjects could be allowed to be free to the degree of the leeway they are offered within set highways (Deleuze, 2007). As a result, this can be likened to the use of roads, train tracks and other substructures built by the state as grid-systems to embed, source, and organise the flow of the population (Khalili, 2017). Once embedded to the limitations of certain grid-systems, people could only benefit from the seemingly limitless possibilities of the leeways of conduct enabled to them. Put differently, power turns the world, the infinite field of actions, into a finite field where possible moves and actions are institutionally permitted. In this way, power becomes a diffused organisation working over and through the productivity of free subjects. Hence, power does not only negate and restrict, but also enables and permits. As in the understanding of *laissez-faire state*, power allocates and grants safe passages as well. However, outside the perimeter of those designated sites, outside the realm of regulated procedures, action is deemed unlawful. Through such proceduralisations, over the long haul, people are expected to come to terms with the designated flow of the world.

For instance, from certain ways of going from home to the workplace, to international movement, to democratic elections, to wayfinding in public places, options are prescribed, carefully designed, and regulated. Another example can be given from sandbox video games. Purportedly, this genre of video games allows players a seemingly unlimited field of operations. Yet, the player is only freer compared

to other video games, and only free within the limits of the game design. Over the long haul, these procesures and practices become the norm and people follow suit.

In his earlier studies, Foucault visited a similar issue through the analogy of panopticon. Accordingly, in *Discipline* & *Punish,* he argued that Bentham`s prison design was analogous to the emerging rationality that permeates the modern governing strategies of states from the 18th century onwards. Accordingly, people were being disciplined and punished, traced and tracked, hence policed and governed through certain surveillance rationalities. From barracks to prisons, to factories and classrooms, people were placed into a visible range, and a panoptic, all-seeing central eye was reigning supreme over their internal thoughts and external behaviours. While the surveilling body *per se* was invisible and central, in contrast, surveilled bodies were visible, vulnerable and diffused in front of the central authority figure, whereby they were rendered docile. Thanks to this new spatial setting, people`s behaviour was gradually being tamed by the fear of a power, which is able to orchestrate large segments of population through its constant, central and all-seeing surveillance ability. In this way, subjects could enjoy a freedom within the limits of an invisible confinement while incospicuously and obliviously being governed (Stern et al., 2015).

Yet, one problem was still hovering above this understanding of power: How and why were flocks of people enabling themselves to be governed in certain ways? This line of thought brought Foucault to the idea of four major types of technologies that are mostly working together: (1) Technologies of production, (2) sign systems, (3) power, and (4) the self (Foucault, 1988, p.18). Yet as he contends specifically in *Technologies of the Self*, of all these technologies mentioned, governmentality is first and foremost related to the very "contact between technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (ibid., p.19). Power does "not exist prior to an interactive relationship. Rather, for Foucault, it was the subject, more specifically the construction of human beings into subjects" (Fuery & Wagner, 2003, p.1).

In this regard, as introduced in the earlier chapter, governmentality is directly related to governance in ways that selves apply certain practices on themselves on their own (Kelly, 2010). Fittingly, technologies of the self taken as practices that "permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom perfection, or immortality" (Fuery & Wagner, 2003, p.18). This is a significant definition for understanding how visual culture can be regarded not only as a tool of entertainment, but also as technologies of sign systems, governance and as technologies of the self. As visual culture offers people certain ways of conducting, comporting, and contemplating themselves through given templates, although to a degree, it can enable and constrain their limits of possibilities.

2.6. Foucault & Visual Culture

Despite Foucault`s paramount impact on the humanities and social sciences (Packer, 2012), "the overwhelming privilege afforded to *Discipline and Punish* in secondary literature — obscures" (Collier, 2009, p.78), the understanding of his later works. The effects of this is evident both in IR and PG and also visual cultural studies (see Mirzoeff, 2015; Rawlinson, 2009; Rose, 2012). In this vein, three examples from visual culture textbooks are telling in the way they limit Foucauldian understanding of power to *panopticon*, *surveillance*, *discipline* and *docile bodies*.

For instance, Rose argues that the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse can be applied to visual culture (2011, p. 190). To her, "for visual matters, perhaps the key text is *Discipline and Punish*" (ibid., p.228). While still important, Foucault`s earlier conceptual tools leave us with an understanding that seeks an external power effect that produces subjectivities (Kelly, 2010). Similar to Rose, Rawlinson uses early Foucauldian approaches to analyse crime and mugshot visuals as well (2009). Hence, arguably, visual culture literature continues to limit the application of Foucault to visual studies with discipline, surveillance and coercion. However, Foucault`s later work has a lot to offer to understand visual culture as a productive power tool that individuals apply to themselves to conduct themselves.

In this sense, Fuery and Wagner`s application of Foucault differs from such approaches (2003). By "relating [governmentality] to visual cultures, [they] use Foucault's notion of power to mark the shift in subjectivity from an uncritical and unaware spectating position to a conscious and self-reflexive positioning with respect to an image" (ibid., p.7). Although I do not necessarily argue that the image can shift the subjectivity from an uncritical one to a self-conscious one, their application of governmentality to visual culture is important to show its applicability.

Following their use, I regard visual cultural media as technologies of the self that is enabled by the technology of power. As Bennett (1992; 1995) reminds us, "through cultural forms and processes the conduct of individuals and populations alike could be shaped and groomed by governing institutions and agents" (Packer, 2012, p.15). For instance, the emergence of museums (Bennett, 1992; 1995), teaching of literacy (Hunter, 1988), the Cold War-era`s switch-side debating practices (Greened and Hicks, 2005), all "became a technology for what Nikolas Rose (1999) has termed governing souls" (Packer, 2012, p.16). Arguably, such practices allow states to standardise and monopolise subjective "worlds" and "views" of daily experiences with the institutionalised "reality" of the nation-states (Boltanski, 2014).

Hence, looking at these cultural practices through a late governmentality approach allows us to move "beyond the tracing of circulation as a measure of a medium's effectivity. Rather, it acknowledges media or culture as technologies of governance, and not simply as a text or product imbued with meaning, and acknowledges that institutions try to accomplish goals through the use of media as technologies for governance" (Packer, 2012, p.16). In that sense, Ouellette and Hay`s studies on the role of television as

a technology of self-actualisation (2008a; 2008b) and governmentality tool in welfare states show us how such lifestyle programming offers templates for individuals to govern their lives. They argue that by processing those templates, people refer to themselves through certain knowledges. On the other hand, while the relations between governmentality, good citizenship and media are studied in terms of welfare states (Ouellette& Hay 2008a; 2008b), the links between media and citizen-soldiership in warfare states have not been examined through governmentality.

2.7. Audience, Affects and Emotions

As mentioned, two conceptually akin concepts, the audience and the subject, are mostly overlooked both in IR and PG literatures (Dodds, 2006; Dittmer and Dodds, 2008; 2013), and in cultural theory (Rose, 2011, pp.261-262). The increasing interest on affect and emotions enables us to invest further effort to understand the deeper processes regarding the operation of these concepts. However, such an interest aiming to understand the inner-dimensions through which people feel a sense of belonging and attachment to the macro-power should be informed and analysed beyond the confines of top-down approaches. As Paras reminds us, fittingly, Foucault`s "migration away from the concept of discipline", just after the publication of the *Discipline and Punish*, "toward[s] an understanding of individualization that was rooted less in practices of domination than in auto-initiated practices of limiting and restraint" (2006, p.102) permits us to combine the studies examining these concepts and turns.

In this sense, the advent of affective and corporeal turns, aiming to understand the non-representational aspects of subjects, brought about new methodological challenges for IR and PG studies (Vuori et al., 2015). The new conceptual tools brought by the affective turn, unlike the tangibility of previous ones, are attempting to investigate the unseen forces which are sensationally transcending bodies at prediscursive levels. This problem mainly derives from the impalpable nature of new objects under analyses, namely, affect, feeling and emotion.

To clear out the confusion, Massumi (2002) argues that affects are prediscursive reactions felt within the body. In other words, affect can be described as the inarticulable biochemical reactions of the body to an event, whereas emotions are recognizable and articulable emotional signifiers within discourse (Mutlu, 2012). As can be seen in the below chart, the main difference between affect and emotion derives from their articulability within discursive structures. Although this is still a fuzzy distinction to be agreed upon, it will be adopted for clarity during the research.

Affect:	Emotion:

• Biochemical • Pre-discursive • Pre-personal • Visceral resonances • Inarticulable within discourse	• Sociolinguistic • Discursive • Personal • Expressed feelings
Corresponding	Implications
• Twitches/Unintentional bodily movements • Changes of face colour • Increase/decrease of blood pressure • Body temperature • Sweating • Butterflies in the stomach • Shivers down the spine/Goosebumps	• Happiness • Joy • Sadness • Anger • Rage • Hate • Pain • Fear

Figure 2 *The differences between affect and emotion. (Source: Adapted from the work of Mutlu (2012b, p.144).*

On the other hand, a close reading of IR and PG literatures on affect (Anderson and Ash, 2015; Ash, 2010; 2013; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Ash and Gallacher, 2011; 2014; 2015; Carter and McCormack, 2006; Dittmer, 2010; Hall, 2015; Mutlu, 2013; Power, 2007; Holland and Solomon, 2014) reveals the challenge of a substantial methodology reaching beyond representational and discursive analyses. While some works are locating affect as a top-down production of power, or a way of controlling biopolitics (Anderson, 2011a; 2011b; 2012; 2015; Adey & Anderson, 2011), others continue to regard it as a visually present, discursively articulable non-representational dimension in politics (Carter & McCormack, 2006; Holland and Solomon, 2014).

For instance, in their recent article Holland and Solomon (2014) try to introduce a framework for the correlated analysis of affect, culture and discourse in IR. However, without touching upon the crucial prediscursivity of affect, they try to engage these concepts through deploying a discursive analysis. In other words, they deploy a discursive analysis to understand the implications of a prediscursive concept. Carter and McCormack, in their article on affect in war films (2006), attempt to pinpoint the corporal dimensions of war films through certain scenes. Despite the valuable contributions of these works on affect, they reveal the ongoing search for extracting affective data from media. Hence, such methods are partly similar to what Irit Rogoff calls "the good eye" (1998, p.17) as they are "not methodologically explicit but which nevertheless produces a specific way of" (Rose, 2012, p.52) describing affect. They thus devise a kind of "visual connoisseurship" (Ibid.) to extract affect in these films. As a result,

questions such as, “what and where is affect” or “who is affected specifically by what and how” remain to be addressed and analysed in these works. In this regard, it can be argued that, by and large, IR and PG literature on affect studies mostly deploy preliminary interpretive analyses on films, newsreels, and discourses, and hence fall short of demonstrating the prediscursively generative role of affect within subjects. While Bos` study (2016) demonstrates a new possibility through ethnographic field work, as he contends, it is hard to extract what a researcher wants in terms of affect through interviews. This means, rather than looking at scenes and representations, an embodied approach focusing on the moments affects emerge within the body should be prioritised. Ash`s studies in regards to affect and materiality provide fertile grounds in this sense. In their co-authored piece, Ash and Gallagher (2014) propose an approach for embodied research to understand how an embodied understanding of affect can be studied by focusing on the experience of the subject itself.

Likewise, by acknowledging affects as the significant visceral components of human subjectivity, in this research, I analyse the affective experiences and practices of the subject through visual culture as well. To specify further, what I am interested in is to analyse the ways in which an individual personally practices a designed experience and how it proceeds within the conduits of power. Katherine Isbister`s recent work on movement and games offers a fresh horizon for the study of affect in visual culture in this regard (2016). She argues that game designers are increasingly working to produce and extract certain emotional and affective sensations amongst players through designing certain consecutive procedures (Isbister, 2016). By going through certain procedures and making certain bodily movements, players are expected to move by the gameplay as well, and in turn, affectively invest in storylines. Thus, to extract the affective dimensions of a visual interaction, a researcher should actively engage with those procedures, and explain how, why, where and through what affects emerge.

2.8. Myths, Metaphors and Lay Theories

Affect and emotions are also related to stories as they are relayed and felt through them. As Jonathan Gottschall refers through Tolstoy, art is an infection as “stories have a unique ability to infect minds with ideas and attitudes that spread contagiously as hosts who spread the infection through our social networks and help create epidemics” (Gottschall, 2013a, para.7). For instance, while watching a film, our brains work as though we are a part of it (Gallese & Guerra, 2012; Hasson et al., 2008; Hven, 2017). “The brain doesn’t look like a spectator, it looks more like a participant in the action. When Clint Eastwood is angry on screen, the viewers’ brains look angry too; when the scene is sad, the viewers’ brains also look sad” (Gottschall, 2013b, para.7). In this sense, affects and emotions should be understood in the way they are experienced through stories too.

This is important as we make sense of the world around us by stories. They are told to entertain, explain and persuade. Swarming with metaphors and emotions, they move and affect us in many layers

(Snaevarr, 2009). And they have their particular roles in IR too. Despite far from being prevailing concepts in use, narratives, myths and metaphors have recently started to be used in various studies in IR. Weber`s work on films and her use of myths (2011), Marks` use of metaphors in IR theory (2011), Wibben`s work on the use of narratives and metaphors in their relations to security (2014) are among the first ones in the field of IR. While Weber approaches myths through Barthes` definition, Marks uses the concept of metaphors in the same way Weber uses myths, and both operationalize these terms to teach IR theory. Similarly, Wibben uses the concept of metaphor through citing various narrative approaches in the discipline as well. By particularly drawing on Cox` famous meta-theoretical argument, "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (1981, p.128), she argues the importance of the ways in which global politics and policy options are framed and narrated.

Yet, there is another role of these concepts in relation to our usage of them through visual culture. As Strathern puts it, "culture consists in the way analogies are drawn between things, in the way certain thoughts are used to think others. Culture consists of the images which make imaginations possible, in the media with which we mediate experience (Strathern, 1992, p.33). In that regard, culture is already a blend of different ways of construing and cueing other things, and as it echoes Jenkins` (2006) argument on convergence culture, we always understand things in relation to others. "All the artefacts we make and the relationships we enter into have in that sense `cultural` consequences, for they give form and shape to the way we think about other artefacts, other relationships" (Strathern, ibid.).

Thus, how does a lay-person understand international relations through those metaphoric interventions? How does a lay-person connect, refer and infer such images, metaphors and myths in construing the meanings and reasonings of geopolitical actions and imaginations? If IR theories are wrought with metaphorical interventions for pedagogical reasons, and even if IR scholars are understanding the theories of IR through metaphors, what about everyday people? What kind of metaphors and myths are weaving their world of geopolitical meanings together and how do they engage with them?

Technologies of the self is ultimately a concept that enables us to understand the ways in which laypeople apply certain practices, connect certain dots, and reach to certain conclusions. In that regard, walking through the visual cultural environments of people enables us to practice their practices, to trace the mythic, metaphoric, and visual themes they are exposed to, and even experience the elements that are designed to move them affectively. In this vein, Eco`s work on *The Role of the Reader* can be a beneficial tool to further investigate what lay people do, practice and experience. In other words, by designing a methodological framework, we can analyse the horizontal ways, experiences and affects designed for the application of everyday people as technologies of the self. To elaborate on this, in the next section, I will outline Eco`s work on the role of the reader.

2.9. Umberto Eco & "*The Reader in the Story*"

Although the English version of Eco`s famous book is titled as "The Role of the Reader" (1984), its Italian counterpart goes with "Lector in Fabula", which means, "the reader in the story". It also has a special meaning related to a common saying in Italian: "lupus in fabula", meaning the wolf in the story. It can be translated into English as "speaking of the devil", which is used "when the person you were talking about appears unexpectedly" (CDO, 2016). By such a playful pun, Eco refers to the inner-meaning making world of the reader when it encounters with itself in the story. Thus, he highlights the inevitable existence of a reader in every story (Eco, 1994).

According to him, when we read a book, watch a film, or listen to a story, we unconsciously activate our own story world and memories. It is an interpretative repertoire combined with various expectations, preferences, references and inferences we acquired through our individual and collective experiences. As a result, we blend ourselves and our very personal dimensions into stories, and stories become meaningful through what we have stored and activate in our minds. By doing that, not only do we identify ourselves with the hero in the story, or with one of the characters in the narrative, but we also start to fill in the inconspicuous gaps in between the lines left by the author, with our own resources. We begin to walk in these fictional woods in the shoes of the character we vicariously embody. And a shared story world ownership comes to existence. The author does not die. Rather, we, as readers, begin to co-author the stories as though they are our own. As Eco argues, texts are ultimately written by skipping some details. "Every text, after all, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work" (Eco, 1994, p.6). The author chooses what to write and what to leave aside, by imagining and authorizing a model reader that is able to connect them in certain ways.

> *To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them* (Eco, 1984, p.7).

Meaning, in this vein, is not a direct result of a text per se. Just as "ideas don't come out of thin air" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp.10-11), conclusions do not simply and instantly occur to us as well. Thanks to certain procedurally occurring rhetorical processes that walk us through, we take strolls inside and outside the texts, and meanings gradually, inferentially and intertextually come into shape in our minds. Put differently, stories do not force us to believe, we believe them through our own procedural rhetorical collaborations. A number of examples can illustrate how such intertextualities, inferential walks and interpretative repertoires serve as cognitive frameworks to conduct international politics in various levels. As Cannon (1991, p.127) and Gibson (1994, p.266; 268-69) note, for instance, Ronald Reagan

was eager to use films as a cognitive framework to understand international politics. Similarly, American soldiers frequently refer to video games, films and novels before the missions or during firefights to encourage themselves (Cole, 2017; Power, 2007). As Satia (2008) contends, intelligence gathering efforts of British spies in the early 20th century Middle East were also driven by gut-feelings and their imaginations were affecting the empire`s policy decisions. And today such hunches alert US soldiers, policy makers and everyday people too. Simply put, the facts and fiction framing geopolitics are blurred for the people who are making and running it.

> *Psychologists have been studying the hunches that alert US soldiers in Iraq to danger. They have found that the much-cited "gut instinct" is a kind of hyperempirical ability: through long experience, the soldier is able to process sensory observations emotionally before he or she is conscious of what the brain has registered. […] But it is worth recalling that the danger they face is the result of hunches with a much weaker basis in reality – intelligence failures now commonly seen as the product of "groupthink" in the US intelligence establishment* (Satia, 2009, para.1).

Similarly,

> *[t]oday, the facts and fiction of the spy business are blurring, with important consequences for intelligence policy. In the past two decades, the Spytainment industry has skyrocketed. Government over-classification has continued to keep vital and timely public information about U.S. intelligence agencies out of the public domain. And Political Science professors have been busy researching and teaching about seemingly everything except intelligence. The results are serious. As the nonpartisan, expert Intelligence Science Board concluded in a 2006 report, spy-themed entertainment has become adult education. American citizens are steeped in misperceptions about what intelligence agencies actually do, and misplaced expectations about how well they can do it. Perhaps even more disturbing, evidence suggests that policymakers—from cadets at West Point to senators on the Intelligence Committee to Supreme Court Justices—are referencing fake spies to formulate and implement real intelligence policies* (Zegart, 2010, p.600).

This is also closely related to what is meant by a holistic and horizontal approach in the prior chapter. Holistic and horizontal approach refers to a specific focus on the intertextual journeys and *inferential walks* of audiences as they travel through the means of convergence culture. In that regard, a holistic and horizontal approach can enable the researcher to enact similar routes with that of the everyday reader of visual culture about geopolitics.

Readers do not read and absorb the texts as they appear on the surface of pages. Rather, they associate various elements, harness the support of other metaphors, texts, images and experiences, and hence construe meanings through various resources in a relatively free way. While, according to Eco, the role of the author is to lay the tracks and to invite the reader to follow, in turn, the reader, as a free subject,

is the one to accept the offer whether to follow a certain lead. What is critical here is that these readings and walkthroughs do not necessarily function directly, or in upwards and downwards directions. The reader, the free subject, can take different walks through other mediums as well. This means, there are always oppositional possibilities that can inform the subject to negotiate and refuse the text. However, the role of convergence culture is critical in the making of meanings, and in the taking of inferential walks. The patterns recurring in convergence culture breeds a repertoire to sustain the referential world of the readers. For this reason, a research aiming to analyse visual culture from an audience centric point of view, should take this horizontal dimension into consideration, before prioritising the chances of a defying audience. People, rather operate through multiple dimensions, and the researcher should be aware of those various horizontal journeys and inferential walks that are enabled to the subject.

As such, thanks to the convergences, visual culture, today, can embed various analogies, themes and motifs in more than one medium, and diffuse its messages in a vast variety of texts. This, in turn, means that convergence culture enables a sort of context, an affective interpretative repertoire, with which people can liaise with during their inferential walks. Hence such diffusions and convergences are also able to "structure the possible field of" geopolitical actions and imaginations for the population. Thus, in regards to geopolitics, the concept of inferential walks has various intersections with convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006a; 2008), procedural rhetoric (Bogost, 2007) and governmentality (Foucault, 2008), which will be explicated in the following chapter.

2.10. Conclusion

This research project aims to analyse the governmentalization of the population through visual culture during the GWoT. By delving into the visual cultural processes, from the vantage point of the subject, it empirically tracks the visual, narrative and affective practices and experiences with which the population is endowed. In this regard, this research argues that the convergences between various media channels and international politics entangle the population into an affective interpretative repertoire, or a composite narrative in regards to the GWoT.

To do so, this chapter sought to address the main tenets of the literatures which are brought together for the aims of this project. From critical geopolitics to critical military studies, all these literatures acknowledge the value of popular cultures, visuality and everyday people. Yet, the chapter showed that "the subjects", "audiences", "doers" of geopolitics are still underanalysed within these literatures. Considering everyday practices furnished with particular geopolitical tools and experiences through visual culture, I demonstrated how the use of governmentality literature would be beneficial for understanding the ways in which human beings turn themselves into geopolitically accultured subjects.

3. Visual Drills, Narrative Infrastructures and the GWoT

Every story bends the world, however slightly. All the people who hear it, and all the people who share it, create a tiny impression. That impression draws people together, and under the right circumstances, creates a community. A tiny culture of shared values, beliefs, and passions. Through these tiny acts, stories create connections.
(Munchy, 2017, para.1)

In September 1954, the US Information Service (USIS) decided to attend to the First Damascus International Exposition in Syria. The aim was to exhibit the American technical and cultural superiority to Cold War rivals and audiences with their new visual entertainment media: Cinerama. It was a panoramic widescreen projection and sound technology, "the remote ancestor of today's three-dimensional surround-sound IMAX format" (Martin, 2015, p.65). By using free Cinerama screenings Americans were planning to awe and inspire and win the hearts and minds of Syrians. To achieve this goal, the audience had to be fully immersed into and enchanted by the screening. Yet after watching Cinerama for some time, some spectators felt disturbed and tried to leave the theatre, only to find out that they were not allowed to leave. According to USIS` policy, theatre doors had to be kept locked throughout the shows to prevent any distraction. One of the spectator`s answer to the person blocking his path to the exit door is telling: "I want to leave. Did you invite us to watch Cinerama or to enter prison?" (Al-Tighilbi, 1954, p.13).

Likewise, can we also be living in a "cineramatic prison"? In this chapter, to elaborate the theoretical dimension of the thesis, I advance the argument that the mainstream US visual culture produces a new confinement regime and show the wider theoretical implications of this, in terms of war, state making and the formation of the geopolitical subject. Briefly, visual culture does not impose or expose a reality, but encloses people into certain ways of observing the world and international politics. Paraphrasing Foucault, this invisibly restricting visual regime structures the possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations of the population. By offering people to observe the international through seemingly a multiple-choice environment, visual culture plays a key role in diffusing the ways in which geopolitics is told, narrated, and understood. Thus, recognising that power resides in social practices and is manifest in the recurring patterns that shape and govern them, this research probes the relations between war-making, geopolitics, and visual culture.

In what follows, I elaborate how this seemingly open, visual confinement regime and its visual drills have social logistical roles for geopolitics in four steps. First, I describe what I mean by visual confinement and composite narratives, and relate these to the general framework of this project. Second, I elaborate what I mean by this confinement through narrative infrastructures and their logistical roles for the states. Third, I discuss how Eco` concept of *inferential walks* (1994) is related to narrative infrastructures and show how they are interfered with media through the analogy of epistemicide and monodominance[6]. Fourth, by relating these inferential walks to visual cultural practices and to Foucault`s *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1988), I show how subjects practice geopolitics in their everyday lives through visual drills and initiate themselves into certain forms of geopolitical narratives.

3.1. Visual Confinement

I argue that the omnipresence of visual culture advanced a new confinement regime, which is seemingly transparent and self-evident, yet reminiscent of total institutions. As Mirzoeff argues, "today`s ubiquitous networked digital screens [...] appear to offer unlimited freedom but are [offering] carefully controlled and filtered views of the world" (2015, p.15). Therefore, whereas in disciplinary societies citizens and soldiers are forced, disciplined and trained through drills, now in control societies they are invited to conduct those drills through visual culture to transform themselves within the entertaining omnipresence of visual mediums. These offered visual drills can be regarded as the new technologies of the self, and societies of control can be analytically understood through governmentality approach. Although this new regime of confinement is often attributed to Deleuze, he himself cited Foucault (Deleuze, 1992; 2007) as the originator of this thought. Therefore, by this argument, I am continuing my theoretical alignment with Foucault`s last works.

As discussed earlier, with the rise of the population as a dynamic diversity, a new control regime started to emerge from the 18th century in Europe. This new regime, disciplinary societies, were sorting the population into segments, confining people in different spaces, and training them with various disciplinary techniques. Hence, with the utilisation of different spaces of confinement and institutional practices, varying from prisons to schools, hospitals and military institutions, people were being moulded into wieldy subjects. However, from the early 1980s, Foucault added a new layer to his argument through *pastoral power* and *technologies of the self,* to underline those who came to recognise themselves as individuals` self-subjecti(vati)on processes (Foucault, 1988; Kelly, 2010; 2014; Paras, 2006; Turner, 2003; 2010). His initial approach instigated through institutionally enforced practices

[6] Monodominance is defined as an ecological condition in which between %60-%90 of the tree canopy in a forest comprises a single species of tree (Arnhold, 2016; Peh et al., 2011).

was later developed to include the subjects and their everyday life practices to shed light on a different layer that allows us to understand power beyond the confines of institutions.

Nevertheless, as Deleuze argued (1992; 2007), by hinting at governmentality, these disciplinary societies were also in transition and being succeeded by a new confinement regime: societies of control. Wherein disciplinary societies people were confined and trained, now, they were seemingly free under a constant control regime which does not require any spatial confinement. Instead, their possible field of actions were structured beyond the limits of spatial confinement. Intrusion and implications of power into everyday lives were not partial, but continuous. In this new perceived freedom, people were free to move and interact with the world through set structures, such as highways, as conduits of conduct. Through the everyday interaction with these conduits, the spectrum of actions was being rendered predictable with design. As Jenkins put it, "interactivity ... is most often pre-structured or at least enabled by the designer" (2006a, p.287). As such, it was becoming possible to entangle the population in a "composite reality" (Foucault, 1994, p.220), or a "constructed reality understood as a network of causalities based on pre-established formats that make action predictable" (Boltanski, 2014, p.xvii). Hence, individuals were free to conduct themselves within the leeways enabled to them, while their action spectrum were being controlled by guidance and predictability at a distance. In this vein, much-cherished individual autonomies were being undercut, and their incorporations to the system were being channelled.

Similarly, the invention of new vision devices in the 19th century Europe were endowing people with new abilities to observe the world in authentic and objective ways. Yet, while these new devices were enabling new autonomies and subjective vision abilities to people, they were simultaneously allowing new forms of control through standardization of vision (Crary, 1990). Despite the trust towards mechanical and rational objectivity claims, "the insights gained from [scientific] observation[s] were subjective" (Pearl, 2010, p.5). And such subjective ways of looking at the world under the guise of mechanical objectivity claims were being shared as a rational totality, leading people to inhabit and own a shared subjectivity. Put simply, people were not observing the world through objective lenses, instead they were sharing a subjective vantage point and being engulfed and inauthenticated by it. Therefore, a subjectivity was cloning itself, and spreading its own world view amongst people.

Thus, new forms of seeing do not necessarily lead people to freedom and provide them with autonomy and authentcity, rather, may allow new spaces of control through vision. The invention of photography and its integration into statistics and forensics in the 19th century through Francis Galton`s studies on "composite photography" can exemplify the point. By superimposing the portrait photographs of select `types of people` -such as, the poor, the deviant, or the criminal-, Galton was producing new composite images to document the generic facial features of certain types of peoples through what he calls

"pictorial statistics" (Edkins, 1994; Ellenbogen, 2012; Pearl, 2010). Gradually, physiognomy, the study of facial features, emerged and gained popularity. It became the face recognition technique of the time, allowing people to recognise and differentiate the types of people by their generic facial features. Thus, physiognomy gave people a permissive repertoire to judge others at face value based on eugenics (Pearl, 2010). Moreover, this new physiognomic knowledge and its corresponding everyday skills neither empowered people`s autonomy, nor rationality. Instead, by endowing people with a lens, an everyday practice, that sorts and distorts reality through certain categories, it misled them to own a shared subjectivity (Pearl, 2010), and brought about the creation of a racist common sense based on the misguided premises of *objective* knowledge claims.

> *Physiognomy was subjective science for everyone, with very practical applications in daily life. Those people whom I call "pocket physiognomists" enjoyed the advantages of drawing seemingly shared conclusions from the evidence of their eyes. ... They could communicate their ideas to others and not sacrifice trusting in themselves. ... By the same token, the very flexibility of physiognomy served to lengthen its life span as a technology of judgment. Physiognomic analyses served to strengthen decisions already made and to reinforce and provide evidence for conclusions drawn from a variety of sources, of which instinct was only one. ... The many valences of physiognomy allowed observations to describe a given trait in numerous ways, and features could often be read positively and negatively. Thin lips, for example, could be a sign of criminal cunning or sophisticated calculation skills. It all depended on who was looking, who was being looked at, when, and why* (Pearl, 2010, pp.5-6).

Today, we also practice and observe the world by employing similar subjective lenses diffused in diverse media platforms. For instance, fiction and non-fiction materials on the GWoT, "get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (Jenkins, 2007, para.2)[7]. Nevertheless, we tend to use the motifs we found in these platforms to inform or justify our arbitrary claims on certain types of people of geopolitical implications, such as the Muslim, the Middle Eastern, the Hispanic, the Asian, etc. We codify, decodify, and misconstrue others based on our geopolitical expectations and predispositions formed mostly through our vicarious encounters with them through visual media sources. As a result, visuality of convergence culture provides self-access materials for geopolitics on a daily basis. This permits an encyclopaedia-like repertoire enabling intuitive guesswork for everyday people to self-evidently reach

[7] On whether the military's positive portrayal on films and entertainment media actually affects enrolment, Philip Strub, DoD`s liaison to film industry, tells: "You get anecdotal information, there's no statistics, no metrics, no scientific data. It's just assumed" (Weisman, 2013, para.19). However, while it is said to have an assumed role, a close look at the common patterns permeating almost every section of the mainstream US visual culture reveals us how certain parameters are consecutively put into motion. In this sense, it can be argued that the GWoT is officially supported to be told through transmedia storytelling platforms. And its causal role is assumed to be conducive, rather than decisive.

geopolitical premonitions. A triumph of affect (Ó Tuathail, 2003), instinct (Pearl, 2010), and intuition (Satia, 2008) over intellect becomes possible, preparing us to follow a hunch on international politics and war.

Moreover, as Jenkins points out, "[a] transmedia text does not simply disperse information: it provides a set of roles and goals which readers can assume as they enact aspects of the story through their everyday life" (Jenkins, 2007, para.10). Therefore, self-absorbed, self-appointed, and self-willed actuants of everyday geopolitics find the chance to self-assemble various texts on the GWoT on their own initiatives, and begin to perform their roles in it. In other words, gradually, everyday entanglements with the ill-disposed and commonplace patterns permeating mainstream visual culture grow into a `do it yourself` (DIY) GWoT. Apart from the ordinary military recruits, self-appointed militiamen patrolling the US-Mexico border to deter migrants, armed civilians moving to Iraq and Syria to join the fight against ISIS, the growing paramilitary culture and its associated industry, and the war crimes enacted by SEAL operators based on a fictional novel (Cole, 2007) can exemplify the point.

In this vein, regarding visual culture not as an exposure or an imposure of a reality, but as an enclosure within which a commonplace reality is implicitly constructed and communicated by procedural interactions of the population, I argue that the mainstream US visual culture structures the *possible field of* geopolitical *actions* and imaginations of the population and ultimately justifies the war effort and the politics behind it by enlisting the power of everyday people through visual technologies of the self.

Hence, I regard everyday visual cultural practices as visual drills/visual technologies of the self. Through those drills, human beings gradually turn *themselves* into geopolitical subjects on their own initiatives. Nevertheless, to analytically show how those drills and visual confinement regime work, we should understand the "*product spillovers*" (Gray, 2010)[8] of the GWoT as well. These spillovers converge and operate in seemingly civic visual spaces, and surround human-beings with a vicariously experience-based composite narrative.

Composite narrative refers to the overall concordance of self-referential GWoT narratives offered by various mediums of visual culture that converge, encapsulate and engulf the population with a seemingly open, continuous and inter-actable environment wherein "power becomes rarefied and imperceptible, total and socially diffusive" (Vinale, 2016, p.1380) as a map.[9] Such a map corresponds to common sense. Over the long haul, arguably, passing through the conduits of conduct enabled to the

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[8] Regeneration of an event/product in seemingly unrelated contexts for entertainment. As an example: "Disney wants to trademark 'SEAL Team 6' real-life Navy unit killed Osama bin Laden" (Braiker, 2011).

[9] Correspondingly, in FM-3-24 (2006), US Military Counterinsurgency Field Manual, the influential aspects of an overarching single narrative as a population mobiliser is mentioned. Hence composite narrative refers to the main narrative composed and cohered through the various mediums of visual culture.

population, people become captive of these paths, internalise those procedures and contribute to the creation of a commonly sensible reality. Hence, political decisions are framed as though they address this reality and people are encouraged to operate within this seemingly open and commonsensical realm of politics. Nevertheless, to understand how do people come to terms and cooperate with, and incorporate themselves into a commonsensical understanding of geopolitics, two further conceptual interventions, narrative infrastructure and social logistics should also be discussed.

3.2. Narrative Infrastructure and Social Logistics

By narrative infrastructures, I refer and elaborate what Foucault called pastoral power (1982). Similar to material infrastructures, the role of narrative infrastructures is vital for the organisation of the state.[10] In disciplinary societies, mass education systems were the main storytelling medium to train, educate, and discipline the population (Gellner, 1983; Kligman, 1998; Posen, 1993; Thom 1990). Yet with the advance of new storytelling mediums, narrative infrastructural grid-systems of states are further developed, particularly through visual culture. This enabled control societies to intrude into the everyday lives of citizens in subtler ways, to make them internalise and spread certain arguments on various topics, including state and geopolitics. In this sense, as liberal democratic governance is ultimately dependent on the idea of a shared ownership, in which the population feel a sense of belonging, and a sense of active participatory relationship to the state, narrative infrastructures can be thought as the social logistical support base of this system.

Logistical support has always been important for states` ability to rule. As Khalili (2017) argues, from the Roman Empire to the US, material infrastructures constructed by imperial powers, both eased these powers` resource extraction capabilities and helped them to regulate the social flows of the territories they occupy. Even today "militaries use infrastructure to pacify intransigent populations and incorporate conquered peoples and places into global systems of rule (Khalili, 2007, p.94)". In this vein, the often underlined "social benefits of infrastructure were [only] secondary effects of empire building" (Ibid.). The chief aim was to manipulate and control the behaviour of the people and ease the mobility of the empire. Therefore, infrastructural investments were never chiefly envisioned to ease and please the social. Instead, warfare states disguised the main functions of infrastructures under the rubric of welfare states to pacify, incorporate and rule the population.

As Elden put it, "[t]erritory is not simply land. [...] [i]t should be understood [...] as a bundle of political technologies (Elden, 2013, p.322). Therefore, states` role and need in connecting the variety of social and geographical areas to sustain their ability to warring and ruling still need further investigation. Although there have been ground-breaking studies on material logistics and viapolitics (cf. Khalili,

[10] While it has similarities with that of Michael Mann`s *infrastructural power* (1984), to underline the importance of visual culture and narratives in a Foucauldian sense, I will deploy the term narrative infrastructure.

2017; Walters, 2014), there is still a need to go beyond the material infrastructures. The argument here is that by binding the geographical areas into each other, states set new connections to expand the reach of their ruling capacities both materially and socially. Thus, the infrastructural dimension of power should not be reduced merely to material systems, as equally instrumental narrative infrastructures are set to relate the social to the static unity of the state as well. As states not only rule by accumulating material resources, but also by acculturating their micro-power sources, we also need to understand the ways in which pastoral power works through narrative infrastructures.

To efficiently extract and mobilise the resources of the territory (including reliable citizen-soldiers) its inhabitants and social life should have been communalised and organised under the monopolised reality, or the truth of the state. Historically, the territory could be seen from the canonical perspective of the sovereign. He was the ultimate authority and owner of the realm. It was his unique privilege to possess such a vantage point. Yet, a different form of state organisation began to emerge in Europe, specifically from the 18th century, which is defined by "the mass of its population" and which "correspond[s] to a society controlled by apparatuses of security" (Foucault, 1994, p.221). This led states to share the reason and vision of state apparatuses with the population. Thus, states implemented narrative infrastructures to generate and nourish a "composite reality" (p.220) to which various subjective worlds of a territory`s inhabitants could be integrated and monopolised under the rubric of single institutional certainty (Boltanski, 2014).

The most critical defect of this governance technique lies in its binary nature that disregards anything outside of it under the category of "unreal". Hence, this process can also be regarded as an "epistemicide" (Santos, 2016). Although the concept refers to the eradication of the Global South`s *knowledge of itself*, by paraphrasing Boltanski (2014), we can also use it to remind that Western nation-states erased and monopolised different worldisms in themselves as well.[11] As Ling argues, "[e]pistemicide destroys not just alternative worlds but also ways of world-making. It erases the Self's willingness to get along with Others, rendering everyone vulnerable to Westphalia's binary power plays" (Ling, 2017, p.17).

One of the main tools of this epistemicide was the compulsory education system of the 18th and 19th centuries (Posen 1993). Through compulsory education, individuals could internalise the reason of the state, adopt their roles in it, share its canonical perspective on seeing the territory, and identify themselves with the state and its causes. Thus, behind the dense relationship between military institutions and education systems lies such a social education and eradication process. This is why it is not surprising to see that the first compulsory national education systems were born from the rivalry between the French and Germans (Thom, 1990). As Posen writes, "[s]tates institute compulsory

[11] Such a discussion on the intricacies of this concept traction most probably requires its own research.

education and engage in propaganda because military and political leaders believe that such ideas enhance the commitment of the troops to the purposes of the war, increase their willingness to sacrifice their lives, and improve their solidarity with one another" (1993, p.85). In this vein, education was playing a key role in terms of supporting the geopolitical agendas of states. And this is why "[m]any believed that it was the Prussian schoolteachers who had won the Battle of Sedan" (Thom, 1990, p.35). Thus, mass education can be understood as a narrative infrastructure that provided states an ability to extract reliable citizen-soldiers to form mass armies to eradicate the Other. And the Prussian education system, which is the basis of the American education system, is the product of the need to produce reliable, devoted, and educated killing machines that use a common language, possess a fervour for a common national spirit, and have a willingness or at least a moral obligation to kill and die (Burke, 2006; Mead, 2013; Posen, 1993).

Therefore, whereas roads allowed citizens to move, trade, interact, and socialise through common ways; social narratives and visual practices, similarly, enabled them to know, relate, and order things in a common way as well (Krebs et al., 2017; Longo, 2015; Shenhav, 2015). Narratives "are a useful tool for spreading information, by locating events within a logically coherent sequence. Thus, much of what we know about the world (what Eco, 1979, once called our encyclopaedia) derives from narratives" (Longo, 2015, p.3). Moreover, as narratives inform our lives, give us meaning, connect us with others, and embed us in a shared reality, they also have a political value.

In this sense, material and narrative infrastructures helped states to monopolise and communalise the ways in which the world is perceived, mobilised, and moved within the "reality" rubric of nation-states. However, this top-down description of what did states do to cohere the narrative unity of its territory falls short of this project`s aims as it does not foreground how the individuals at the micro-level practice these narrative infrastructures. If the reader is the fundamental ingredient of each story (Eco, 1994), what is the role of it in geopolitical narratives? Or, as readers, how do we converge and re-forge those narratives? And how do we imbue ourselves within those stories? In the next section, I discuss these questions through Eco`s concept of inferential walks. This allows me to understand and explain the operation of pastoral power at the micro level.

3.3. Monopolisation of Reality

Above I discussed that visuality developed a new confinement regime, and situated this understanding to war and state making through narrative infrastructures. In this section, I discuss how these narrative infrastructures monopolise the reality for the benefit of the state and its war-making causes through Eco`s work on inferential walks. By doing that, I aim to highlight the similarities between Foucault`s work on pastoral power (1982) and Eco`s work on the role of the reader (1984). This is a key lineage for

my methodological approach as well, as I question the role of the subject as a reader of visual geopolitics (See Chapter Four).

Inferential walks refer to the imaginary walks a reader takes outside the text to aid its understanding (Eco, 1984). Authors often expect their model readers to take such short walks to support their understanding with intertextual references. Yet, arguably, with the omnipresence of visual culture, these imaginary and subjective walks we evoke and utilise in our minds to guide our reasoning and interpretations benefits from very similar sources. Put differently, the ways and whereabouts of our inferential walks are infested by the recurring patterns in visual culture. This new cultivation process leads to the standardisation and monopolisation of our subjective imagination and decision making possibilities as well. Therefore, a constructed reality increasingly began to interfere with our diverse subjective worlds on a regular basis through visual culture.

Another important concept to understand what Eco means through those walks is the *woods* – it is "a metaphor for the narrative text" (Eco, 1994, p.5). We use these fictional woods as though they are our own private gardens (Eco, 1994). We do not simply read the texts. We actively collaborate with them, even if we are daydreaming. We sometimes seek and find something in the woods from our own lives, or we might even fill in the gaps in them through our own private memories as well (1994, p.9). In this vein, we often go outside the texts to have inferential walks elsewhere in our personal worlds to aid our understanding with some meaning transplantations. Hence, while the subjective structure of those gardens is essential for our individuality[12], the fiction in the woods sometimes blur with the truth in our lives as well. Therefore, the paths we choose in the woods merge with a wider path not of our own making.

> *"Wood is a garden of forking paths. Even when there are no well—trodden paths in a wood, everyone can trace his or her own path, deciding to go to the left or to the right of a certain tree and making a choice at every tree encountered. In a narrative text, the reader is forced to make choices all the time"* (Eco, 1994, pp.5-6).

Yet, how do we make choices in the well-trodden landscapes of visual culture? Do we do it alone? Or are we guided? Moreover, what happens if these gardens and woods are cultivated, or deforested, or monodominated by visual culture? What if almost every tree is the verisimilitude of the other and we cannot choose our own paths clearly? What if our walks in these woods are proceduralised with certain complementary patterns, and we start to draw upon the same interpretative repertoire to guide our choices, to find our paths, and to complement our judgement, for instance, on geopolitical dilemmas? What I mean by this is the subtle intrusion of visual culture into our subjective woods which we use as

[12] Similarly, Gellner (1983) uses the allegory of "cultivated or garden cultures" to refer to the "high-cultures" achieved through mass literacy and education, opposing it to "wild varieties" of localised and differentiated vernacular cultures.

our own interpretative repertoires. This means, a different level of epistemicide/eradication process becomes available through the cultivated standardisation of personal/subjective imagination processes through visual culture.

While taking strolls in the woods, we see certain gaps in storylines that are functioning as rabbit holes. These holes invite us to step inside the stories and fill them in with something from our own lives. For instance, following the publication of one of his novels, Eco mentions that he received a letter from one of his friends, writing that: "Dear Umberto, I do not recall having told you the pathetic story of my uncle and aunt, but I think you were very indiscreet to use it in your novel" (Eco, 1994, p.8). Yet, following Eco`s response, which states that the uncle and the aunt mentioned in the novel are Eco`s own relatives, his childhood friend apologises for the confusion. To explain what drove his friend, Eco writes: "he had been so absorbed by the story that he thought he could recognize some incidents that had happened to his uncle and aunt—which is not impossible, because in wartime (which was the period to which my memories went back) similar things happen to different uncles and aunts" (Ibid.). Similarly, in his Norton Lecture series, Italo Calvino gives an example from an Italian folktale:

> *A king fell ill and was told by his doctors, "Majesty, if you want to get well, you'll have to obtain one of the ogre's feathers. That will not be easy, since the ogre eats every human he sees." The king passed the word on to everybody, but no one was willing to go to the ogre. Then he asked one of his most loyal and courageous attendants, who said, "I will go." The man was shown the road and told, "On a mountaintop are seven caves, in one of which lives the ogre.*

Nevertheless, in the tale, "not a word is said about what illness the king was suffering from, or why on earth an ogre should have feathers, or what those caves were like. But everything mentioned has a necessary function in the plot" (Calvino, 1988, p.36). Therefore, we are often placed in fictional woods as the reader with some possibilities and constraints. Possibilities offer lead-in gaps in between the givens. Within the flow of the narrative, we fill in these gaps on our own as the collaborators of the stories, often instantly, unconsciously and in taken-for-grated ways. This is why even questionable incoherencies within the stories are fixed by the arbitration of the readers. As Eco argues,

> *[A]ny narrative fiction is necessarily and fatally swift because, in building a world that comprises myriad events and characters, it cannot say everything about this world. It hints at it and asks the reader to fill in a whole series of gaps. Every text, after all is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work. What a problem it would be if a text were to say everything the receiver is to understand—it would never end* (Eco, 1994, pp.2-3).

For Eco, by taking inferential walks outside the texts, we aid our understandings. In other words, readers come to their own conclusions on a text through their implicit assumptions and intertextual processes. Hence the role of the reader in geopolitical stories should be thought in this way as well. In this sense,

if, as Bhabha put it (1990), nation is a narration, and if geopolitics is mediated to the population through fictional and non-fictional works of visual culture, how does a reader make sense of it? To what texts does a reader refer to to aid his/her understanding? Moreover, what happens if we all use the same repertoire, a monodominated forest, or take similar turns in similar gardens, to find our way, to make sense of our experiences in the woods? As Boltanski put it, the surge and popularity of mystery and detective stories in the 19th century Europe brought nation-states an opportunity to instil the modern reasoning techniques to the population and cohere their territories with the official received "reality" (2014) of states. He does not argue that this surge was simply an official project. However, by looking at the practices offered by these novels, he fleshes out their role in buttressing states` ability to proclaim static realities within their political realms.

Therefore, we fill in the gaps in, for instance, filmic stories as well. As it will be explained in the case studies, every instance of a visual item brims with taken-for-granted moments expecting the viewers to fill in without thinking. For instance, the film *Zero Dark Thirty* begins with a dark screen. We hear the last telephone calls of the 9/11 victims. The immediacy and emergency in their voices remediate the weight of the events at an individual level. The immediate scene ensuing these conversations brings us to one of the CIA Black Sites in Afghanistan. We suddenly are faced with the much-debated issue of torture. The body in pain and its wounds do not speak, yet the preceding scene enables us to presume that the guy in pain has something to do with the attacks, and thus his horrifying state is deemed necessary by the CIA to extract a geopolitical truth from him. Despite we can make critical judgements as well, the emotional flow of the scenes prompt us to tie these marshalled events and fill them in accordingly.

Similarly, *American Sniper* begins as a sniper team perched on a rooftop. We understand that these are American soldiers, and the story takes place in Iraq. America invaded the country, as Iraq was accused by the Bush administration for putatively supporting Al-Qaeda, which is the terrorist group that was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Hence, these American soldiers are there, eyeing a child and a woman from the scope of a sniper rifle for a reason. As the woman overtly hands a grenade to the child, we understand that they are insurgents and about to commit a deadly crime. The protagonist must do something to prevent them from succeeding. Not an additional cue is needed to legitimise what the protagonist does. Visual reminders most cogently deliver the issue at hand and legitimises the need to act. Initial briefings and evidential complexities can be skipped and substituted with the narrative infrastructure from previous experiences. In other words, an intercontextual, or a transparatextual realm is readily available for everyday use. What is needed is to distinguish the good guys from the bad ones. If they seem *threatening*, or threatening what the viewer or player embodies, they are "the bad guys".

Hence, not everything we see needs to tell the complete tale from the beginning. We fill in the gaps through our experiences in visual culture. Our earlier experiences precontextualise the issue to us and we complete the images with meanings without any conscious effort (Oddo, 2013; 2014). First, the speed of these meaning transplantations occurs fast enough to keep our pace with the flow of the visual product. Second, the medium does not enable us to hear and embody the narrative of the Other. Lastly, our overall interpretative repertoire to cohere the narrative and make sense of it is limited to our "echo chambers" of convergent visual culture. Hence our ability to think outside the flow of the narrative is limited to what Metzinger called "reality tunnel":

> *Yes, there is an outside world, and yes, there is an objective reality, but in moving through this world, we constantly apply unconscious filter mechanisms, and in doing so, we unknowingly construct our own individual world, which is our "reality tunnel." We are never directly in touch with reality as such, because these filters prevent us from seeing the world as it is. The filtering mechanisms are our sensory systems and our brain, the architecture of which we inherited from our biological ancestors, as well as our prior beliefs and implicit assumptions. The construction process is largely invisible; in the end, we see only what our reality tunnel allows us to see, and most of us are completely unaware of this fact.* (Metzinger, 2009, p.9)

Although there are dozens of pathways for going from one place to the other and dozens of ways of doing things in the world, through the filtration of such reality tunnels, our options are delimited to certain conduits of conduct as in "echo chambers". As a result, the limits of our conducts are channelled and conducted at a distance. Similarly, in Eco`s *Foucault `s Pendulum*, one of the characters is hospitalised and his access to the outside world is limited to what his friend tells him. Referring to this confinement, he retorts:

> *Jacopo, I'm stuck here in a bed. I can't decide whether what you're telling me is happening only inside your head, or whether it's happening outside. But it doesn't matter. Whether you've gone crazy or the world has makes no difference.* (Eco, 2001, p.548)

In this sense, I argue that visual culture, as a practice-based technology of the self, invites us into certain conduits of conduct. We commute and communicate, corroborate and collaborate with the world within the confinement of those conduits. They work as our common "reality tunnels" (Metzinger, 2009) guiding and paving our ways in the woods. More importantly, as we use those well-trodden tunnels and paths, practices and experiences, what develops over time becomes a set of shared practical knowledge frameworks that change the population`s values and attitudes, especially on geopolitics. Hence, our visual drills, practices, and experiences gradually clone institutionally received realities and instil them into us. And if we find gaps in geopolitical narratives we fill them in through our limited repertoire on international politics. For instance, although *the US Empire* is *incoherent* as Mann put it (2005), visual culture enables various subjects to cohere it on their own initiatives, lives, and imaginations. This does

not mean that the population is a uniform, undifferentiated entity. Rather, it means that visual culture enables certain conditions of possibilities to sustain a certain mode of subjectivity that can support the maintenance of the state.

3.4. Visual Technologies of the Geopolitical Self

As argued by Kelly (2013), whereas many of Foucault`s peers relegated the issue of the subject to a product of structures, Foucault`s initial point was ambivalent. Yet, from late 70s and early 80s, he began to refer to power as something produced by what he calls "subjection" and "subjectivation". In this approach, whereas there was a realm of macro-power, it was operating in a diffused way through the means of micro-power. And micro-power was not merely subjecting itself to macro-power as subservient objects through external coercion. Rather, as thinking beings, they were forging and turning themselves into subjects. In this respect, subjectivity was neither a constant substance, nor a direct external product of power. It was rather constituted and formed by the subjects themselves through practices. Also, these practices were "not something invented by the individual himself" (Foucault, 1998, p.291). They were models people find in their cultures which are "proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (Ibid.).

Hence, Foucault`s focus in *Technologies of the Self* (1988) was to understand the ways in which human beings historically constitute, form, conduct and recognise themselves as subjects through certain practices. As a result of these practices, they were also experiencing and internalising, for instance, certain social and political arguments themselves, which enable them to make certain concessions conducive to the operation of power. The reason behind various disciplinary institutions` obligatory practices lies such an aim: to mould individuals through certain practices. Hence, institutions instruct new practice regimes to instil certain subjectivities. Yet, today, as discussed, these practices operate through visual culture in subtler ways without a need to overtly force or discipline individuals. In this vein, what are the practices enabled to human beings in our time to mediate, realise and develop themselves as subjects? To elaborate the issue and relate it to GWoT and visual practices of our times, two examples can be illustrative.

In *Technologies of the Self,* Foucault argues that *melete* and *gymnasia* were the two poles of those exercises (1988). "The melete was a philosophical meditation that trained one`s thoughts about how one would respond to hypothetical situations" (Besley, 2008, p.61), and *gymnasia* was for "training in reality", or physical training of bodies. In each case, people were visualising themselves in imaginary events to prefigure and test themselves:

> *You had to anticipate the real situation through dialogue in your thoughts. It is composed of memorizing responses and reactivating those memories by placing oneself in a situation where one can imagine how one would react. One judges the reasoning one should use in*

an imaginary exercise ("Let us suppose...) in order to test an action or event (for example, "How would I react?"). Imagining the articulation of possible events to test how you would react - that's meditation. At the opposite pole is gymnasia ("to train oneself"). While meditatio is an imaginary experience that trains thought, gymnasia is training in a real situation, even if it's been artificially induced. (Foucault, 1988, pp.36-37).

As mentioned earlier, when we look at today`s popular culture, we can see many books and visual media offering the population to train and prepare themselves for imaginary situations, akin to *melete* and *gymansia*. Books written by ex-SOF operators and GWoT combatants are very popular, and tactical training courses and entertainment events open to civilians are ubiquitously available (Aaron, 2015; Bonner, 2015). We witnessed the fast ascendance of combatants to fame and authority on war and survival during the last decade. Instantiating this, a book authored by an ex-Navy SEAL, "SEAL Survival Guide: A Navy SEAL's Secrets to Surviving Any Disaster" (Courtley, 2012) similarly offers various dangerous scenarios to be visually imagined and physically prepared by his readers. These entail what you can do if you are attacked by a gunman in a mall; what you can do if you are caught in a sinking ship; what is the best way to prepare yourself to a street fight and etc. Similar training and preparing practices are also offered by many other books, smart-phone applications and social media accounts by ex-SEALs. Such references most overtly continue in the narratives of visual culture. Specifically, through documentaries, films and video games, we are being put into certain GWoT situations, enabled to walk in the shoes of the protagonists, and embody their situation, reasoning and practices. These vicarious experiences continue to converge in different sites. Rather than practicing drills in military camps with a disciplinary obligation, we practice such visual drills in various settings for imaginary situations as part of daily entertainment, pastime activities.

These personal pastime activities arguably relate viewers and players to international politics by way of obliviously applying the same narratives they experienced to everyday life. In a way, those experiences tailor the way the subjects construe their everyday life events and hence these visual drills structure the possible field of geopolitical actions, options and imaginations of the people. The concept of "*Mean World Syndrome*" is a useful departure point to describe such practices and permeations between the real world and the virtual. Mean World Syndrome is one of the main conclusions of the cultivation theory in media research, and argues that rather than direct impositions, media cultivates dispositions towards the view of the world, reality and life. In this sense, long-term exposition to violence-related media content causes the viewers to construe the real world as more dangerous than it really is. Therefore, according to the surveys supporting the research, heavy-viewers are more inclined to comprehend the world as a more mistrustful and dangerous place than it really is, or arguably than light-viewers (Edles, 2002; Murray, 1998, Shanahan & Morgan, 2004).

Whether the real world is safer, the dissemination of a certain perception of outside world as a place where fear, danger, and uncertainty lurks primes people to perceive the world in a certain way, decode it in a belligerent mindset and act upon it in defensively. Explanatory value of Robert K. Merton`s concept of *self-fulfilling prophecy* is still strikingly clarifying in this sense (1948). Accordingly, common expectations, collective perceptions and resulting cumulative attitudes are not isolated phenomena as they influence each other. And as a result, they co-construct a "reality" which is not necessarily so. And this has geopolitical implications.

As "stories inform our lives [...] and live on in our imagination, long after the author has disappeared, they make their presence felt in books, movies, speeches, excuses for war, campaigns for peace" (Mani, 2010, p.1), the narratives we experienced during our engagements in visual culture make us connected with the wider world of international politics as well. This is the reason, "[p]opular narratives are ideological, but not just because they are fabrications or because they dupe and distract. They also work to transform real social and political desires and insecurities into manageable narratives in which these can be temporarily articulated, displaced or resolved" (Martin, 2006, p.110). In that respect, resorting to violence, both in the real and in the virtual world, as experienced and learned from the first-hand through visual practices and narratives, becomes the short-cut or ideal way to manage our daily and global experiences. For instance, "[t]hough set in the near future, Modern Warfare 3 seems to render the reality of contemporary wars as an embodied virtual experience in households across the developed world, thereby reifying and reinforcing the militarization of civilian life" (Valiaho,2014, p.32).

For the wars of the 21st century, states have to cope with the population beyond the scope of disciplinary societies and education institutions. For instance, during the GWoT (Rostker, 2006) "to attract the best recruits, the army had to compete in a tight labour market for bright, technologically skilled young people who receive much of their information from online pop culture. In this environment, traditional recruiting methods are increasingly ineffective." (Mead, 2013, p.60). Various visual cultural mediums are supported to produce films, documentaries and video games to boost the population`s willingness and attitude for military purposes. More importantly, these new tools of narrative infrastructure were also monopolising the ways in which the military and warfare were seen. For instance, on 4th July 2002, the first official army video game was released for recruitment purposes under the title of *America`s Army* and has become the most cost-effective and most efficient recruitment tool ever (Ibid.).

In a further move, in 2008, the US military closed five of its recruitment stations in Philadelphia area and replaced them with the Army Experience Center. Costing over $14 million and furnished with 19 Xbox 360 consoles, 60 networked PC gaming stations, and an HMMWV Humvee simulator, the centre has been visited by around 12.000 people in one year. Dubbed as the "one-of-a-kind, 14,500-square-foot virtual educational facility" by the US Army, centre was offering free war video game play

opportunity to visitors. In the words of Maj. Larry Dillard, AEC Program Manager, "[t]he Army is not all about boots and guns. We want to give people the opportunity to experience the Army for themselves, so they have an understanding of what soldiers do, and they can be proud of their service" (McLeroy, 2008, para.23). Hence, the visitors, most of whom were children, were not only experiencing the war video games for free, but also the Army was offering them a brief experience of being in the army. People could come and go without any obligation and coercion to enlist. Recruitment officers scattered around the centre were not informing anyone unless they are asked to do so by the visitors. Therefore, the people, mostly children, were free; games were free; and nothing was coerced. People were coming to virtually experience the procedures of becoming an actual soldier, pathways for future career, and thereby they were calling their own shots themselves to what to do with their lives. In this way, power was being exercised over free subjects.

Governments have used a variety of techniques and technologies, from TV and social media ads, to documentaries, movies and video games as strategic tools to channel the motives of the population, to cope with the manpower fluctuations and with the political will of the population. This is why there is a close relationship between visual culture and governmentality. Of many definitions and interpretations of governmentality, according to Foucault`s own definitions, it is the "conduct of the conduct" of the population by governments. It is of "structuring the possible field of actions". It is the mentality of ruling at a distance, through certain techniques that channels the energy of the population towards state`s intended directions, while they feel themselves free and unattended. Hence, governmentality is a mode of government, rather than coercing, it harnesses the energy of the population through certain procedures to which the subjects enlist on their own, by their own willingness. In such a way, power becomes diffused, anonymous, yet liberal. It allows the population to be free within the constraints of the "possible field of actions". It is a mode of power where the subjects` lives, motivations, intentions, directions and predilections can be calculated and predicted; traced and tracked; while the subjects feel themselves in charge of their own directions.

To conclude, self-actuating practices, such as popular applications on personal development, enhancement and training lead human beings to self-subjugation processes. And these have political implications as well. People not only mould themselves and develop skills and mindsets, they also tailor themselves in certain ways enabling them to fit into certain social, political and geopolitical positions. Hence, to understand the narrative infrastructures set to relate people into geopolitics as technologies of the self, I look at visual culture and its geopolitical practices.

In this regard, this research argues that, first, visual culture has been affectively governmentalized in order to produce and micro-manage the necessary subjectivities of the GWoT. Second, this governmentalization of visual culture made specific `technologies of the self` available to the

population which endows them with specific practices and procedures to turn themselves into the self-regulating subjects of the liberal war effort. Third, these practices not only assist the war effort by supplying manpower and willingness resources to the army, but also assist the political decision makers` capabilities in diffusing power and responsibility during the GWOT.

4. Researching Everyday Subjectivities, Visual Practices and the GWoT

4.1. Introduction

This research is a qualitative analysis of the governmentalization of the population through visual culture during the GWoT. More precisely, it raises a qualitative enquiry over the governmental uses of the US visual culture in the production of geopolitical subjectivities necessitated by the ongoing GWoT. In that sense, the main aim of this research is to understand the self-subjectification processes enabled by the mainstream US visual culture during the GWoT. Through the analysis of select visual cultural practices of individuals, the research examines the ways in which subjects are initiated into certain geopolitical knowledges which affect the possible modes of subjectivities in times of war.

This project attempts to understand the everyday geopolitical experiences of subjects through visual media, rather than approaching geopolitics merely from the perspective of states, structures and institutions. Analysing the ways in which geopolitics is practised, experienced and sensed by the subject also allows us to dissect the ways in which micro-power operates in times of war. In this regard, the research is designed to "cut the king's head off" (Foucault, 1979; 2003; Neal, 2004) both theoretically and methodologically and thereby focus on the relations and practices of the population which are vital for the states` ability to conduct war. However, it does not mean that the population is at the disposal of "the king", or that the king has – does not have- the ultimate power to influence subjectivities. The governmentality approach offers a more nuanced power understanding (Gros, 2005). It refers to the diffused and relational operation of power. Hence, its focus entails the co-incorporative and co-operative practices of micro and macro power working in tandem. As Anne Frey (2009) reminds us, in terms of governance, "Foucault emphasizes the centrality of `invisibility` in Smith`s model of the invisible hand" (p.169). Accordingly, the aim of governmentality is not

> *"[I]nstitutions," "theories," or "ideology," but '"practices"—with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypotheses being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances ... but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and "reason." It is a question of analyzing a regime of practices—practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect.*
> (Foucault, 1991b, p.75)

I argue that visual culture is a site where we can examine those practices as visual technologies of the geopolitical self that incubate and modify modes of subjectivities essential for the state`s wider geopolitical practices.

> *Foucault also provides a critique of the contemporary tendency to overvalue the problem of the state as a singularity based upon a certain functionality ("good government"); in modern society the state is active in everything from media content to dietary and fitness standards. Governmentality can be witnessed in the relation between self and itself, interpersonal relations involving some control and guidance, and relations within social institutions and community* (Peters & Burbules, 2004, p.59).

Furthermore, through self-analysis and analysis of practices, we can make what is institutionally covert ethnographically more overt (González, 2012). "[W]hat troubles me with these analyses which prioritise ideology is that there is always presupposed a human subject on the lines of the model provided by classical philosophy, endowed with a consciousness which power is then thought to seize on" (Foucault, 1980a, p.58). According to Foucault, modes of power are contingent upon the existence of corresponding modes of subjectivities. In this regard, this research is devoted to the fleshing out of the ways in which "a human being turns him -or herself into a subject" (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, pp.208-209), rather than focusing on the mapping of the mastermind behind these Military-Industrial complexes. As power does not simply hold or herd people, and as subjects of governmental power are not only disciplined, oriented, corrected or tortured carceral subjects; they should also be regarded as disciples, aspirants and imitators who are actively embracing, endorsing and participating in the operation of power.

In this sense, there are two methodological paths to empirically support my argument that situates visual culture as a governmentalization tool. First, an institution-focused and document driven project can verify how the institutional mindset can be prepared. This can show how the institutional mindset problematised and instigated new social relations through media. This involves interviews and archival research to show the links between corporates, politicians and institutions. Yet it leaves us with a top-down focus, devoid of the practices of the subjects and a problem of access to certain links and documents. The secrecy surrounding the covert information operations and the habituated unresponsiveness also prevent researchers from having access (González, 2012; Jones, 2014). Moreover, such an approach would not uncover the practices of the subject as well.

In this sense, a second mode of analysis that focuses on visual cultural practices *themselves* in their convergences can be utilised. This approach might benefit from a concentration on the practices and relations experienced by the subject and might analytically showcase the "agency of being governed" (Cremonesi et al., 2016; Stern et al., 2015). Hence, with a preference for this second approach, this project aims to devise a method like a lens to detect and analyse geopolitical patterns embedded in these

practices to consider the "changing connections between seemingly unconnected elements" (Aradau et al., 2015, p.64). For sure, the mixed-method approach devised here for heuristic purposes comes with its own limitations. However, acknowledging its experimental foothold towards the role of visual culture in terms of geopolitical modalities of subjectivation processes is important for future research.

Following this introduction, in the next section, the subjectivity of the researcher will be revealed. As this inevitably affects the way the research is conducted, a growing body of scholars states that the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher should be acknowledged (Henry, 2013; Letherby, 2014), which is "central, unavoidable, and necessary" (Jennings, 2015, p.2). The third section reviews the reasoning behind the horizontal approach I employ to study governmentality. In the fourth section, the relations between affect, visuality, and procedural rhetoric will be discussed to cohere them together through as a method to analyse governmentality. Next, I will discuss the way I deploy autoethnography to extract the affective data in visual culture. Lastly, the data collection and analysis procedures are given. The chapter is concluded by the justifications for the chosen research design.

4.2. Disclosure of Researcher`s Identity

I grew up in a small town in Turkey. For my childhood imagination, visual culture`s impact was dazzling. My memories for these years are brimming with watching American war films and documentaries with my father. Even my first visit to the cinema was for Rambo 3. Albeit there were Turkish films and comic books to enjoy as well, their technical immersion capabilities and reach were limited compared to American ones. After all, that was not a big dilemma. Turkey was a NATO country and the US was one of us - or vice versa. Hence, without any substantial concern, the characters and reasoning I encountered in these fiction and non-fiction moving images were feeding my imagination to execute a just war with my G.I. Joes and plastic soldiers. Tasking them in similar missions, embodying them with similar names, I was re-enacting geopolitics through those visual media experiences.

Other times, I was handling the job myself, naming myself anew, and having firefights with my friends with toy guns. Weapons of my choice were *M-60* or *M-16s* as I was the little soldier who had the largest weapon arsenal amidst friends. I was also collecting a series of chewing-gum inserts called *Lazer*. It was a brand of chewing gum, produced by Turkish company *Kent* during the late 1980s. Its inserts were featuring the images of various military vehicles and I was part of this collectable fad. Thanks to this collection, I was becoming literate on the global weapon arsenal with their technical details. For instance, what were the differences between an F-4 and F-16? What was an Apache? Ask me, I would tell you. War could be the continuation of politics by other means, yet what I continuously was doing was pure entertainment to me. I was merely continuing to experience a geopolitical imaginary by my childhood means.

Yet the toll this entertainment took became evident when the First Gulf War happened, and I was completely oblivious to this. My dad was strictly against the US intervention, and I disagreed with him. I was defiantly rejecting the geopolitical authority of my father at the age of nine. Watching CNN through its dubbed live stream, I was hooked on the war. I did not know who Baudrillard (1995) was, but for me the First Gulf War exactly took place as he argued: on screen. Newspapers and magazines were also advertising everything about this war, and feeding my imagination. I even remember a full coloured magazine page on what US soldiers would eat during the war. While collecting these pages, reading and observing everything about it, I was also continuously trying to refute my father`s objections when he was commenting on the news. To me, American intervention was good, as they were the "good guys". All the newspapers, news, documentaries, films, cartoons and toys were in agreement as well. Hence, the war I waited for so much was real and live on TV.

Later on, thanks to my first computer, I become able to experience war more intensely. Also, I was older, and it was unsightly to fashion a toy gun. Playing war through embodying a character and directing its moves on screen was better compared to its plastic G.I. Joe embodiments as well. Moreover, rather than positioning my friends as killable targets, it was cooler to shoot properly donned enemies who were suitably materialising, reciprocating, and bleeding. Before the play begins, watching and auditing briefings based on so-called real events were sustaining my immersion. Therefore, it was much closer to the "reality" I construed through "visuality" and thereby I was playing and experiencing WWII and the Vietnam War as though I was a combatant.

Years on, my aspirations to become a soldier disappeared. I chose to study Political Science with the residues of such feelings in my gut. There were many courses: on law, on theories and on thoughts, all top-down and institutional. I was learning how politics and international relations functioned, yet the role of the subject was subsumed under these top-down regulations and academic renderings. More interestingly, the thing that made me who I was in terms of geopolitics from my childhood was not there as a knowledge. Even prior to auditing my university courses I was already a geopolitical subject. However, there was nothing explaining my participation into this geopolitical world. Was it merely a personal knowledge confined to my upbringing? Nevertheless, if my family was against American interventions, how did my upbringing bring me to a position where I was more sympathetic to US geopolitics?

On the other hand, history classes were more intriguing. Based on my previous vicarious geopolitical experiences through visual culture, I could imagine and cohere the events in these classes. They were all matching with each other and with my memories. I was reciting various events from my visual memory. Somehow, not only had I cloned them, but also I was inferring through them. Hence, there

were templates I gained from my travels in visual culture, and I was contemplating on geopolitics through them.

Therefore, what was the thing guiding my imagination, supporting my reading, conducting my conduct, and enabling me to be a `subject` in terms of geopolitics? Even when I was reading a political history book on WWII, I was reading it with the imaginary experiences I had had from my travels in the hyperreality of popular culture. The afterimages from my vicarious experiences were prevailing in my mind and everything I read was referring to them. They were my memories, accesses and reference points to political history and geopolitics. This was also what Eco said of "inferential walks" (1994) I was taking *elsewhere* to aid my understanding about geopolitics. I was converging different domains and making meaning transplantations (Jenkins, 2006a) to get a personal grip of it.

Years ahead, during my graduate studies, I began to auto-critically examine my subjectivity. Had the studies I had were different, and non-critical, I might be continuing to support what I do not support right now. But, more importantly, how could I academically expose and analyse these civic but geopolitical interfaces that moved me? How could I elicit the data that can trace the forms of governmentality? How could I tell whether popular culture experience sets work as data sets too? Was there any theory or method that could allow me to do so? Visual culture was not simply exposing a truth or imposing a specific way of thinking. Its influences were not confined to instances as well. It was enclosing me in my everyday life in a continuation and entangling me in a world wide web of geopolitics.

As a result, through observing my own various technologies of the self, through the deployment of Eco`s *Lector in Fabula* (1984), Bogost`s *Procedural Rhetoric* (2007), and through intense readings of Foucauldian literature, I developed a specific method to analyse the ways in which visual culture affects bodies, moves ideas, entangles human-beings and turns human beings into geopolitical subjects. In other words, by operationalizing my own self and the body, I analyse the governmentality of geopolitics through visual cultural practices.

However, as a non-US citizen subject, operationalising my own body as a data source to analyse the US visual culture on a US-led war might not seem relevant. Nevertheless, the GWoT and the US visual culture do not only affect and device the US society. Their aim and reach have been global since the Cold War (Engelhardt, 1995; Gibson, 1994; Martin, 2015). As Sardar and Davies put it:

> *The idea of America forms the upbringing of any non-American of a certain age. Anyone who grew to years and consciousness with the rise of the technology of mass communication grew up with America by just watching television. But our distinction from Americans of similar years is singularly important. We did not grow only with and through American mass popular culture; we are at least bi-cultural beings, possessors and inheritors of much more than Americana. It is this consciousness we bring to the debate. America's*

ethos and heroes are ours and not ours. We grew with an internal set of contradictions and debate which we now externalise because we, unlike Americans, can create the mental distance to see the connections between the embedded ideas of mass popular culture and their strangle-hold on the operation of American society, in American society and on the rest of the world (Sardar & Davies, 2004, p.27).

In that regard, the method developed here can be used and deployed for a variety of other practices to uncover the political interfaces affecting the self`s relations with geopolitics and the self in a global context.

Offering a new viewpoint, I aim to contribute to the emerging debate over methods and methodologies in IR and PG studies to systematically conduct an empirical analysis on visual culture while embracing the layers brought about by "visual" and "affective" turns in this research project. This choice inevitably directs us to audience reception and subjective practices. Hence, I devise an autoethnographical research methodology (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010; Butz & Besio, 2009; Jones, 2008) and following Bleiker (2015) Rose, (2012), Harper (2008), and Saugman et al. (2015), a pluralist method which employs both visual/rhetorical and narrative analyses of visual cultural elements. That enables me to empirically trace the ways in which visual cultural practices are affectively governmentalized in the aftermath of 9/11 terror attacks. In the next section I discuss the horizontal approach I employ to study governmentality.

4.3. Horizontality

This research project uses the connections and patterns enabled by the US visual culture during the GWoT as an illustrative case to understand the governmentality of contemporary geopolitics at the micro level. Although there is a vast literature deploying Foucauldian concepts to delve into the ways in which international politics operates, or make subjects (Dale, 1981; Green, 1990; Müller, 2011; O`Tuathail, 1999; Spring, 1994) they remain either as top-down approaches underlining the techno-institutional operation of power, or as bottom-up approaches that are too hasty to see resistance everywhere, as argued by Morris (1988; Rose, 2012, p.290), or too obsessed with employing conceptual "disruptions" and "interventions" (Shapiro, 2012) for the sake of "speaking truth to power" (Weber, 2011) claims. These limited approaches, therefore, remain vertical in their analyses and hence prevent them from analysing and scrutinising the ways in which the diffused forms of power operate. What I mean by vertical approaches are the analyses focusing either on what macro power does (top-down), or what people speak truth to power, or what people utter at certain instances (bottom-up) through content and discourse analyses and interviews (Müller, 2008, 2011; 2013; 2015).

In that sense, as the "self government of individuals (technologies of self) and the government of population (technologies of domination) are two sides of the same coin, the concept of governmentality offers novel insight into the nature of social power" (Hakli, 2009, p.629), that allows thinking on both

“human agency and structural limitations at the same time” (Carah & Louw, 2015, p.21; Stern et al., 2015). This is also directly in relation to exemplifying *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-1979) (Foucault, 2008). As Paras states: “the central theme of the course was the emergence and transformation of a kind of `governmentality` that ruled not by top-down intervention but rather by a calculated leaving-alone: a laissez-faire state” (2006, p.103).

In this vein, what a horizontal approach refers to is an attempt to analytically understand *how* certain flows of ideas, themes, or metaphors complementarily *dawn on* everyday people as a result of their inter(con)textual practices, trains of thoughts, walkthroughs, and journeys through spatio-temporal mediums, mostly afforded by communication tools in a convergent continuum, such as newspapers, magazines, TV shows, social media sites, films, documentaries and video games. Put differently, it focuses on the ways through which everyday people come to learn, accept, condone and say “such is life/such is geopolitics” on their own initiatives through their visual practices.

The term *composite narrative* is key to understand this horizontal dimension. It denotes the ways in which everyday people modulate and cohere their own interpretations on various topics, for instance, the GWoT, through combining and converging various parts and wholes in an intertextual manner (Hodges, 2011). It is a practical concept to understand the collective meaning-making of subjects through fragmentary pieces of knowledge that can be cohered into composite narratives. For instance, a human being`s understanding of the GWoT does not come into shape in an instant. Its stream of consciousness is subject to modulation and convergence pertaining to what is constantly made available in a given culture in a longitudinal manner. Simply put, can we analyse the stream of geopolitical consciousness of human beings in their everyday interactions through visual culture? If so, can we identify and examine the governing patterns codifying these practices and the techniques employed to draw people into such practices? Therefore, can we dissect the elements leading everyday people to cohere, compose and converge, thereby modulate and reproduce both power and their own subjectivities?

Following Anderson (2006) who posit that “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (p.5), in contrast to a vertical elite-diffusion model (Kauffman, 2017), I argue that a horizontal approach does not regard people as static, credulous/incredulous objects of geopolitics. It does not regard people as unnatural and unvariegated docile products of power, or natural products of resistance. It does not focus on people`s momentary reactions or utterings at the instances of their encounters with certain programs, messages, events, or interviews. It is not designed to extract such instant reactions out of the subjects as well, as people’s professed opinions and their actual behaviours might contradict (Best, 2010; Lyon, 2003a; 2003b).

Rather, it refers to longitudinally converging intertextual continuums. It aims to understand how do people cotton on and come to conclusions through the various complementary tracks they follow and practice. In other words, it is about understanding people`s dynamism within the static realms of the state, and within the continuum of visual cultural media. As people, gradually, not instantly, animate certain means, actuate meanings, and come to certain conclusions through various procedures, without being coerced, the thesis embarks on a horizontal journey on the GWoT in the US visual culture from the perspective of the subject, to answer two interrelated questions which were given in the third page. Paraphrasing them through Foucault`s (1982) definition of governmentality: how does visual culture "structure the possible field of" geopolitical actions and imaginations of the population; and how does a human being vicariously experience geopolitics through visual culture and turn itself into a geopolitical subject? In the next section the concept of *procedural rhetoric* is explained to demonstrate how it is related to governmentality.

4.4. Procedural Rhetoric and Governmentality

Procedural Rhetoric is a concept coined by Bogost (2007) to explain the self-persuasion techniques which cannot be understood otherwise. These techniques are designed to persuade the viewer, however, subjects initiate these processes themselves. While Bogost (2007) specifically uses this concept to underline the opportunities of video game design, I expand the purview of procedural rhetoric towards convergence culture, as complementary patterns experienced in a continuum in-between several multi-media platforms generate a persuasive procedurality achievable by the viewers as well. In this sense, instead of a vertical and direct persuasion technique, this should be understood as a horizontal and longitudinal one. Employing it as a method allows me to analyse the procedures by which a rhetoric comes into play, generate connections, and make sense. Therefore, the operationalisation of this concept is central for my autoethnographic approach as it allows me to sample from my experiences. Yet, before understanding how I employ it, we should take a look at what Bogost meant by procedural rhetoric.

Procedural rhetorical techniques are designed to persuade the video game players by enabling them to explore and experience certain causalities themselves (Bogost, 2007). They are offered hands-on experience on certain topics through which they can test and verify the logic behind certain actions used to solve various issues. E.g., in a shooter game, they learn who to shoot, how to shoot, and why they need to shoot. Therefore, as players interact with the games, they gradually reach the reasoning between causes and effects that govern the behaviours of the elements of the fictional worlds within which they operate. Put differently, players begin the games without being overtly instructed to the rules. Instead, they learn the rules, causes and effects during the gameplay from experience. As a result, players are expected to convince themselves and grant the truthfulness of certain arguments of their own account through procedural rhetorical design. In this sense, instead of a vertical and direct persuasion technique

asking or forcing people to believe certain things, procedural rhetoric should be understood as a horizontal and longitudinal one allowing people to come to believe their seemingly own reasonings, arguments, and narratives.

Although the term “rhetoric” connotes a notorious deceitfulness, it has a long and indispensable history. The first recorded instances of classical rhetoric date back to Athenian Democracy. It was being used in to convey coherent arguments in public for the benefit of the common. Later Kenneth Burke expanded the purview of the use of rhetoric beyond the classical oratory. For him, rhetoric was not only useful for persuasion, but it also held the power to facilitate human actions and identifications between separate groups of people. By doing that, he also embraced the nonverbal domains of human interaction, such as symbolic systems. Further, with the advent of new visual mediums, such as photography and cinema in the 19th century, rhetoricization through visuality took a new shape (Bogost, 2007).

With the abrupt developments in computer technology, a different register of rhetorical element started to materialise. Digitalized rhetoric emerged as a powerful tool to convey arguments not only verbally and visually, but also, and most importantly procedurally, by harnessing the viewers` moves and related perceptual faculties (Isbister, 2016). Although cinema holds this capacity as well (Hven, 2017), specifically video games become the apotheosis of this new rhetorical register thanks to their stronger capacity to interact with the human subject. As the players being put into protagonist`s position with certain abilities to move the game elements, the narrative flow of the game becomes contingent upon the player`s interaction with it.

For instance, you are not forced to buy, play and buy into these games. You are offered to be free to do what you want and you do it all yourself. If you wish to play the game, you are being unwittingly pushed to act inside the lifeworld of the gameplay. This lifeworld possesses its own norms, rules, narratives, causalities and goals. And to entertain yourself, you have to exist in it. And to exist in it, you need to interact with it. And to interact, you need to understand these rules and causalities and act accordingly. Moreover, as these all happen throughout a procedure you follow and experience, they gradually become habitual. In this sense, by magnetically pulling you to immerse inside the screen world, not only do you process the machine, or move the avatar. Both physically and emotionally, it moves you back too (Isbister, 2016).

Moreover, as the game takes you through certain procedures and practices demanding you to perform and act, you continuously become attuned, accustomed and hence initiated into a lifeworld in which you think you call the shots. Yet its predesigned rule-based character allows you to experience only specific procedures and combinations. Your freedom of choice is limited. You interact, make sense, and make judgments within this new lifeworld which procedurally unfolds and leads you to choose certain

actions. This is why, Bogost defines procedural rhetoric as "the practice of using processes persuasively" (2007, p.28), as it has the elements of "persuasion", "expression", and "procedural authorship".

Thus, you become the author of an already authored world, just like in the novels with branching dialogues. Although you are endowed with various options and decisions, you call your shots by drawing upon a predesigned virtual field of actions. In other words, your possible moves and correlations of consecutive decisions are already calculated and packed by the design. This procedural authorship and the ad hoc experiences you practiced in due course of the gameplay are particularly important both to understand and also to deconstruct the everyday politics of governmentality from the perspective of the subject. This allows us the ways in which "a human being turns itself into a subject" through a specific technology of the self.

The concept, hence, is also closely related with Eco`s readers` procedural predictions, which are inferential walks (1984). In the face of an event with few clues, to guide themselves, readers apply a guesswork to foresee and understand the text at hand through inferential walks. Although tentative they are, such a guesswork guides the meaning making process of the reader. By such a guesswork, the reader activates a referential framework. Nevertheless, this activation process is not merely reader-oriented. Such moments are called relatively open interpretative nodes given to the reader. Therefore, such nodes precipitate the reader to resort to inferential walks. These junctures include metaphors, citations, potential verbal allusions, conceptual similarities between characters, scenes and events. Through applying the internal causality of these intertextual elements, the reader sustains its meaning making. Hence, "to make forecasts which can be [dis]/approved by the further course of the fabula, the Model Reader resorts to intertextual frames" (1984, p.34). The next section introduces a brief methodological discussion to understand and extricate the affective dimension of this concept and to further operationalise my argument.

4.5. Affect, Visuality and Governmentality

Although the recent advent of affective and corporeal turns paved our way for new horizons, this resulted in new methodological problems as well (Mutlu, 2012a; 2012b; Vuori, et al., 2015). While operating comfortably through analysing texts, representations, discourses and institutional mechanisms (Sylvester, 2012); now we had to cope with the intangible, non-representable assets of world politics. Yet how would it be possible to conduct research on non-representable affects within world politics? This is precisely challenging, since these new conceptual tools, unlike the tangibility of the previous ones, such as texts and representations, attempt to refer to the unseen forces that are sensationally transcending bodies at prediscursive levels.

However, what I am interested in this chapter is to develop a method to empirically trace the subjective possibilities and technologies of governmentalization patterns and affects through visual culture,

overcoming such challenges brought in by intangible aspects of world politics. I want to understand how individuals personally practice predesigned experiences and procedural rhetorics through visual culture. For instance, think of our everyday lives as the taken-for-granted procedures we unwittingly follow. Governmentality, or the conduct of the conduct, operates through certain conduits of conduct that immerse and channel our movements. By doing so, it creates a specific grid-system that can be regarded as an interpretative repertoire through which we make our inferential walks. Or we can think of them as conduits, as roads, routes, shortcuts, traffic signs, aisles, urban designs, architectural wayfinding tools that enable the system to channel and direct the movement of its population at a distance. It can also be exemplified through the yellow figure in Google Maps. We can virtually be located in a street somewhere in the world in an instant. We can manoeuvre our looks and moves within the limits of certain conditions of possibilities which are prescribed by the design and technology of it.

In this vein, in our everyday lives, what paths are enabled to us? Which routes we can follow and skip, which shortcuts do we choose and on the basis of which rules do we operate our decisions? What kinds of experiences do we have during those processes? What kind of visual elements do we encounter? How do they affect us? Or how do we skip them? Do we follow these based on our own volition? Or is it also related to our subjectivity entangled in a certain grid-system, like a nation-state, through prolonged procedures? This is why ethnographical methods analysing these paths and possibilities can allow us to connect the dots horizontally and spatio-temporarily. In Geertz`s terms (1973), to get a hold of a thick description of subject`s meaning making faculties and practices within these governmentalized grid-systems, we can design and conduct ethnographical and autoethnographical research and attempt to understand the life experiences increasingly leading, inducing and affecting the population to geopolitical epiphanies through convergence culture (Kien, 2006; 2013).

Hence, as our daily lives are prevalent with visual cultural elements (Mirzoeff, 2015) how do people proceed within the conduits of power, and more importantly how do these vicarious initiations through visual culture, for instance to geopolitics, coalesce with their subjective positions? Can people obliviously manifest these initiations through their decisions as if these are on their own initiative? However, how do I know that it is merely on my own initiative? Or does my choice also hinge on a possible field of actions?

As Foucault argues, "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p.187). Hence, what what we do in visual culture does? Or, what does our constant exposure to visual cultural interactions do? Are these engagements with visual culture simply entertainment? Consciously or unconsciously, what do we learn, infer, and abduct from them? Do we refer back to them to understand other things in our lives as well? Do we use them as woods to take our inferential walks in geopolitics?

"People know what they do"	• Playing FPS Games • Watching Films • Documentaries	• War-making • Fighting • Killing • Respawning • Observing
"...frequently they know why they do what they do"	• Enjoy	• Self-Suppression: Running away from unpleasantries of everyday life • Self-Expansion: Actively seeking new skills, stronger relationships and possess new experiences • Self-Display: People playing to draw the attention of fellow players, new people and more importantly online talent scouts.
"...but what they don`t know is what what they do does."	• Commodification	• Subjectification

Figure 3 Self-drawn table. (Source: Adapted from Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, p.187)

To understand the ways in which how these technologies work gradually and practically in their own spatio-temporal dimensions, I argue that we can study these "little things" that matter (Thrift, 2000) only through a horizontal and embodied perspective, which leads us to ethnographical studies. Within the aim of a horizontal approach that focuses on the subject, the method to be devised should be a pluralist one to employ the different layers affecting the subject. The reason why such a methodological framework is preferred can be explained in four steps.

1- **Prediscursive Nature of Affect and Embodiment:** Prediscursive nature of affect renders itself as an elusive object of analysis. Mere interpretations, discourse or compositional analyses would be hard for the researcher to engage with the intensity of bodily affects. Mutlu (2014b) argues that the use of autoethnography is one of the suitable methods to study affect. For instance, as part of a global audience actively experiencing the GWoT through visual culture, I would like to analyse and evaluate my own bodily reactions to get a hold of every aspect of affect.

2- **Generative Power of Affect:** Geopolitical imaginations and narratives are built upon affective sensations. Affects do not simply emerge and fade out. Rather, affect has a generative role through sensational arousals. Through guided references affect can be garnered as the basis of geopolitical narratives. To understand where those affects are transcribed into geopolitical narratives at the discursive level, analyse the narrative formations and visual rhetorics of the select visual cultural medium. This enables the researcher to demonstrate how those affects progress from pre-discursive reactions into wider geopolitical utterances. The question to be asked at this stage is: how do affects influence my reasoning and thinking?

3- **Interactive and Voluntary Engagements:** Affective geopolitical narratives do not simply expose themselves to the population as in the propaganda model. Rather, people voluntarily engage with these information inputs. Simply put, they do not impose and expose, they enclose the subjects through their own wills. In this sense, people vicariously experience geopolitics, as themselves, through interactive mediums of visual culture. Omnipresence of those narratives constantly couple up with each other and this leaves less and less space for subjects to not to immerse themselves into those narrative engagements. This brings us to a more interactive and complex engagement of the subject with mentioned affective narratives. In this sense, procedural rhetoric has a very rich potential to elicit the governmentality aspects of visual culture. According to classical rhetorical models, rhetors were trying to persuade people to do something. However, unlike these dialogic propaganda-based models, according to Bogost, people self-experience those rhetorics and they believe that they make their own meanings and judgements out of them. As a result, through procedurally experiencing narratives, war experiences disseminate and clone amongst subjects.

4- **Bridging Governmentality with Experiences and Practices:** Although Foucault attempted to show the links between truth, power and the individual conduct in his writings, as he admitted himself, his initial overemphasis on truth and power "hampered" the link of individual conduct to his general argument on the operation of power (Foucault, 1989). Roughly from 1977, he coined new concepts to understand the ways in which governments tried to produce self-subjugating free subjects to best suit their political purposes. This was mainly achieved through structuring a possible field of actions in which subjects are freely operated within the confines of given options and pathways. Through applying Foucault`s "technologies of the self" concept to visual culture as practices, I aim to empirically delve into the operation of micro-power.

In that sense, affect studies plays a very important role and attach a new quality to the realms of procedural rhetoric and governmentality studies. To understand how does power taps into subjects` bodies and souls, we should also be vigilant in analysing the procedural rhetoric in terms of affects,

sensations, somatic markers most of which are felt at a pre-discursive level. In that regard, procedural rhetoric does not only make us move though a virtual path and perform specific procedures step by step with our own consciousness. It also moves us at somatic levels. In that sense, procedural rhetoric can be regarded as the vicarious initiation ceremonies taking place on a daily basis. Thanks to these processes, subjects initiate themselves into the realms of the *raison d'état*, and hence to the grid-system. The sequence of events and the circumstances we are faced with lead us to affect-driven geopolitical epiphanies as well.

The links between above discussed concepts of procedural rhetoric, affect, visuality and governmentality can be exemplified through the frontispiece of Hobbes` Leviathan, in which he himself carefully guided the drawing of it. In that frontispiece, while the sovereign eyes the territory with the power of the two realms in his hands, his torso is constructed by the assemblage of the population. It includes the basic elements of visual rhetoric. Yet in procedural rhetoric, the Global Leviathan, or the US, lends his eye to his subjects to allow them to see from his perspective and to exercise states` ground level dilemmas. By that, subjects surveil, reason and judge on their own, from the strategic vantage point of the state. They witness and share states` geopolitical issues and stalemates, for instance, through the situatedness of its soldiers. This allows people to turn themselves into the willing extensions of power. Therefore, power can extend its ties to a network of subjects and justify its conducts by sharing a way of seeing and observing the world, and by lending an eye/I view. In this sense, to see how certain geopolitical vantage points and narratives are shared and practiced from the perspective of the subject, I use autoethnography. In the next section, I demonstrate how I integrate autoethnography to my method.

4.6. Autoethnography

Autoethnography as a methodological choice only recently started to become popular in IR and PG. Despite their tendency towards autobiographical studies, these works herald the need to refer the researcher as the harbinger of data as well (Butz & Besio, 2009; Brigg & Bleiker, 2010; Dauphinee, 2013; Edkins, 2013). As mentioned earlier, there is a plethora of studies analysing the various issues in global politics through applying various conceptual interpretations. Especially recently, both IR and critical geopolitics literatures are consistently piling up with works analysing films, cartoons, video games, social media discussions, art installations and others. However, as Salter refers, these are mostly "preliminary" interpretive analyses (2011). Furthermore, what is mostly being done by these studies is asking a relevant question on an international issue, and arguing it with a useful concept and implicating interpretive analysis. This is to suggest that the literature continues to enjoy the ontological and epistemological arguments of the social theory as the basis of their conceptual interpretations without a methodological need to sustain a theoretical framework. Especially in terms of affect studies this absence becomes more conspicuous.

Affect is a nascent study terrain setting the body at the centre of its analysis and moving beyond its representable aspects to understand the power relations at the somatic level. Yet this leaves us with four distinct ways of studying affect and power. First, as mostly applied within the literature, assumption-led preliminary analyses with select conceptual interventions into relevant international topics propose the affective implications of the case at hand. Second, neurology-led analyses might focus on the biochemical reactions taking place within the body as a response to specific cases. Third, ethnography-led analyses, by working with focus groups, recording their reactions and interviewing them to elicit responses in regards to their felt experiences. Fourth, auto-ethnography-led analyses in which the researcher, acknowledges the fact of his/her subjectivity, takes his/her own body and record its experiences by transcribing pre-discursive affects s/he experiences into discursive articulations and thematically compares them with geopolitical and popular cultural narratives.

In this research, the fourth method will be implemented. The reason why this fourth register is chosen originates from the fact that the first register significantly lacks the rigorous methodological elements. The second register requires an interdisciplinary and mostly quantitative collaboration with neuroscientists and the use of EEG and fMRI machines. The third register, although useful in certain aspects in regards to generalizability of the results, is problematic in that the number of experimentees and the time that should be devoted to each of their experiences are limited to reach a generalizable quantity, and it is very complicated and mostly discouraging to elicit pre-discursive affects of the felt experiences from the experimentees as verbal responses and the ways in which they relate it to global geopolitical agenda. For instance, in Bos` study (2016), he takes six people into account as a research sample, records their videos during their gameplay to see their bodily reactions, and asks them their feelings after the gameplay. He later interprets these video recordings and relates them with the responses he gets. Nevertheless, as he mentions, mostly the experimentees are unable to verbally describe those affects and bodily reactions.

However, the fourth methodological register offers us a new perspective to move beyond these analyses. First, by using the methods of autoethnography, the researcher regards itself and its own body as the object of analysis. Second, s/he carefully practices the select case material and record its own video and writes down every reaction s/he experienced. These vary from sweating hands, shivers down the spine, goose bumps, tears in the eyes, and every other possible bodily reaction. Third, s/he compares them with the video recording to double check the moments s/he misses to transcribe due to the flow of the experience. Fourth, s/he sorts them into relevant narrative themes which manifest the governmentality aspect of the general geopolitical agenda. Later, the acquired data is discussed by the researcher within the proposed theoretical framework. To a degree this method is similar to shot-by-shot film analysis techniques.

Regarding these experiences as procedural rhetorics through which a subject guides itself, while at the same time entertaining or informing itself freely, s/he also practices a given experience from the perspective of the sovereign. This does not only lead the subject to empathize with the sovereign, but also allows the subject to recognise the reasoning behind the geopolitical actions and narrations on its own as a free subject. Considering the given knowledge s/he concluded on his/her own, the subject internalizes a specific geopolitical situational awareness, reason with putting him/herself into the shoes of the protagonist, and ultimately justifies the actions based on the procedure experienced. As during the procedure, all the options, if any, s/he can choose are given, the subject limits its own possible field of actions and imaginations with which the optional spectrum s/he is endowed. By that, subjects automatically dismiss alternative possibilities and create imagined constraints. This is why, deploying PRA to critical geopolitics is of paramount importance to lead the field into fertile methodological and theoretical debates and further these options beyond the mentioned boundaries of autoethnographic studies.

4.7. Methods: Data Gathering

This section reveals the specific method I devised to extract data through visual cultural resources to see how they converge and function as compilations producing a totality about a geopolitical topic. This approach allows us to understand and explain how a human being procedurally initiates itself into the world of geopolitics through the complementing cross-references found in visual culture in a diffused way. To do so, I focus on the recurring design features and thematic patterns found in various storytelling platforms. Thus, PRA entails a pluralist method, including my autoethnographic experience of procedural rhetoric in and between various mediums (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010) as well.

In this vein, I analyse each case in five steps. Each step aims to understand the various stages designed for viewers to make them procedurally immerse themselves into the story world, embody the protagonists and make meaning on their own by following in the protagonists` predesigned routes. While these five steps allow me to attend to the production, dissemination and reception of media products as well, as said, the main aim is to detect the common design flows, recurring themes, and patterns of experiences offered to the audience as practices in a diffused sense. Simply put, I look at the patterns of correlation (Collier, 2009) between multiple media products.

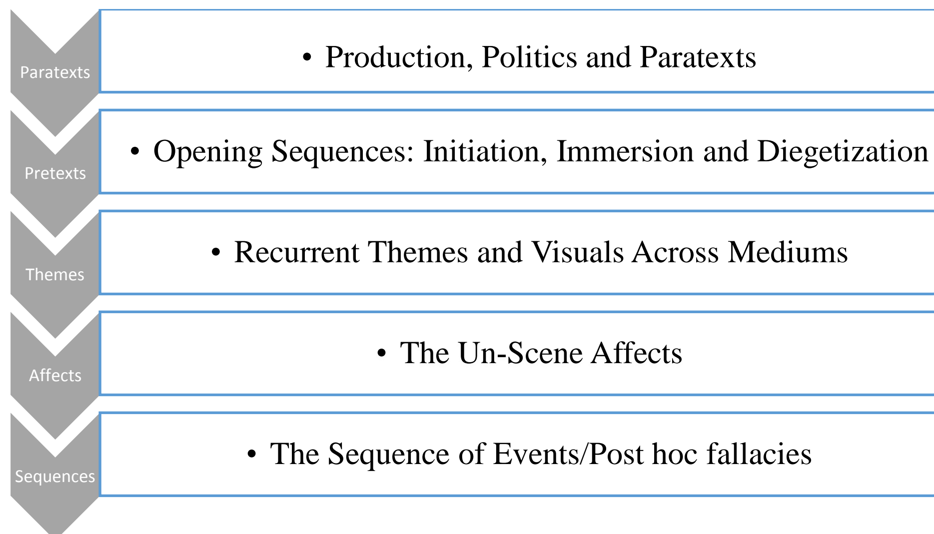

Figure 4 *Five Stages of Analysis (Source: Self-Drawn).*

First, I look at paratexts to understand the medium`s production phase and initial framing to the public. Paratexts are important added elements which form preconceptions for the reception of a medium by the public. Simply put, they are devised to prime the users to how to receive the media, anchor the meaning to interpret and hence complement the viewing experience in a certain way. From marketing hype to press reviews, whatever is told about any medium that begins to shape public positions and channel audience can be regarded as paratexts (Gray, 2008; Pirinen, 2014). Accordingly, they inform and shape viewing experiences,

> tell us what to expect, ... shape the reading strategies that we will take with us `into` the text, and provide the all-important early frames through which we will examine, react to, and evaluate textual consumption. As such, the study of paratexts is the study of how meaning is created, and of how texts begin (Gray, 2010, p.26).

Therefore, paratexts guide and channel the conduct of the audience, by precontextualising the scenes to unfold (Oddo, 2014), and by addressing the woods we need to take inferential walks to comprehend the text (Eco, 1994).

For instance, marketing campaigns can be understood as paratexts of media products. According to Gray "through hype and previews, texts are pre-decoded [for the viewers] before a text even exists" (2008, p.33). Put simply, by the means of paratextual hype, producers catch attention, encourage and aid the decodification process of the audience. It involves accompanying ads, texts, products, and the public statements of producers and directors. This stage of the analysis allows me to understand how the foremost encounters of the viewers are tried to be shaped. At this stage, first, I look at whether the media products received any institutional/governmental support and whether they frame themselves

to the public as though they did not; second, I look at whether they frame themselves practically through the same paratextual realm of another media product. In this vein, this level of analysis reveals the initial intertextual references in between the mediums and the paramilitary culture and military institutions.

Second, I analyse the opening sequences of the mediums. Next to paratexts, this stage can be regarded as the second threshold in which a viewer initiate itself into a story. Following Pötzsch (2012), I maintain that analysing these initial moments enables us to see the ways in which the mediums use certain design tracks to immerse viewers and players into the story world, and prime them to how to receive and co-construct the story worlds. Themes and references deployed at these initial stages through "objectifying/subjective rhetoric" link certain memory processes to shape the interpretative freedoms of the viewers. For instance, objectifying rhetoric

> *[P]ositions the spectator within the frames of a dominant filmic discourse, reducing the availability of alternative codes and competing reading strategies accordingly. The ensuing narration serves as a mere illustration of a pre-established factual background positing itself as the truth about a historical event. The objectifying strategy aims at evoking an aura of detached objectivity and impartiality; clear and matter-of-fact lines of text on a black screen, distanced voice-over commentators or witness accounts and recourse to news footage, historical documents, or original locations characterize this particular mode* (Pötzsch, 2012, pp.8-9).

> *[A] subjective rhetoric [...] enables an overdetermination of the spectator as it allows for multiple subject-positions within the discursive frames of the film. The subjective mode has a strong psychological component and is heavily reliant on accounts by direct witnesses. In contrast to the objectifying mode, however, these witness accounts are not employed to invoke a dominant historical master narrative pertaining to a certain event, but constitute a claim to a merely partial truth vested in personal (and often traumatic) experience.* (Pötzsch, 2012, pp.9-10).

However, as Pötzsch (2012) argues, most of the war films use these rhetorics together to make the viewers relate their subjective positionality to the objective reality set in motion in the beginning. This enables the convergences between various mediums, fiction and non-fiction alike. For instance, in this way, the personal stories of war-making and vulnerabilities of the body cohere the overall narrative by adding different layers. Both the subjective victimhood and personal heroics find their place in the grand narrative. Therefore, viewers can complement objectivity with subjectivity, and cohere a composite narrative from different perspectives. Such perspectives, for instance, evoke empathy to the vulnerable soldier, arouse antipathy for the enemy who is responsible from the vulnerabilities of the soldier, and normalise and depoliticise geopolitics.

Third, I analyse the underlying thematic patterns that are recurring in each medium. Based on how Pascale (2011) and Charmaz (2008) outline analytic induction, paying particular interest in patterns of interpellation and subjectification, I base my codes on macro and micro discursive visual cues, by comparing the narrative with the experience. I pay particularly close attention to how do visual mediums show the self, the body, the other and the properties that the visual medium assigns to these constructions—such as agency, fragility, fighting, killing and immortality, which arguably, desensitize/inoculates the body to condone the imbroglios of war-making. In this sense, in each case, I organise a large number of initial coding extracted through select media products. Next, I sort these initial codes into ten overarching categories. Ultimately, these categories lead me to central concepts I can organise my analysis around.

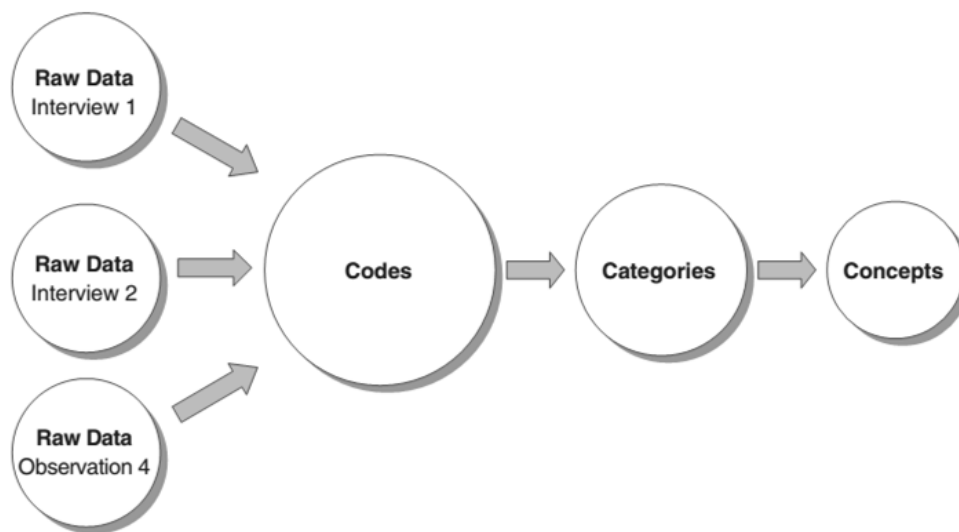

Figure 5 *Coding Phases (Source: Lichtman, 2012, p.252)*

Hence, by colour coding each conversation and scene, my analyses detected ten-to-twenty conversational and visual codes that are reduced to eight overarching themes/categories and ultimately to four main underlying messages/concepts in each medium. When compared, I found out that each case was woven around certain thematic patterns that were recurring in other cases. Moreover, apart from recurring, they were verifying and fuelling each other`s truthfulness/reality by compiling and compensating. Put differently, offshoot narratives were offsetting the narrative flaws of each other and offering a verifiable convergent flow. The underlying thematic patterns I found in each case are as follows:

1. **Desensitization/Desanitization:** Refers to the ways in which scenes covering violence, blood and gore, are not hidden; but increasingly, and blatantly obvious.
2. **Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):** Refers to the morally problematic actions undertaken by the protagonist to restore the order to its default status. This entails killing; hurting; torturing; homefront/battlefront conversion; twisted good and evil, and the necessity of sacrifice.
3. **Sin-Easter Egg Hunting/Geotagging: there be dragons to legitimize draconian politics:** This theme refers to the eagerness to find foes to punish and the tendency to deal operational dilemmas with probabilities. It refers to the geopolitical guesswork seeking morally problematic and hostile actions and enemies to kill. Furthermore, the idea of killing is legitimised by complementing probabilities with gut-feelings, hunches, confirmation bias and labelling. Hence, this entails the way the Other is socially and militarily seen, sought and predicted.
4. **Intuitions against Institutions:** Refers to the intuitive drives (chance, self-assurance, manifest destiny; exceptionalism; gut-feelings) compelling the "hero" to follow its gut-feelings and stand against the institutional regulations to do it. This entails hand tying orders; rules of engagement; law and order; corrupt bureaucrats; human rights; equality; liberty; democratic values.
5. **Voiceless Other:** Refers to the ways in which the other is rendered unintelligible, disordered, precarious, disposable and dehumanised. Hence, while we can see the Other, only in certain instances their voices and pains are rendered comprehensible.
6. **Voiced Self:** Refers to the ways in which the friend/self is narrated, rendered intelligible, ordered, stable, vulnerable, indispensable and humanized. Hence, we also see how the self is physically, mentally and emotionally affected by war at a deeper level with more intricate details.
7. **Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:** Refers to the drills, military exercises, techno-fetishism and military show of force.

The concepts distilled from these categories/themes are the onus; sin-eating; gut-feelings; and the first-person. Accordingly, The Onus refers to the responsibility to protect and take action; while sin-eating refers to the adoption of the use of violence for the protection of the good through professional, dispassionate, purposeful and thoughtful hands. Gut-feelings, on the other hand, addresses the

importance of intuitions over institutional checks and balances, and the resulting bureaucratic setbacks. Depicting that killing is not taken for granted at the institutional level, it shows that exerting violence is necessary for the survival of the warrior who faces geopolitics. Fittingly, first-person denotes the possible field of personal actions that are making geopolitics personally situated and embodied. Therefore, bundled with the hero`s first-person vision, these experience-based messages initiate us into geopolitics as a realm of personal survival, whilst rendering certain moral misconducts that are based on intuitions.

Next, I analyse the affects I experienced via my own body. This refers to the affective reactions felt and sensed by the audience (in this case the researcher) concomitant to the viewing/playing geopolitics. I call these "un-scene affects", as they are not present in the scenes, and as they are unseen and unknown to the viewers/players themselves. Put differently, viewers/players are mostly oblivious to the affects, which are "non-intentional, bodily reactions" (Leys, 2011, p.437) they experienced during their visual drills and to the ways in which these affects influence their reasoning. Inspired by Robbie Cooper's art installation, *Immersion* (2008), in which he captures children`s facial reactions when playing video games, I record my own face with a camera to see how I am moved by visual culture. In this sense, I regard face as the depository of somatic reactions felt in the body, and an object of analysis where I can record the ways in which a viewer/player gives emotional reactions when experiencing certain elements and practices in visual culture. Although analysing facial expressions to decode emotional and affective sensations leads us to recent neuroscientific research, especially on mirror neurons (Iacoboni, 2009), I only include a preliminary analysis to show how our visual cultural encounters have affective dimensions as well. Further developed and separate research, benefiting from the employment of fMRI machines, might be conducted on the relations between the face, mirror neurons, visual culture and geopolitics. This might relate recent studies on neurocinematics (Hasson et al., 2008; Pisters, 2003; 2012), neuropolitics (Connolly, 2002), and face politics (Edkins, 2014; Mutz, 2016) as well.

My mere aim here is to underline the affective impacts of visual culture on the ways in which viewers/players experience geopolitical narratives. Put differently, if visual culture provides us with geopolitical narratives which function as interfaces between our everyday lives and world politics, the affects of such interfaces become manifest in our faces. Hence, to extract this affective data, I record my own facial expressions during my engagements with visual media. These expressions ranges from sudden jolts, red mists and mimicry, to smiles, tears, cringes, convulsions and frowns. These facial expressions show how I am viscerally immersed and vicariously moved by and through visual practices. I later watch these recordings and note how I felt/reacted at certain moments, how these moments affectively influenced my reasoning, related me to the storyline and to the protagonist`s positionality. It also allows me to remember and compare, in which scenes how and why I reacted and what I felt. By doing so, I also show how IR and PG literature can benefit from autoethnographic and affective turns.

Fifth, I analyse the sequences of events, enabling the viewers to procedurally experience the narrative in a certain order. This stage, therefore, aims to understand the causality and consequentiality emplotted by the medium. By focusing on the ways in which certain themes and affects are weaved into each other in a consecutive fashion, I examine how mediums emplot and guide the viewers procedurally to experience the story along certain lines and through certain trains of thought. In this sense, this stage of the analysis focuses on the order of events to unravel the path of reasoning structured by the media. Attention to these sequences reveals how the media products provide certain cause and effect relationships and produce or silence arguments through post hoc fallacies.

As a result, the method developed here is used to reveal the governmentality aspects of visual culture in regards to the GWoT. By uncovering the visually, narratively and affectively engaging thematic templates in visual culture, it is aimed to trace the tracks practiced by the population as technologies of the self. In this regard, what I call as *PRA* covers the intertextual and horizontal permeations between affective, visual and narrative registers in visual culture.

5. Documentaries*: These are the True Stories*

Previous chapters presented the methodological and theoretical departure points of this study, including the procedural rhetorical aspects of the analyses. In this vein, rather than regarding the media products as isolated and static experiences in themselves, their designated gradual transpirations[13] on the audience will be analysed by focusing on their dynamic, intertextually converging flows in five steps. The first four steps aim to analytically segregate the flow of the narrative into gradations to show how they are woven into each other in the fifth step. First is an examination of paratexts, the intention of the producers and the support they had from government and military institutions (Gray, 2010). Second is the analysis of opening sequences to understand how the audience is plunged into the story and how its interpretational freedoms are attempted to be enabled and disabled, steered and navigated from the very beginning (Erll, 2008; Pötzsch, 2012). Third is the recurring themes to pin down the common layers in each medium. Fourth is the affective impacts of the medium on the audience through an auto-ethnographical position (Brigg & Bleiker, 2010; Bleiker, 2015; Bødker & Chamberlain, 2016). Fifth is the sequential analysis to show "cynically timed sequences" (Lisle, 2014), that generates a fluid narrative typical of mainstream cinema, that forces the viewers to participate in the story world to coalesce the events into cause and effect relationships (Brody, 2008).

In this sense, this chapter substantiates the analysis through US based documentaries on the GWoT which are advertised as personal geopolitical exposés and "unmediated/unnarrated" *true stories*. Although news coverages, films, video games and cartoons have widely drawn the interests of IR and PG scholars, documentaries did not gain a similar traction. While documentary making has recently become a hot topic for pedagogical or political reasons (Callahan, 2015; Munster & Sylvest, 2015), understanding what documentaries mean for everyday people are also important for the literature. Yet due to their non-fictive nature, they have the power to exercise complementary inputs in the affective interpretative repertoire of the GWoT.

Moreover, while classical style documentaries are being narrated from a third-person point of view and documenting the war effort from an institutional perspective, new war documentaries illustrate the war zone environment from the perspective of the soldiers. By doing so, while audiences are channelled to witness the bodily hardships and sentimental moments of soldiers, in turn, they miss the institutional and political reasoning behind the wars. As a result, war-making is being rendered to the personal, embodied, vulnerable and anguished accounts of American soldiers, who are depicted as everyday

[13] In botany, transpiration means the passage of water through a plant from the roots through the vascular system to the atmosphere. (http://www.dictionary.com/browse/transpiration). I use this word to refer to the gradual permeation of complementary references in media texts.

people. Rather than the erasure of the personal narratives, an erasure of the political narrative is achieved through the deployment of deployed personnel`s personal narratives. This increases a certain sympathetic register that whitewashes the war effort itself by the transposition of geopolitical victimhoods and by showcasing the soldiers` use of violence as the only option for their personal survival. In what follows, three documentary films depicting the everyday life of US soldiers in the GWoT will be analysed.

The selected documentary films are *Restrepo* (2010), *Taking Fire* (*TF*) (2016) and *Live to Tell* (*LT*) (2016). While the first one is a feature-length documentary film, the two others are docuseries, and while the first two takes place in Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, where the events covered in the *Lone Survivor* film occurs, the last one takes place in Ramadi, Iraq, as in American Sniper. Furthermore, *LT* narrates the loss of a SEAL Team member who served in the same team with the *American Sniper*, Chris Kyle (see Chapter 7). Therefore, each of them chronicles a certain section in the lives of soldiers in the frontlines. While *Restrepo* is documenting this through the cameras of embedded journalists, *TF* uses the personal helmet-cam footages of the soldiers, and *LT* employs re-enactions. However, each of these documentaries leave the narration to the soldiers themselves by conducting talking-head style interviews. Apart from these aspects, the way they frame themselves as "true stories", the themes they cover, and the ways in which they are sequentially woven into each other are the common analytical features which driven my choice. Yet, their special focus on the personal, and the concomitant defocus on the political have been influential in guiding my selection.

Hence, to categorise these reasons: **First**, makers of these documentaries argue that they avoid being political, but are dedicated to the lived battlefield experiences of the American military personnel, while minimising the support they garnered from the US military and government (Foundas, 2013; Turse, 2010) to make the documentaries. I argue that this seeming apolitical framing is itself political, as it naturalises war-making, while denaturalising the political aspects of it, as if wars are caused by the eternal conflict between the good and the evil. **Second**, each of those films deploys the perspective of American soldiers and portrays geopolitics from their lived adversities. Yet, although they speak against the enemy and the geography as the personification of their threat environment, none of the soldiers speak against or seem to be contemplating about the political background of the war they are fighting. While this authorises the soldierly experience to speak about war as an apolitical, personal survival issue, the same perspective also justifies their use of violence as a requirement for their survival.

Third, while the US soldier is being authorised to document what war is, neither the enemy, nor the local Afghani or Iraqi people are voiced, translated or heard. Their presence in these documentaries are lumped with the enemy, or relegated to the minor role of a recalcitrant culture. **Fourth**, relatedly, they all purport to transcend the top-down geo/political narratives of the GWoT through the thick reality of

the personal, boots-on-the-ground experiences of military personnel in the battlefield. However, with the tokenism of seemingly prioritising the personal experience of war over the political use of it, arguably, they overwrite the political with the prioritisation and victimisation of the American-centred personal. And as a result, the contemporary geopolitical complexities of the post-9/11 era is simplified as an everyday threat and become relatable issues to the everyday lives at the homefront. **Fifth**, these documentaries present themselves as reliable sources for forming beliefs on US wars, hence, the geopolitical conduct and agenda, while highlighting the social, sentient, and vulnerable aspects of US soldiers and their "bodies at risk" (Burgoyne, 2012). **Sixth**, arguably, these emotional and affective registers embroil the viewer to the soldierly situatedness on the frontlines and its emoting faculties in a certain direction to embody the soldiers at risk. **Finally**, the themes and the sequential usages of them as causal links that lead the narrative to be gradually unfolded and owned by the viewer is a central aspect of all the films to be analysed.

5.1. *Restrepo*

5.1.1. Introduction

Restrepo (2010) is a documentary film on the Afghanistan War directed by Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington. As embedded journalists, the two produced the film by living with the 2nd Platoon of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in a remote outpost in Korengal Valley, Afghanistan in 2007. In relation to other cases, it has a boots-on-the-ground perspective focusing exclusively on soldiers and their "war" – a war between an elusive, faceless enemy and an embodied, sentient and vulnerable warrior. Moreover, receiving the Grand Jury Prize for the best documentary at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, *Restrepo* can be considered as one of the earliest and most prominent documentary examples of narrating the GWoT through a boots-on-the-ground (Munster & Sylvest, 2013), or "strategic corporal" perspective.

Along with the documentary, Junger published a book, called "War" (2010), further documenting the events in *Restrepo,* and a less known sequel film continuing the story in the valley, called *Korengal* (2014). Hence, the valley and its continuous pop-culturalisation make *Restrepo* a quintessential example of convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006a) in regards to the GWoT too. For instance, the events covered in the film, *Lone Survivor* (2012) (see Chapter 7) and in the documentary, *Live to Tell* (2016) (see next section) also took place in this region. Thus, I contend that these different yet related fragments registered through diverse boots-on-the-ground perspectives are remediated and converged into a composite and holistic narrative and sustain a cohesive account on the GWoT.

In this sense, *Restrepo* chronicles the lives of the soldiers in the 2nd Platoon during their 15-month deployment in Korengal Valley. As a fly-on-the-wall documentary, it shows the soldierly life on the frontlines and does not narrate the war effort from any top-down perspective of any kind. Rather, it wants the viewer to consider soldiers, their everyday lives and sensitivities from their very own perspectives as "war". Accordingly, the platoon Junger and Hetherington are embedded with is deployed in the valley to establish a safe zone for a strategic road construction. To secure the area, they are tasked with building an outpost and winning the hearts and minds of the local population, while fighting with an elusive enemy. On the other hand, eponymous with the outpost, the documentary is named after one of the fallen comrades, which speaks to the emotional aspects of the documentary and soldierly life. Therefore, no voice-over narration is employed and the scenes are rather cut and merged with post-deployment interviews. These talking-head documentary style shots enable soldiers to express themselves and enhance the intimacy of the film as well.

Yet, I argue that this microscopic battlefield perspective (1) disguises the macro-politics behind the war effort by humanising and victimising the perpetrators of geopolitical violence, (2) consigns the possible field of geopolitical thought with the situatedness and capabilities of the soldiers on the ground, (3) and relegates geopolitics, as seen through the eye/I of "strategic corporals", into a personally supportable tactical issue for the sake of the survival of the warrior. In this regard, questioning how the film is promoted (paratext), how it is initiated (beginning sequences), how it is filled (with themes and affects) and weaved together (sequences) are equally important elements to critically uncover the film`s implicit and wider geopolitical functions.

5.1.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

As Der Derian contends, "cinematic aestheticisation of violence can glorify as well as vilify war, depending on how the spectator identifies with the protagonist and the investigator with the informant" (2010, p.181). Paratexts, in this vein, help the media product to be decoded and identified in a certain way. They arrange a viewing, aiming to constrict the interpretational freedoms of the audience. A case in point, Restrepo is consistently promoted and framed by way of endorsing the verity of its content. In its official website, for instance, it is defined as:

> *"[A]n entirely experiential film: the cameras never leave the valley; there are no interviews with generals or diplomats. The only goal is to make viewers feel as if they have just been through a 90-minute deployment. This is war, full stop. The conclusions are up to you.*
>
> *The war in Afghanistan has become highly politicized, but soldiers rarely take part in that discussion. Our intention was to capture the experience of combat, boredom and fear through the eyes of the soldiers themselves. Their lives were our lives: we did not sit down with their families, we did not interview Afghans, we did not explore geopolitical debates. Soldiers are living and fighting and dying at remote outposts in Afghanistan in conditions*

that few Americans back home can imagine. Their experiences are important to understand, regardless of one's political beliefs. Beliefs are a way to avoid looking at reality. This is reality" (Junger & Hetherington, 2009).

In that sense, paratexts of *Restrepo* recommend it as a direct access to "war" as it is, as if it lacks any political lens, top-down narrative and editorial intrusion. Some commentators argue that Junger avoided "making a political movie" (Noaker, 2010, para.8) and "documentary's lack of agenda has created something of a cinematic Rorschach test" (Hargrove, 2010, para.10), leaving anyone to independently make sense of the film. Yet, ascribing the interpretative freedom of a Rorschach test to such a documentary might be misleading, as it is not necessarily an anti-war documentary at all for chronicling war from a different point-of-view. Thus, to show how the film is promoted and framed to aid and guide viewers` initial interpretational freedoms in certain ways, its paratext, as well as the role of *embedding* and *editing* should be carefully dissected.

As Munster contends, "embedding allows journalists, photographers and filmmakers to get close to combat and fighting, activities that might otherwise remain off-limits and out of sight" (Munster, 2008, p.116). Moreover, as it permits proximity for the journalists to a specific content through a specific positioning, it also enables a sense of selective embodiment for the audience. This, in turn, allows the viewers to see through the eyes of the combatants, vicariously experience their situatedness, and practice their possible field of actions and imaginations on the homefront. Simply put, embedding journalists to the frontlines enables the viewers to embody the war effort with a lent eye/I. And assuming the eye/I of the soldiers aligns and transposes the subjectivity of the citizen-soldiers in the battlefront with that of the civilian-citizen on the homefront.

Arguably, this new visual alignment, or transposition, enriches the vantage point of the audience on war by sustaining the authenticity of the overall composite narrative through new layers. Nevertheless, this visual alignment/transposition of subjectivities do not necessarily challenge or altercate with the top-down political, strategic and diplomatic vistas. Rather, by detaching war from policymaking and its otherly costs; and ascribing it exclusively to warfighting and the personal survival of US soldiers, it generates a suitable atmosphere to by-pass politics. As a result, even anti-war sentiments can be subsumed through "support our troops" statements: "Ask almost any American, even those opposed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they will state that they `support our troops`" (Carr, 2010).

On the other hand, as Cockburn argues, embedded journalism evokes "an image of the supposedly independent correspondent truckling to military mentors who spoon-feed him or her absurdly optimistic information about the course of the war". Yet, *optimism* should not be considered as the single mainstay of the politics behind embedded-journalism. For instance, merely drawing on the pessimism of the film, van Munster suggests that Restrepo reveals the futility of war and enables "a

more critical stance... to ask macro-questions about the nature and costs of war" (2008, p.115). Nevertheless, a case in point suggests otherwise. A caller, who is named as Andrew who participated in an interview with Junger and Hetherington on NPR`s Talk of the Nation and comments on how the film helped him to enlist in the Army:

> *I watched the movie, incredibly well-done documentary. And in during that time of watching it, I was actually considering joining the Army. And of all the stuff that you get during that time where you're thinking about it, you get kind of a candy-colored lens of everything. And that seemed to be more of a - just a window into what was actually going on and really helped made my final decision in that, you know, I don't want to say that was Army life at it's worst, but at its hardest. And even at that moment, I just felt that I still needed to do it. And so thanks for making the film. I really appreciate it. It had a big impact on my life* (NPR, 2011).

Thus, rather than giving an optimistic frontage, the main criteria for military cooperation, in the words of Phil Strub, "the Pentagon's liaison to the movie industry, is how could the proposed production benefit the military . . . could it help in recruiting [and] is it in sync with present policy?" (Sirota, 2011, para.11). Similarly, "Robert Anderson, the Navy's Hollywood point person, put it even more clearly to PBS in 2006: `If you want full cooperation ... until the script is in a form that we can approve, then the production doesn't go forward`" (Ibid.).

Displaying the tolls and stress of war-making does not necessarily lead to critical questioning and offer contrasting points against present policies. That's why the film was shown on several military bases, including Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell and Fort Benning as well, as though it is an orientation session for soldiers, rather than a critical war film against what they do (Carr, 2010). Likewise, the appraisal of the book "Generation Kill" written by embedded journalist Evan Wright is telling. Once it was deemed to be conveying a critical picture against the Marine Corps in Iraq War, later, officers are ordered to read it, "to get a clear idea of what war is like for enlisted men" (Waxman, 2004). In this vein, challenging Munster`s view, I argue that the prospects of asking macro-questions about GWoT are delimited in *Restrepo* with the situatedness and capabilities of American soldiers who are framed as sentient, vulnerable and rendered human beings without choice. In his accompanying book, Junger puts his intention bluntly:

> *This time, I`m not interested in the Afghans and their endless, terrible wars; I`m interested in the Americans. I`m interested in what it`s like to serve in a platoon of combat infantry in the U.S. Army. The moral basis of the war doesn`t seem to interest soldiers much, and it`s long-term success or failure has a relevance of almost zero ... they generally leave the big picture to others"* (Junger, 2010, p.25).

While Junger frames war as though it is an issue of personal survival for American soldiers and as though they just found themselves in a position without an alternative option in the “endless, terrible wars” of Afghans, Turse argues otherwise. Joining the army for these soldiers was a choice and they “volunteered to kill on someone else’s orders for yet others’ reasons” (Turse, 2010). Congruently, a soldier from the 2nd Platoon, Toves, says that “he joined the Army because he was tired of partying” (Junger, 2010, p.67), and many others say that they saw it as an alternative. Yet as Turse underlines, war is not an alternative for the Afghans who find themselves caught in constant war in their homelands.

> *“The ordinary people whom U.S. troops have exposed to decades of war and occupation, death and destruction, uncertainty, fear, and suffering … have had no such choice. They had no place else to go and no way to get there, unless as exiles and refugees in their own land or neighboring ones. They have instead been forced to live with the everpresent uncertainty that comes from having culturally strange, oddly attired, heavily armed American teenagers roaming their country, killing their countrymen, invading their homes, arresting their sons, and shouting incomprehensible commands laced with the word “fuck” or derivations thereof”* (Turse, 2010, para.14).

Hence, what is concealed through the film`s paratext is its embedded politics and implicitly selective reasoning that remediates and consolidates the composite narrative of the GWoT by adding a personal frontage and a common American face to it. In that respect, by substituting *the personal* for *the political,* and underlining the corporeal vulnerability and victimhood of soldiers that necessitate the use of violence, the critical stance offered by *Restrepo* is entrusted to a specific situatedness/positionality of the soldier. And as a result, the suffering of these soldiers “provide the easiest entree into the Afghan war zone. … The young troops naturally elicit sympathy because they are besieged in the Korengal Valley and suffer hardships” (Turse, 2010, para.20). In turn, “abstractions like politics, religion and patriotism are left to those who can afford such meta-discussion on rear bases and at home. … Between the bullets routinely snapping over their heads and the filthy hardscrabble day-to-day, there's no room for anything else” (Hargrove, 2010, para.8).

5.1.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetization

Apart from paratexts, opening sequences are also important as they continue to prime the viewer for the things to be experienced. These moments initiate the audience into the reality of the story, thereby they can not only smoothly immerse themselves in it, but start to construct the story universe themselves (Pötzsch, 2012). Put differently, taking roughly five minutes in documentaries, and longer in films, these moments ensconce the viewer in their seats and enable them to breath in the film`s own atmosphere. In accordance with Pötzsch`s analysis, at this stage, *Restrepo* evokes both an objectifying and a subjective rhetoric that suggests a personally situated shared truth. In this way, "the war story is

disseminated to multiple real-life soldier characters in order to convey a sense of shared suffering and sacrifice" (Trafton, 2016, p.156).

Correspondingly, the film starts with a scene through which we are introduced to some of the key figures in the film. We see four of the soldiers, recording themselves with a hand-held camera, drunk and joking with each other in a train ride before their deployment. After we see Doc Restrepo saying "You can`t tame the beast" and "We are going to war", the scene cuts to a view inside a Humvee. As the camera starts to pan slowly, it in turn gradually positions us to a seat in the back of the vehicle. While the Humvee passes through the Korengal Valley, a caption interjects the view: "It was considered one of the most dangerous postings in the US military".

As such, arguably, an embodied positioning and a situational awareness limited to an eye view are instilled in these initial scenes. Following that, for around forty seconds the vehicle casually follows its path without any incident until a sudden blast under the engine block caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) shocks everyone inside, including me as the viewer. Since I was immersed, as though I am also seated in the vehicle and not expecting anything like that at that stage, I cringed my head as well. The embodied impact of the scene made me realise how I was embroiled into the narrative right from the beginning.

Furthermore, as the camera`s lens transposed my embodied subjectivity to one in the vehicle and thereby I/eye started to see through the eye/I of someone embedded there, a feeling of nervousness kicked in. Following the initial terror caused by the blast, we/they get out to take cover and respond. A firefight ensues and the scene quietly changes to talking-head shots in which the soldiers are interviewed about their initial thoughts on Korengal Valley. We hear their preliminary reflections when they first see it from the helicopter, such as how they regarded the area as a place "in the middle of nowhere", as a place where they think their end would come. As a result, as the viewer is fed with the soldiers` state of mind through their perspectives, the viewer further engages with the film and begins to empathise with the soldiers. The following section will be detailing the organising themes and visualisations of the film.

5.1.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. *Desensitisation/Desanitisation[14]:*

While the bodily impacts of war are blatantly visualised in films and video games, mainstream documentary films are more restrained in displaying graphic violence. In *Restrepo*, we learn what

[14] "Desanitise: To make unsanitary in grand fashion. Especially in cases when cleaning and sanitation has just occurred" (Urban Dictionary, 2017).

happens to bodies through witness accounts, as we never see wounded and dead bodies directly at all. Yet the witnesses depict how their comrades are killed. We learn that Restrepo died from taking two shots to his neck and Sergeant`s face was "messed up" from these accounts. On the other hand, some of the soldiers express their desire to see how they "blast the enemy into pieces". Pemble-Belkin says, "I wish they were closer so I could have seen them when I killed them." Hence, although there is no graphic violence in the documentary, it is verbally depicted many times and the desire for it is clearly articulated. We also see them joyfully playing FPS video games in their free time, and shooting at the enemy and scream as "eat this turban head".

2. *Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):*

As the enlisted, willing delegates of the population`s dirty lethal deeds, during the first day of Operation Avalanche, the platoon calls in for air support. This leads to the death of five civilians and ten wounded including women and children. Although we see that soldiers tend to the wounded, Captain Kearney`s post-deployment account relegates the issue of civilian deaths to a flaw for the mission. He seems to regret, yet not grieve for, killing innocent lives. Rather, he regrets "killing them and making them mad", as "first impressions are lasting impressions". He thinks what he did was first and foremost a blow for their mission to win the hearts and minds of the locals. He continues, "Although they [the civilians] are not the ones pulling the trigger, in some way, shape or form they were connected to them [the Taliban]". In that sense, he relates and equates the population with the Taliban, and hence tries to justify the use of violence.

3. *There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting:*

From the beginning, the documentary conveys Korengal Valley as a dreadful place. As Kearney puts it "70 percent of all the ordinance in Afghanistan was dropped to Korengal Valley". Quoting Bush, he says that it is the "ugliest place on Earth". Similarly, Junger himself defines the valley as "the Afghanistan of Afghanistan" in his accompanying book *War* (Junger, 2010, p.24). In another instant, Pemble speaks of the Outpost Restrepo as a place that never resembles Restrepo himself. In that sense, Korengal Valley is geotagged continuously as a place "in the middle of nowhere", as a "no man`s land", and as an area where "fear is always there especially at night when you can`t see what`s coming at you". Likewise, when Kearney shows the area to a commander, he says: "Everything south of that is the enemy sanctuary" and lumps everything there together. By using the benefit of the doubt, their tactical judgements are formed in the absence of full evidence and complemented with a sense of credulousness. Thus, they decided to do an operation to extract the enmity in the area. In the words of Caldwell: "If they don't come at you, you have to go out there and reach out to them".

4. *Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action*

This theme is not overtly used in the documentary, yet a few instances make it felt. For instance, Junger concludes his book by relating the withdrawal to a scarcity of manpower: “The reality was that a battalion of American soldiers probably could have done whatever they wanted in the Korengal, but they didn`t have a battalion - they barely had a company” (Junger, 2010, p.271), and implied that it was possible to rule the area if they had sufficient logistical support. On the other hand, what is called “the cow incident” is also revealing. When a cow of a local was entangled in a razor-barbed wire, the soldiers kill and eat it. Following that, three elders come to the outpost to demand reimbursement for the cow arguing that it is illegal to kill it. One of the soldiers, surprised, subtly smirks and asks: “It was illegal?”, implying that they *are* the law in such a *lawless territory*. Later, he calls Kearney to ask whether they can reimburse the locals with money. Yet Kearney does not authorise it as he was told that the cow was entangled in a razor-wire, and they “had to put it out”. Thereafter he wants the locals to be compensated with “Humanitarian Aid”. Yet the locals refuse and leave empty handed. However, while in the documentary we are shown that it is the free-roaming cow that caused the incident, in the book, we learn that the soldiers chased and caused it to entangle in the wire. This speaks both to the issue of how soldiers see themselves over others, and how bureaucratic channels restrict their possibility of ruling, compensating and winning hearts and minds.

5. Voiceless Other:

Afghan people are never rendered invisible during the documentary, but they are barely heard, or allowed to articulate themselves. The reduced use of subtitles is indicative in this regard. Very seldom we can read what they utter through subtitles. In many other cases, we either understand what they say through the translator working for the troops. Other times, we just see and hear them without understanding. In this regard, we gaze at these local people through the lens of the US soldiers as securitizable subjects/objects. Hence, we look at them when the camera looks at them, and we only understand them when the editing allows. For instance, while an old man is being detained, we see him talking, yet without any subtitles and translation. Hence, the gaze of the viewer begins to work as a detector rummaging enmity within such inarticulate subjects with securitization concerns. Likewise, the gaze of the documentary securitises the locals, rather than humanising them.

Also, during the weekly Shura with valley elders, Kearney, commander of the platoon, talks to them about the road project. Yet the elders want to talk about detainees instead. As one of them interrupts, Kearney dismisses his request by saying: “I don`t fucking care”, as he is unwilling to discuss the “enemy profile” within the locals that he seems to be so sure about. In the ensuing interview, Caldwell says that despite Kearney`s continuous positive inputs, *shuras* do not work, as elders` concerns are indifferent to Kearney`s security and development prospects, reminding Duffield`s argument on how war-making has become an element of development discourse (2001).

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

In contrast, we see soldiers as sophisticated and sentient warrior-citizen subjects harbouring many layers. For instance, Pemble talks about his childhood and family and we learn that he had a happy youth. Moreover, as his mother was a hippie, we learn that he was not allowed to play with any toy gun, while he enjoys using real ones now as a soldier. During the interview, he reveals how he felt, "suck it up" and hid the bad news from her mother as well. From this, we understand that Pemble`s rearing does not suppress his interest in the soldierly life and tools, and this interest does not change his sentimentality and attachment to his family members. In another instant, when a teammate is killed, we see shell-shocked faces. As Burgoyne (2016) put it Kappelhoff`s formula of pathos is applied in the film as well. Yet it:

> *"Catalyses a double-edged emotion in the viewer. Provoking an immediate response of anger and repudiation, the portrayal of shell shock is channelled into a sense of collective emotion, transformed into an emblem of sacrifice for nation. ... a portrait of solitary, psychological suffering is converted into an icon of national cohesion and purpose"* (Burgoyne, 2017, p.66).

Similarly, in many instances, we are allowed to witness as soldiers grieve, fear, cry, smile and fight. Hence, while we can humanise the soldiers through many civilian and militaristic layers, the locals are seen as quiet, ungrieving, emotionally primitive and sinister subjects.

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

The joy of using weapons and fighting is visible in Restrepo. For instance, we see Pemble blithely using a gun while telling about how his mother, a hippie, banned him from playing with toy guns throughout his childhood. We also witness how soldiers play FPS games in hand-held devices during their free times, shooting at the enemy while chanting, and expressing their desire to see the impacts of their weapons from a closer range. Yet, the way a soldier, Steiner, describes the joy of combat at the 35th minute is indicative: "Big firefight. It was fun. You can`t get a better high. It`s like crack. You can skydive, bungee jump, kayak, but being shot at, you can't calm down, there`s nothing you can top that". And when he is asked how is he going to go back to the civilian world, he says that he has no idea.

5.1.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

The first moment I felt an affective impact was when the patrol vehicle was hit by an IED attack. The film had just started and the seemingly uneventful, movement of the vehicle abruptly changed as it was suddenly struck by an explosion. Although it was an almost boring scene until that moment, I realised that I was already immersed into a position inside the vehicle once I unintentionally jerked my head. From that moment on, unknowingly, my subjectivity had changed from "I" to "we". The images on the

screen got shaken up and darkened for a moment during the first moments of confusion. I felt a sudden rush run through the soldiers as well, as though we are hit together. Someone from the radio yells commands of "keep going, keep going". Yet *we* start to hear shots firing. Someone says that they are shooting from an eight o`clock direction. During the continuing hesitation to what to do, someone starts telling others that they need to get out of the Humvee. Soon we get out, while I was thinking if it would be safe to go out directly. Later I learn that the vision I assumed belonged to Junger.

5.1.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

As mentioned, as a fly-on-the-wall documentary, the film is not narrated. Instead, the story is moved with the post-deployment talking-head interviews with soldiers. Nevertheless, it does not mean that the story is unedited or unmediated to purely represent reality as it is. The way the scenes, themes and events are assembled into a 90-minute feature-film out of 150-hours of deployment and 50-hours of post-deployment shots sets the stage for a certain emplotment. Emplotment refers to the selective organisation of a series of events into a narrative with a plot. In that regard, apart from the content, the timings of the revelations of certain contents are also important (Hogan, 2014). This means that "a single historical event – the French Revolution for instance– [might] be emplotted in different ways to produce different interpretations" (Cuddon, 2000). In this regard, following the paratext, beginning sequences, and thematic contents, the way they are all pieced together encourages the audience to apply their interpretational freedoms in a certain way.

Such as, from the 16th minute, we learn that Pemble-Belkin, the baby-face character, was prevented from using guns and watching violent films by his hippie mother. Yet while he was talking in a post-deployment interview, the scene changes to one of him shooting frivolously at the mountains with an MK-19 grenade launcher and without any specific target. In these scenes, Pemble shoots, smiles and whoops as though he is enjoying what he lacked in his childhood. Following that, as we see soldiers duck and cover, Pemble starts to talk about how they were attacked every day during their first few months and how he did not share any of their hardships and losses with his mother to not raise her concerns. His point is buttressed by Steiner and Kearney`s interviews and several stressful shots from the deployment.

For instance, while Kearney is talking about the Korengal Valley as a danger-ridden space, we see bombs exploding in the mountains without seeing any enemy and distinct targets, as though the whole area is lumped together in one classification, regardless of their identity. We only see bombs exploding. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, when Kearney calls in for air support during the Operation Rock Avalanche and learns that civilians are killed, we see him saying "in some way, shape or form they were connected to them". Reminding us of Obama Administration`s drone policy that "counts all military-

age males in a strike zone as combatants, … unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent" (Becker & Shane, 2012), the Other is seen in chunks as enemy combatants to be killed.

This point also reflects what Kearney says about "having an influence on the populace" five minutes before we see Pemble shooting: "[t]he hard part is that they are so deeply rooted down here because of family ties and religious ideals". In the ensuing scenes, we see Pemble talking about the loss of their beloved friends and learn how their emotional worlds are shaken despite their best intentions. Also, we see weekly shuras taking place with the valley elders for a few times. These scenes are not only replete with selective subtitles and translations but are always preceded and succeeded by the best intentions of soldiers who are faced with battlefield obligations and a recalcitrant population.

For instance, during the first shura we see, Kearney talks to the elders: "We can make you more money, make you guys richer, make you guys more powerful. What I need you to do is join with the government". Yet as we hear these "positive" development prospects, an Afghan elder appears. From a close shot, we see how he is struggling to penetrate the juice pouch with a straw. Hence the development and security nexus is visualised with "backwardness" and "inability". Eventually, we learn that "elders" are behind the attacks in the valley and the US leaves the area in 2010. In that regard, the documentary does not criticise the war effort or the Counter-Insurgency (COIN) strategy itself, rather, it wants us to see the best intentions, limited options and vulnerabilities of the soldiers, and leaves the responsibility of the failure in the valley to the local populace, the "untameable beasts". Therefore, what a soldier says at the 27th minute, "We are gonna take their hearts and minds", become something enforced and necessitated by the situation, and a minute later Kearney argues: "The best defense is who has the greater offense".

5.1.7. Conclusion

Since *Restrepo* drills down into the personal experience of war-making with a ground-level microscopic lens, in his review, the famed film critic Roger Ebert regards the film as "non-political", for it rasterises the war effort from the perspectives of the soldiers: "`Afghanistan` is a word on the news, debated in terms of our foreign policy. Almost an abstraction. Nobody thinks about foreign policy in *Restrepo*" (Ebert, 2010). However, as Centeno & Enriques (2016) and Sylvester (2012) argue, war entails three aggregates: political, military and corporal. Yet the least understood and studied corporal level should not be analysed in isolation from the political and military culture with which it is embedded, and hence war should not be equalised with the sole corporal experience and survival motive of the combatants.

As argued, the micro-level geopolitical vistas the film is documented through involve a soldierly situatedness with a spectrum of im/possibilities whereby we learn what can happen to a soldier, what

can take place in the frontlines and what can they do about it. *Restrepo*, in that regard, "wants audiences to feel the sand in their eyes, hear the gunfire and listen to the soldiers' themselves describe their experiences in Afghanistan" (Noaker, 2010). Thus, rather than being a critical documentary on war, it can be regarded as an institutionally delegated personal war account documented from the perspectives of the US soldiers in the frontlines. As Munster and Sylvest argue, despite both *Restrepo* and a similar documentary *Armadillo* (2009) being "presented as documentaries; they are promoted as war films that are just as exciting and action-packed as fiction features—except more real" (2013, p.12).

Hence, in contrast to Burgoyne (2016) and Munster`s views (2008), I contend that *Restrepo* does not offer an alternative. While Burgoyne argues that the film exposes the "corporal tragedy" and "somatic" aspects of war-making which are hidden from the sights of mainstream media, I maintain that he arbitrarily confines his view to artistic imaginations and expositions of war. For instance, in the next chapter, a mainstream documentary channel`s *Taking Fire* (2016) will be dealing with the same somatic experiences of war and expose it from the very helmet-cams of soldiers. Meaning, what Burgoyne has found in Restrepo is neither unique nor far from mainstream. As Bonner argues, a multi-million-dollar industry focusing solely on the soldiers` experiences is growing in size and popularity. For instance, on Brandon Webb`s media industry, who is a former SEAL and Head Instructor of SEAL Sniper School who taught Chris Kyle and Marcus Luttrell (see Chapter 7):

> *Webb's success is breaking mainstream. Force12 Media now oversees 10 sites, ... he's recently begun working on a SEAL television pilot ... for a major network and just launched a SOFREP book imprint with St. Martin's Press. (Its latest sniper memoir, The Reaper, which recently hit the New York Times bestseller list, was bought for $3 million, and is currently being made into an NBC series.) Last year, Scout Media — a company funded in part by Bob Pittman, one of the founders of MTV and a longtime media entrepreneur — offered Webb a deal worth $15 million for Force12. "Marketers want to reach the military audience and millennials who grew up playing video games like Call of Duty," says Ben Madden ... "Kids used to idolize athletes, but now they see these special operators as superhuman guys. It's huge business."* (Bonner, 2015. para.6).

Hence, convergence culture offers an important terrain to contextually ground the medium, before in-depth analyses. *Restrepo* should be analysed in its convergences with the multi-million dollar SOF veteran industry (Aaron, 2015; Bonner, 2015) to find whether it offers any critical framework to criticize war or if it fits into a militarized popular culture perspective. As in the above example, a citizen contemplating on enlisting, might find further encouragement in the film, rather than thinking it through film and art history, and constellating it with the artworks of Farucki (Burgoyne, 2016), or apply Bakhtin on Goya and Rembrandt`s relation to Restrepo (Burgoyne and Rositzka, 2015). To contrast *Restrepo* with a mainstream war imaginary, while both Gregory (2016) and Burgoyne (2016) argue that video games and the media in general sanitise war and render war into screen images, they do not

consider what players find in them, what new recruits and soldiers do with them, and what is it in *Restrepo* is alluring for many. Nor they do consider why the film is shown in military bases as an orientation film. Hence, while Burgoyne argues that *Restrepo* brings a new perspective of war on the bodily level against the mainstream tide in visual culture, he does not situate it into a deep popular undercurrent that feeds a warrior culture, that is ever-growing, converging and popularising. This is why analysing such media within its convergence culture and through its paratexts, contents and sequences allows us to critically value such geopolitical texts.

Therefore, I argue that *Restrepo* offers a reifying eye/I that focuses on the soldierly perspectives, frustrations and failures which do not necessarily relate the issues to the broader geopolitical situation. Rather, it adds additional "human" layers from an on-the-ground "us" against "them" perspective that sustains the geopolitics it disguises, bridges the often-criticised citizen-soldier divide in the US. Furthermore, the empathy and narration it offered for the soldiers leave Afghans voiceless in the void of GWoT. Hence, we see soldiers as though they are simply happened-to-be-there-against-their-own-will-human-beings who kill to not die, and view Afghanis as immutable locals whose hearts and minds cannot be won despite soldiers` best-of-intentions to assist and liberate them from the evildoers of Taleban.

5.2. *Taking Fire: Hero Flight*

5.2.1. Introduction

Directed by Kim Nally for Discovery Channel, *Taking Fire* (2016) (*TF*) is a docuseries which employs helmet-cam footages shot by real-life soldiers in Afghanistan. Hence, it provides a rare and authentic look in the GWoT from the eyes of the soldiers. The footages are shot by the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division of the US Army who were deployed to Combat Outpost Michigan, Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, in 2010. It "takes place in the same region where the documentary 'Restrepo' was filmed" (Levine, 2016) and where Marcus Luttrell became the *Lone Survivor* (See Chapter 7). Moreover, as we learn from the previous documentary, *Restrepo*, it is also the area where the US forces left in 2010. As Discovery`s production and development executive Denise Contis says, *TF* "allows viewers to look at this world of intense stakes through a relatable prism" (Galas, 2016, p.109). In that sense, *TF* visually embeds us to the last days of the US military in the region. Thus, if *Restrepo* brought us closer to soldierly life, *TF* directly walks us through what the soldiers went through in the `Valley of Death` with their own recordings.

Akin to *TF*, Deborah Scrantoon`s *The War Tapes* (2006) and *Bad Voodoo`s War* (2008) are also produced by the raw images shot by real-life soldiers. Yet the cameras used in these documentaries were provided to soldiers by filmmakers for production purposes. However, the archival footages used in *TF* were for personal use and not shot for a production company. In this vein, developed by piecing together these personal footages with the interviews jogging their memories, *TF* is a unique documentary on the GWoT. Providing a first-person documentation of war, it registers the population to the joys, sorrows, confusion and struggles personally experienced by the soldiers. Hence, it does not only continue the story of *Restrepo* on a spatial level, it furthers the personal level charting and justification of war through helmet-cams.

Thus, by fostering a specific microscopic battlefield perspective, *TF* underlines the personal, undermines the geopolitical and hence underpins the GWoT. More specifically, by registering the viewers with the humanised situatedness and the limited capabilities of the soldiers on the ground, it vindicates the geopolitics by rendering the war effort into a personally supportable tactical issue for the sake of the survival of the warrior. In this sense, the series does not simply expose the futility, destruction and precarity of war. Rather, through the utility of the personal situatedness of the soldiers, it denarrates, remediates and masks the political.

5.2.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

As an unconventional documentary series on the GWoT, *TF`s* production phase is illustrative of convergence culture as well. When producer Laura Dunne saw a visceral combat action video on Funker530.com, a popular combat footage website, she started to trace the video back to the soldiers and met with several of them who captured the shots with cams affixed to their helmets. Collecting these first-person view "videos with the addition of interviews", she composed "a gut-wrenching show that gives some sense of what it feels like to be shot at" (Merry, 2016, para.4).

Yet, although in many reviews the production phase is framed as though it is initiated through a coincidence when Dunne stumbled upon a visceral video, an article in Variety gives us a different insight regarding the intention of the producers. Discovery`s production and development executives, Denise Contis and Joseph Schneier were already looking for making a project out of soldier-shot combat videos. Nevertheless, although social media sites were already full of such videos back then, Contis says, "We were looking for the narrative thread. We didn't want it to feel acquired; we wanted it to feel pure" (Galas, 2016, p.109). Hence, upon finding 101st Airborne Division`s videos on a social media site, Contis says, they decided to shape them "into a very human story". Highlighting combat and looking for humanising moments, "We went into the editing room with the idea of finding the material that makes their journey personal. Such as when they're talking about how the area smells or feels" (ibid.).

Moreover, akin to *Restrepo*, the series is supplemented with interviews conducted with soldiers and unnarrated except for few brief descriptive interludes. The main characters revealing their memories are J.J. McCool, Kyle Petry, Ken Shriver and Kyle Boucher. They "don't talk much about their reasons for filming, but do appear to have been motivated by a sense of pride and a sense of posterity" (Gay, 2016). In this sense, the series claims to be showing what it is like to be there in an unmediated way. As its program description says (Discovery Channel, 2016b):

> *Taking Fire is war as never seen before. A handful of rookies and their leaders from 101st Airborne Division packed personal helmet cameras with their standard issue kit and flew out for a year's deployment in Afghanistan. …Excited and nervous, the rookies wanted to capture what they saw to show the folks back home. The footage they brought back charts an extraordinary first-eye view of modern warfare in one of the deadliest places on earth.*
>
> *Their combat footage plunges viewers into the heart of the action, giving a visceral experience not captured by news reports or traditional documentaries. Deeper still, their unmediated rushes reveal personal struggles with the dilemmas, confusions, joys and sorrows of war. The men leave the States seeking adventure, inspired to serve their country.*

Hence, inviting viewers to "experience an extraordinary first-eye view of modern warfare in one of the deadliest places on earth" (Discovery Channel, 2016b), *TF* frames itself as an unnarrated and unmediated experience. However, as it will be seen in coming sections, it is barely the case. As Lisle put it, the use of "clever editing tricks, powerful imagery and moralising rhetoric … are intended to bypass our critical and intellectual faculties, inject themselves straight into our emotional conscience, and create an intended effect" (Lisle, 2014, pp.169-70). Arguably, underneath *TF`s* entertainment purpose lies an intent to give a common human face to geopolitics, and a function conducive to the personalisation of geopolitics through the depoliticization of war-making.

5.2.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetization

The beginning sequences of the series span around four minutes in each episode. These initial moments introduce the overall story and the main characters in the series with brief interjections tying each episode to the previous one. The second episode in the series, *Hero Flight*, begins with helmet-cam footage taken inside the COP Michigan, as McCool talking about why he joined the military:

> *"I started originally working at Abercrombie & Fitch, as weird as it is. So, it`s kind of interesting that I decided to make the choice for the military. But I like going on adventures, doing new things, being crazy. We were brand new, out of the gate, don't know anything."*

This initial confession addresses the agency of the soldiers, depicting them as voluntarily enlisted free subjects, rather than involuntarily forced docile bodies. Although this was alluded to *Restrepo*, in his last book, Junger argues that war is a compelling topic for the American public and soldiers do not enlist for not having another choice. They choose going to war to be a necessary part of a tribal community, to experience a self-actualisation process that they cannot find back home (Junger, 2016). Although Bourke criticises his point as "a surfeit of nostalgia and disregard for historical fact", she finds the idea that young men enlist to belong to a team, to seek thrills, to make war plausible (Bourke, 2016). However, as rightly pointed out by Fletcher, a revival of romanticism for war is widespread in the US. A growing desire to identify the self with grand causes makes war appealing and is galvanised in the post-Vietnam and 9/11 eras (Fletcher, 2002). This is not only consistent with Junger`s idea, but also consistent with Lebow`s (2008; 2010) and McDougall`s (2016) arguments over the culture`s appetite for war.

Following that revelation, as the camera pans from inside an armoured vehicle, we hear another comment from Sergeant Doc Shriver which reverses the way we look at the characters: "We`re here in the middle of nowhere. I`m kind of like, this is the lion`s den and I kind of feel like a lamb right now". Hence, rather than being depicted as invincible, confident warriors, the soldiers are introduced as sentient common people we can meet in a shop. Moreover, right from the beginning, the domestic citizen-soldier images are contrasted with the dehumanised, wild beings of Afghanistan. Furthering this point by revealing the vulnerability of the soldiers, we see Sergeant Petry recollecting his memories on a commonplace patrol mission. He says that he was sitting up front in the vehicle, scanning the road for IEDs when everything seemed to be normal. Yet as he speaks, the films cut to an image of a sudden blast that dims the view. We learn that there was an IED explosion injuring him and killing two other troop members occurred. Thereafter the main generic sequence introducing the unit, the valley and the series with interjections from news coverages begins. We see soldiers running, falling and shouting, while a bomb blasts on a mountain ridge, and the following captions and soldiers` remarks converge into an overall generic sentence: "a small band of brothers", "outnumbered and surrounded", spent "a year under fire", experienced "baptism by fire" in "a kind of journey from boyhood to manhood".

Thus, by underscoring the realness and the presumed unmediated documentation of the story, the series begins with the struggles the soldiers had to endure. As the news and helmet-cam footages jumble through soldiers` memories, an objectifying geopolitical rhetoric coheres itself with the subjective rhetoric of the first-hand accounts. Hence, through the authority, vulnerability, and the survival necessity of the citizen-soldier, we dig deeper into geopolitics as a traumatic and transcending personal experience which heralds a transition from "boyhood to manhood" in "lion`s den". However, as the following sections will uncover, the ravages of war which splintered families, caused turmoil in targeted

countries and the world politics are condoned by concocting stories on American soldiers as the victims of geopolitical violence.

5.2.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitisation/Desanitisation:

Throughout the series, we never meet the enemy. This is not abnormal as the helmet-cams cannot zoom in on the enemy positions. Nevertheless, we always know when there is a US casualty, but no one talks about whether anyone shoots an enemy or not. While in *Restrepo* we hear soldiers talking specifically about how they want to shoot and kill and see the result, in *TF*, we see and learn about US casualties exclusively. For instance, in the fourth episode, we specifically see soldiers bleeding from their necks after they get hit by sniper bullets. Similarly, in this episode, while fallen troops are not seen, the wounded and their wounds are made visible. Moreover, we see soldiers talking about their desensitisation. At 16:23, in a retrospect talking about his fallen comrades, Boucher says, “It was just like somebody squeezing the life out of you, become so desensitized to everything you know, to emotion, to pain, to fear, but now realized the best way to grieve your friend is to go out there and hunt and kill these bastards”.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):

In line with desensitisation/sanitisation process, at 21:44, Boucher continues, “We wanted you to shoot us, shoot us we're gonna kill you”. Similarly, at 21:53, Sgt. Shriver says, “I'm a very religious person but these people are trying to kill you and your men so you kill them”. Hence, the survival of the soldiers and their fight to protect their teammates are concocted as the main cause of their violence, whereby geopolitics is discarded, war is equated with frontline combat experience and war is depoliticised.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

Patrolling is an important dimension of counter-insurgency. As it is hard to distinguish insurgents and combatants from the local people, the US military strategy uses patrols as “baits” to extract the enmity within the area. Hence, as in Vietnam, with a deep-seated presupposition of encounter and enmity, soldiers go out, take fire, and respond. This results in a strategy that expands the safe patrolling areas. Akin to this view, when they were tasked with finding Taleban elements in a village, at 17:54, Doc Shreeve says: “after the 17th of August I think a lot of us got angry and we knew we are preparing for more than just patrol, we're preparing for a true fight”. Similarly, at 18:07, Boucher maintains the very idea we heard from Kearney in *Restrepo* that lumps the region`s social life to Taliban elements: “There was no other friendly element that was more south than us. So, anybody that was out there was Taliban and we're trying to kill them”.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

Thematically, the whole episode can be summed up with a sentimentality that works as a justification tool to exert violence. The episode is based on the psychological impact of the fatal IED attack in the

beginning. The fear, sentimentality and hatred it caused are made apparent. At 7:41, McCool on Sgt. Shriver`s feelings: "You do get mad. Everyone is angry and Sgt. Shriver was angry for a good reason". In the ensuing scene, as Sgt. Shriver sums: "a lot of emotions going on at that time but anger is only one I can show. Anger is acceptable." At 12:43, Doc. Shreeve comments on the situation: "Let them come, you know, give me something to shoot, give me somebody to hurt. Bring it on. We got bigger guns and I guarantee it." Hence, the personal feelings are made acceptable as a causation for geopolitical violence, for the sake of the survival and the solidarity of soldiers.

5. Voiceless Other:

As mentioned earlier, the Other is not seen in not in the series, nor heard. While it is possible to see the Afghani villagers and elders in *Restrepo*, although they are very rarely and selectively voiced, in *TF*, they are unnoticeable. The only occasion they are mentioned is when they shoot at the soldiers.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

On the contrary, the paratextual flick factor of the series is surrounded by the victimhood of the soldiers, and the way they talk in retrospect about their travails that are staying with them at home. For instance, the show`s website is full of short clips emphasising the vulnerability of the soldiers. A video, "fighting for survival", (Discovery Channel, 2016c) summarises the above-argued claim that humanises the violence exerted against inscrutable, inhuman, malicious, geopolitical beings, through the vulnerability and victimhood of the voiced soldiers. Through talking-head interviews mixed with their video memoirs, we see them sobbing and voicing their inner sentiments caused by battlefield struggles.

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

Whenever a weapon or a military gear is used or mentioned, a brief explanation is given, either in written or narrative form. For instance, when Sgt. Shriver was using a scope to scan the area, an explanation in the corner emerges: "ELCAN M145 Scope, Magnification: x1,5/6, Enhanced Visibility: 1.200m". Or when he uses an MK 46 Machine Gun: "Max. Range: 800m, Max. Rate of Fire: 730 Rounds per minute.

Moreover, a banner emerges in every episode on the gear that links us to the series` website that documents other gears, vehicles and weapons and their explanations (Discovery Channel, 2016d).

5.2.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

Viscerally exhilarating moments are extensively felt during the episode. For instance, we see McCool, Sgt. Shreeve and Boucher either sobbing while talking over their comrades` dying, crumpling up with sadness, feeling survivor`s guilt, or going sentimental for the moments they thought "it is over" for them. In such moments, as an audience, I felt shivers running up my back. I did not cringe away as I did in Restrepo`s initial IED explosion when, in *TF,* when they struck by an IED too. However, I crumped my face, and sensed various affects in my body, especially when I saw McCool sobbing and

Doc. Shreeve was bleeding at the end. However, during the next episode, when we experience a battle through McCool`s camera, as the bullets was whizzing and clicking around him, and as he ducks to cover himself, I felt an alignment within my body, situating my embodiment in McCool`s positionality.

5.2.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

Compared to *Restrepo*, although it is much shorter in length, the spectrum of sequences is not varied in *TF.* However, almost each sequence is threaded into the other in three steps: attack and bodily vulnerability, followed by an emotional address in retrospect, which is followed by a counterattack imbued with feelings of vengeance, camaraderie, and survival. For instance, the episode begins with an IED attack in week 12. Next, we see soldiers explaining their thoughts on it in retrospect. Their common vocal urge to take the violence to the enemy is answered in the subsequent sequence. Yet, it does not follow from the following and from the 12th, the episode leaps into the 14th week, where they are tasked with a mission in a nearby village in the South, called Omar. Hence, the episode is thematically and emotionally emplotted, to show how the soldiers leapt at the idea of fighting back, shooting at something to avenge, with a complete disregard about the events that had happened in between those weeks, in the area, and in the command and political structure that oversees the COP Michigan and the area. Hence, nothing in the series questions beyond the individuality, camaraderie and survival possibilities of the soldiers.

5.2.7. Conclusion

Following *Restrepo*, the stories of the soldiers and their sufferings in Korengal Valley were relayed and continued by *TF* through their personal recordings. Without offering any critique or encouraging a questioning beyond the personal vulnerabilities of the soldiers in the valley, *TF* continues to personalise the war effort by depoliticising it. Therefore, as an example of convergence culture, or product-spillovers, taken together, these different media products continue and complement each others` stories, and generate a composite narrative which can be tiled with various objective and subjective levels and layers. Such a composite narrative enables viewers to see a unified and cohesive account which can be looked at and verified from different vantage points. Hence, whichever angle and level a viewer looks at it from, they find a supporting layer. *TF* does not discourage citizens from enlisting. Rather, by juxtaposing the endured hardships and sacrifices with "manhood", "brotherhood", and soldierly gallantry narratives, it supports "adventurous" everyday citizens, such as McCool and Boucher, to embark on similar journeys from "boyhood to manhood" to discover and actuate themselves. As a result, *TF* shows what Afghanistan war is like by exclusively focusing on American soldiers` experiences and tragedies and renders war as a coveted, depoliticised and, individual tour de force.

5.3. Live to Tell: Charlie Platoon and the Story of Marc Lee

5.3.1. Introduction

Live to Tell (LT) (2016) is a docuseries featuring first-person accounts of recent US SOF missions in the GWoT. Directed by Peter Berg for the History Channel, who also produced *Lone Survivor* (see Chapter 7), each episode of the series covers a different mission, commemorates the story of warriors who experienced them, and gives them an opportunity to voice to what they did and faced in war through their own accounts. Pieced together through both archival footage and re-enactments to complement the storytelling, each episode, hence, claims to be a ground-level geopolitical exposé from the theatres of the GWoT.

Its production, presumed "unnarratedness" and intertextuality with other cases covered in the thesis further elevate the importance of the series as well. As the first person who is allowed to embed with an on-duty SEAL team in Iraq for a month before the shooting of *Lone Survivor*, the initial plan of Berg was to produce a documentary, rather than a film. Following the film`s successful reception, he continued this project and made documentaries and reality-shows on SOF for the History Channel. Among these are *LT*, later broadcasted as *The Warfighters* (2016) which is picked up by an "unscripted" series called *The Selection* (2016), that focuses on civilians attempting to go through special operations training. While each of these series entails analytically important elements, only the first episode of *LT* will be analysed for constraints of space.

Covering the story of Marc Lee, who is the first SEAL Team member killed in Iraq, the episode documents the events leading to his death through his teammates` and family members` accounts, re-enactments and archival footage. Lee was a member of SEAL Team 3, Charlie Company, Task Force Bruiser and a close friend of Chris Kyle, like "Biggles" who served in the same unit. We know all of them from *American Sniper* (see Chapter 7). Hence, though we are aware of their friendship and how their deaths affected "Chris" in the film, this episode directly focuses on Lee`s life and his story as a beloved friend, devoted husband, dedicated son, good Christian, reliable team member, as well as an intimidatingly tough warrior. Overall, the episode provides us new layers pertaining the story of the GWoT through Lee`s life, devotion, personal conduct and sacrifice. Reinforcing the patterns we are already familiar with, for instance, through *American Sniper*, the episode sustains the composite narrative of the GWoT.

Accordingly, on 2 August 2006, another beloved teammate, "Biggles", is fatally wounded by shrapnel pieces on a mission in the war-torn city of Ramadi. Yet the team members regroup and continue to fight to support the conventional U.S. Forces to take back the city. The team receives heavy gunfire in an alleyway and a bullet strikes Lee on the head, instantly claiming his life.

In this regard, by focusing on the sufferings of warriors who are fighting for their lives on the frontlines, and dismissing the wider political reasoning behind the fighting per se, the film develops the same themes found in other cases. It generates and incorporates similar affects to ground audience reasoning, and procedurally guides the audience by playing out certain themes and affects through similar sequences and references. Overall, three aspects of the film should be pinpointed: (1) political denarration disguised under personal narration, (2) corporeal vulnerability and victimhood of the hero, which (3) necessitate the transgressions of moral and territorial borders. As a result, the film affectively adds up to the composite narrative that propounds the GWOT.

5.3.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

The program description defines the series as a continuation of another story: *"Live to Tell* picks up where Peter Berg's Afghanistan Navy SEAL film Lone Survivor leaves off. Produced by Berg's company, this anthology series will follow the men of the Special Forces as they reveal their first person accounts of deadly covert missions" (History Channel, 2016). Thus, as an example of embedded journalism and filmmaking, endorsed by SOF community, *LT* series rate itself as a geopolitical exposé: a truthful account of geopolitical facts, told by the soldiers.

As mentioned, director Berg`s embedding with an active SEAL Team in Iraq was a unique access given to him before the shooting of *Lone Survivor* (Foundas, 2013). Berg says, "I watched them operate, and when they operate, they kill people" (Bonner, 2013). Thus, having such unprecedented access to secretive operations that could not be obtained without institutional support, Berg could have had undisclosed backing from the DOD and the Navy. Moreover, both during the film and for these series, he closely collaborated with various SOF members, both to document these stories with first-person accounts, and to re-enact the scenes as close to reality as possible. Mitchell Hall, for instance, one of the most renown military advisors in the entertainment industry, collaborated with Berg for *Lone Survivor.* As a SEAL Team Six (DevGru) veteran, he also worked on two other major films, including *Act of Valor* (2012), and *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), as well as a *Call of Duty* video game series with Activision.

> *"A personal story was used in the 2012 film, Act of Valor. In 2012, he was the technical adviser for the critically acclaimed film Zero Dark Thirty. He worked directly with the Oscar Award-winning writer and director to help with set design, story/script concept, and to make the actor's movements, speech, etc. as realistic as possible. Mitchell was a technical and stunt adviser on the set of Lone Survivor. Working with the director, he helped with everything from using the correct gear to using the correct language and also played a minor role"* (Trident Focus, 2012).

Act of Valor, starring active-duty Navy SEALs, as well as a veteran like Hall is a particularly important film in this sense. (Anderson, 2012; Hornaday, 2012). Supported by the US Navy as part of a targeted

marketing campaign to increase recruitment rates, even "former SOCOM admiral William McRaven worked with Hollywood producers on the film" (Bonner, 2015). Hence, working closely with various SOF members and veterans, such as Ray Mendoza, Marcus Luttrell and Michael Baumgarten, Berg become a film director uniquely embraced by the SOF community as well. In an interview with the Havok Journal with Baumgarten on *LT*, another veteran, Donovan Ronin says: "I haven't seen anything this raw and this emotional on television before. I mean ever. Anywhere. Knowing that it's told by some of the people that were really actually there, really separates this, apart from other military type TV shows" (Ronin, 2016).

Such endorsements by the SOF community are important as they support what is trying to be given through the series` paratext as "raw stories" on war: "Driven by first-person storytelling, archival footage and original cinematic sequences, each episode is a visceral and personal perspective of the human experience of war" (Wagmeister, 2015). Yet this personalisation of geopolitical experience, and the rendering of war into politically isolated individual combat experiences are problematic. Conveying war as an apolitical necessity caused by "evil-doing bad guys" and recounting it as a one-sided human experience do not consider and account for the causes and effects of geopolitics. Eclipsing the wider political facts and policy-making processes, as though these soldierly experiences are the results of quotidian and personal encounters with the "evil" in the world, depoliticizes and white—washes the war effort. Thus, unconcerned with the wider facts, the audience is offered a depoliticised journey into war which evokes empathy for one side while disavowing the Other.

5.3.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetization

The beginning sequences of *LT* span around six minutes in which we learn about willpower, being a SEAL Team member, and Marc Lee himself. It starts with a series of captions describing SOF operators as the men who have been "at the tip of the spear, honourably risking their lives for the country and one another" during the GWoT, and introducing the series as their stories on a black background. The scene cuts to a Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) image, the type known to be used by Lee with smooth piano tones and Jocko Willink - another famous SEAL veteran and the Task Unit Bruiser Commander - appears. Speaking softly, in a talking-head documentary interview style, he responds to a question he used to "get asked: what does it take to win?". He says, it is will.

> *"You have to have the will to kill. Because you cannot win without killing the enemy. And the other side of that coin is that you have to have the will to die. If you`re gonna go to war, you`ve got to make sure that you have those two types of will in the deepest part of your soul. But if you believe what you`re doing and the will is there. Then victory is always possible. And in fact, if you have the true will and the true belief, victory is imminent and undeniable"* (Live to Tell, 2016).

The calm yet passionate way he speaks to find the right words and the tone of his voice, combined with the musical notes in the background instantly evoke a sense of truthfulness and respect. The next scene describes the situation in which the story will take place with archival footages from Iraq, 2005. US soldiers appear in a firefight while a reporter voices: “Insurgents and Jihadists have found a home in Iraq`s sprawling Anbar Province and have turned it into a hotbed of violence”. The ensuing scene cuts to short interviews with Leif Babin (Charlie Platoon (CP) Commander), Willink, Tony Eafrati (CP Chief), Jason Hogan (CP Machine Gunner), and we hear them talking about how they trained themselves as a team, and more importantly, what it is like to be a team member, which is mostly about a brotherhood, knowing and relying on each other, and doing everything together as a family, rather than merely having the tactical skills and doing them correctly all the time.

After these, they start to talk about Marc Lee, and we learn how a joyful, fun-loving teammate he was, cheering up everyone even in distressful situations. In one picture, we see him and *the American Sniper*, Chris Kyle perched before a sniper rifle, while his teammates describe him as a newcomer immediately endorsed by the team. Next, we see his mother talking about him and how he described his teammates as brothers to his mother, and how his friends voted him as “Class Clown” two years in a row. Following that, we see his widow talking about how athletic, religious and good-looking he was with many layers, as a compassionate person for everyone he knew and how he decided to become a SEAL. The beginning sequences end when his wife turns emotional, and a caption describing their deployment to Iraq interjects.

Thus, in these beginning sequences, the audience is introduced to the worlds of the SEAL Team members. Yet we are not presented with how strong, deadly, and skilful warriors they are. Rather, we are allowed to gaze into their kind, compassionate, social and beloved sides as respected and cherished human beings. Hence, the sequences immerse us into GWoT through the humanity of the fallen warrior and their friends` personal experiences, as though they are the victims of geopolitics caught up in a world of violence, for one another and for their country. Interviews, archival footage and passing re-enactments prepare us for the upcoming scenes with an objectifying and a subjective rhetoric that proposes a personally situated geopolitical truth as in other documentaries. Moreover, we are also introduced to the very idea that the team members are composed of human warriors, believing in what they are doing with a strong willpower both to kill and die.

5.3.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. *Desensitisation/Desanitisation:*

Although we do not see graphic violence in the series, from the start we hear how violence is related to willpower, naturalised as a necessity to fight an evil enemy and euphemised as "smoking". As Babin defined, "smoking" means killing, eliminating the "bad guys". Moreover, those instances are being regarded as trophy moments, as problem-solving measures executed for having a positive impact upon terrorism and insurgency. Yet, what Lee wrote in his letter for 4th of July, although read, is not echoed as a critical questioning in the series. In this letter, Lee asks: "When does glory fade away and become a wrongful crusade or an unjustified means by which consumes one completely?" (Lee, 2006). While Chris Kyle is shown to accuse this letter in *American Sniper* as the reason for Lee`s death, as it manifests Lee`s loss of belief in what they are doing, in contrast, in *LT*, all his teammates attest that he undoubtedly believed in what he did.

2. *Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):*

When the situation in Iraq and Ramadi was described as militarily unwinnable in a leaked report, Babin reflects on how they believed in themselves and the war they are fighting: "What other people see as impossible is possible with the right folks who believe in the mission. Guys like Marc Lee really believed in this mission, that we can, we were trying to liberate the Iraqi people from an evil insurgency." Following that, Eafrati: "I totally believed in what we were doing there. I mean, you know, somebody has to kill the bad guys. And I think we were the best suited for that." Although waged on false intelligence reports and bogus causes, the Iraq War became unpopular in American public and although it is known that the US invasion paved the way for further instability in the region, the interviewees detach wider facts from their experiences and blithely present their belief in the way they exert violence.

3. *There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting*

While Korengal Valley was tagged as the most dangerous place on Earth in 2007 as we have seen it in *Restrepo*, in 2006, as Leif Babin quotes *Time Magazine*, it was Ramadi, Iraq. During the episode, the area is described as a complete war-zone, stinking, full of violent people. In the words of Hogan, "it was almost like being in a movie". Yet after their operations, many Combat Outposts were established around the city of Ramadi which stabilised the area as the safest place in Iraq for seven years. And according to them, this was realised thanks to the successful execution of violence.

4. *Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action*

In *LT,* this theme, rather than empowering the hero`s intuitional drives to set them against tight bureaucratic regulations, reveals to us the SEAL Team members` discovery of their bodily and emotional vulnerability. By doing so it also underlines their willingness to kill as well as to die, sacrificing themselves for their brothers and for what they believe in. For instance, in the beginning, Willink emphasises the importance of "true will and true belief", and on learning of Lee`s passing, he says that he felt that something was going to happen to one of them before the operation, as it was only

chance that had saved them from so many threats until that mission. Yet we see them continue to believe in what they do at an intuitional level. At the end, Willink continues:

> *"When you are lucky enough to experience war, you can get very jaded because you can see that human beings can be...abhorrent creatures. And you can begin to question if there's really any good at all, and it can become... dark. Especially when it is your job... to, in some sense, grow that darkness. Marc proved that there was light and good. It was hard to see that in his life, but for some unknown reason, or reason that's beyond understanding, I saw it in his death".*

5. Voiceless Other:

As in other documentaries, the Other is absent in this show too. The limited presence they have is limited to performing the role of ruthless and brutal "bad guys" with killable offenses. We do not know how to differ them from the populace, and terrorists from the insurgents. We also do not hear anything about why these people were opposing the presence of the US troops and the political authority there, leading us to lump and treat the Other as bad guys all together without any humanity, order and logic.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

The show presents us the other side of America`s warriors. Although they are mostly depicted and visualised as intimidating, invincible and just warriors, in *LT*, we see them as beloved, compassionate, devoted human beings who discover their vulnerability and non-invincibility. Put in other words, apart from seeing them as wilful, vulnerable warriors, we also discover various human layers they cherish.

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

Although the episode is about Marc Lee, and we learn how he decided to become a Navy SEAL, we also learn how Willink, Hogan, Babin and Eafrati decided to join the military to become Navy SEALs. For instance, while Hogan says that he was "bored with his life", for Babin, it was his childhood dream, which started with playing with G.I. Joes. Similarly, Willink states: "when I was a little kid I wanted to be some kind of soldier, some kind of commando, and I realised that there were guys that were fighting and dying, and I wasn`t with them". On the other hand, Eafrati describes the situation they find themselves in as a good occasion to fight, as something to enjoy. We do not see excessively visualised firefights or military gears, but the way they describe their "job" and the way they relate it to a strong willingness are illustrative of the joys they gain from combat and war.

5.3.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

Although the *LT* series deploys re-enacted scenes to convey previous events, and hence are mostly narrated by the interviews conducted by the combatants, directly affecting combat scenes are absent. Yet from the opening scenes the series underlines the emotional bonds between the soldiers themselves and families. Hence, in this respect, their humane, social selves are much more depicted in this series.

When Willink talks about the willingness to die they have to have as a warrior, or when we learn about the death of Marc Lee, from his wife and friends` mouths, the emotive atmosphere they harness, the way they crumped their faces reframe the way you look at them in an emotional way. Alhough the series does not deploy a first-person view of battlefield footage, I was very empathetic to the general atmosphere.

5.3.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

The timing of the revealing of certain information to the audience enables the course of the narrative. This results in certain ways of emplotment which refer to the assembling of events. In this vein, the way *LT* is emplotted sustains the audience to stay on course. Accordingly, all throughout the show, the scenes and themes oscillate between the warrior-self and civilian-self of SEAL Team members showing us that they are not robotic killers; rather, they are sentient, vulnerable human beings with many social and emotional layers, and family ties and responsibilities. This is evident between archival footage, first-person interviews and re-enactments that are enhancing the belief that the show is truthful and the storyline is correct; and between the threatened situatedness of the soldiers and their duty-bound belief in what they are doing, justifying what they are doing both through their courage and trust, and through the presence of enemies which could only be coped with through military means. In that regard, the weaving of these themes and scenes into each other by revealing certain information pertaining to their human side and warrior side back to back, enable the narrative to cohere itself through an implicit argument. The interpretation of this implicitness is entrusted to the audience by making them stay the course of their own accord.

As mentioned, following the paratexts, the beginning sequences encourage us to see the reality given by the show trough the subjectivity of the SEALs. While we gaze at their inner-worlds through their talking-head interviews and cherished memories, the outer-world of geopolitics is defined through archival footage and news reports. For instance, whenever we are introduced to the outer-world of geopolitics, such as Ramadi, Iraq, 2006, as a threat environment brimming with "mujahadeens covered with khefiyyes", it is followed by one of the Team members` childhood reasoning that led them to become a Navy SEAL. As Babin recounts, when the team was stuck in a hallway:

> "Rounds are just coming in and just shattering glass and literally inches over guys` heads … Tony`s standing in the corner, and rounds are bracketing him coming in two different windows, and he`s kind of just up against the concrete, and he just looks at me as, like, gives me a smile, like a thumbs-up, like `this is crazy`."

Following that, we see Eafrati commenting: "You`re in a war zone. It`s combat, it sucks, it`s hard, you know and fun at the same time" and thereafter recounting his teenage reasoning to become a Navy SEAL. Hence the objectifying rhetoric on the outer-world of geopolitics and the subjective rhetoric on the

inner-world of warriors situate the SEALs as beloved, sentient, vulnerable, social human beings in the dreadful world of geopolitics, and detaches the politics behind the war and exchange it with the personal.

5.3.7. Conclusion

Though the show enables a candid inside look into the world of geopolitics through the eyes and memories of SEAL Team members, and while soldierly accounts and experiences are integral to geopolitics, relaying it through merely personal experience has led to the depoliticization of geopolitics. Thus what we are introduced to through the show is a geopolitics which is not being run by top-down looking generals and politicians, or invincible and insentient warriors. We see geopolitics, as though it is run by vulnerable and loveable warriors, who are disciplined, restrained, caring and willing; and is, in turn, threatened by unseen, faceless, senseless, uncaring, and violent Others. Nonetheless, the questions asked by Lee in his letter home, or the fallacies that led to the Iraq War are left unattended. In the words of Lee, questioning racism and American exceptionalism (Lee, 2006):

> *"I have seen the morals of a man who cares nothing of human life...I have seen hate towards a nation's people who has never committed a wrong, except being born of a third world, ill-educated and ignorant to western civilization. It is not everybody who feels this way only a select few but it brings questions to mind. Is it ok for one to consider themselves superior to another race?"*

Yet, the documentary does what exactly Lee was questioning: humanising the self, while dehumanising, even dismissing the Other. Thus, while the show is documenting a Navy SEAL`s last mission, it leaves us with personal experiences of war and biographical details of warriors but does not present what the warrior himself was contemplating about the politics of war. Moreover, as we will see in *American Sniper* (see Films), his friend, Lee`s close friend Kyle will be criticizing Lee for his questioning. In one scene he laments this letter for being the cause of Lee`s loss. A similar theme also appears in History Channel`s show Six. In one scene, one of the SEALs daughter challenges his father for what they are doing during the frontlines: "well, maybe we're making more bad guys than we're killing. It's bad math." Nevertheless, he frames his warrior mindset to his daughter: "I can't think about that. So I don't. Doubt creates hesitation. Hesitation gets you killed. So... I can't".

6. Films*: These are Based on True Stories*

The previous chapter presented the PRA of GWoT documentaries, which are framed as the unmediated representations of true geopolitical events. Regarding them as technologies of the self, conducive to the production of geopolitical subjectivities, I argued that geopolitics becomes a personally relatable issue for the everyday people at the homefront through the eye/I contacts enabled and afforded by such visual cultural mediums. Hence, the preceding chapter showed how the visualised personal stories of soldiers disguised the politics behind the war effort and skewed geopolitical understanding towards a personal survival narrative.

This chapter addresses another part of the study – GWoT prestige combat films (PCFs), which are framed to be *based on true geopolitical events*.[15] The chapter deploys PRA to three GWoT films: *Zero Dark Thirty* (ZD30) (2012), *Lone Survivor* (LS) (2013), *American Sniper* (AS) (2014). Each of these films had a good standing in box office ratings, as opposed to the American film industry`s earlier dealings with the GWoT topic (Carter & Dodds, 2011; 2014) and they can be regarded as some of the leading films from the second subcycle of GWoT PCFs. Distinguishing GWoT PCFs into two subscyles, Decker (2017) points that:

> *the first cycle, from 2006 to 2010, told tales of American military frustration and was marked by tremendous generic innovation and pervasive commercial failure. … The second subcycle, turning toward the elite Navy SEALs in the early 2010s, proved more successful commercially* (Decker, 2017, pp.27-28).

As Murray noted, "the majority of non-fiction and fiction films" on the GWoT "have failed at the box office" (2010), and as a result, most studios were reluctant to produce such films until *ZD30* (Buchanan, 2013; Prince, 2009).[16] Yet after 2012, in particular, the GWoT genre started to blossom and make a profit. Several reasons might be given about why the genre is flowered after 2012. The assassination of bin Laden in Pakistan on May 2, 2011 by a group of US Navy SEALs is one of them. The value of this geopolitical accomplishment was striking for the US public and it brought fame to DevGru operators, US Special Forces, and the military. For instance, Disney applied to trademark "SEAL Team 6" as a brand name days after the killing of bin Laden (Braiker, 2011). Therefore, after a decade long geopolitical quagmire, the success of this operation provided the confidence to filmmakers and

[15] As a genre, these films "tell the stories of US soldiers fighting abroad in actual historical conflicts" (Decker, 2017, p.11).

[16] "A string of Iraq war box office flops, including Green Zone (2010), Body of Lies (2008), Rendition (2007) and Stop-Loss (2008)" (Berlatsky, 2016).

entertainment media to turn their attention to the heroic warrior genre. The depressive critique of war replaced with the `quite professional` warriors` wars.

This turn also reflects the increasing reliance on Special Operations Forces (SOF) by many Western governments during the last decade. Despite the ever-growing focus assigned to the role played by drone warfare in IR, ground combat operations, especially the use of SOF operators and their embodied subjectivities remain central to the making of the GWoT. Particularly, since 2007, the US SOF has begun to play an ever-increasing clandestine role in America`s vaguely defined global war zones. Approximately 8.000 US SOF operators alone are currently deployed to more than 140 countries (almost 70 percent of the world). And to achieve this, the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) almost quintupled its budget ($11 billion) and size (70.000) during the last decade (Eken, Forthcoming). However, to reach this number of personnel and to conduct the conduct of such clandestine operations, the US military requires reliable warrior subjectivities volunteered to undertake high stakes in distant areas of the world and their wilful efforts.

Thus, to promote this form of subjectivity and to attract people towards coveting SOF units, it is well known that the DoD has been very pro-active. Yet the range of governmental intrusions in the evolution of this genre is unknown (Alford & Secker, 2017; Jenkins, 2016). What we know is, box-office ratings skyrocketed and military and spy-themed entertainment become adult education tools (Aaron, 2015; Bonner, 2015; Zegart, 2010). Similar to what Gibson (1994) forecasted about the post-Vietnam America`s paramilitary transformation through its everyday entertainment landscape`s militarisation, today we see a comparable, yet a more widespread trend.

Nevertheless, beyond box office ratings, the reason behind choosing to analyse these films stems from a variety of thematic and analytic reasons to understand how and through which patterns these films are woven together. **First**, makers of these films say that their films are not political, but committed to the ground-reality of the lived experiences of the American military personnel, and trivialise the support they garnered from US military and government (Bigelow, 2014; Dockterman, 2015). Yet I argue that this depoliticizing perspective is itself political, as it naturalises war-making with a sense of ground-reality, as if the political realities instigating these wars are irrelevantly abstract and unreal.

Second, each of these films deploys a boots-on-the-ground perspective to portray a geopolitical event and justifies the use of violence as a requirement for the survival of the American protagonist. While *ZD30* goes through the long process leading to the execution of Osama bin Laden, *LS* portrays the mortal consequences of a mission in Afghanistan, and *AS* presents us the story of Chris Kyle, a former US Navy SEAL, as a legendary GWoT figure. **Third**, each film includes a Navy SEAL element, allegedly one of the most celebrated and publicised SOF units in the US military, both as characters and as production support personnel. Hence, despite *ZD30*`s main protagonist is a CIA operative until its last

scenes, each film illustrates the conduct of geopolitics through the eyes of Navy SEALs[17]. **Fourth**, they all purport to transcend the top-down geo/political narratives of the GWoT to ostensibly transcribe the personal, bottom-up, boots-on-the-ground experiences of armed forces personnel. However, with such a tokenism of seemingly prioritising the personal experience of war over the political use of it, arguably, they overwrite the political with the prioritisation and victimisation of the American-centred personal (the SEAL). As a result, the contemporary geopolitical complexities of the post-9/11 era are skewed in favour of the Western subject (Kaklamanidou, 2016) by exclusively featuring its "bodies at risk" (Burgoyne, 2012).

Fifth, the films are claimed to be based on real-life accounts, and have a non-fictional, docudrama aspect (with the slight exception of *LS)*, while their producers claim to have no political, but only factual, commitments (Hellmich & Purse, 2016). Therefore, these works present themselves as reliable sources (Bigelow, 2014) for forming beliefs on the US geopolitical conduct and agenda. Enhancing what documentaries on geopolitics covered in the earlier chapter, films advance the blurred lines between geopolitical fiction and non-fiction. **Sixth**, each film designates and legitimates a different register of violence and moral contravention. While *ZD30* legitimates violence through the necessity of torturing the Other to cope with geopolitics, in *LS* and *AS*, the necessity of survival and the corporeal and psychological wounds of the protagonist legitimate the use of violence. **Seventh**, the themes and the sequential usages of them as causal links that lead the narrative to be gradually unfold and be owned by the viewer is a central aspect of all the films analysed. **Finally**, the affective aspect of each film harnesses and guides the viewer and their emoting faculties in a certain direction to embody the leading character. Put differently, war becomes a topic which can be sensed, articulated and experienced through a soldierly authority and gallantry. Its political purposes, reasons, faults and dimensions are bypassed. As a result, war is demonstrated as something inevitable, natural and hence apolitically personal and real.

Thus, as the audience is led to embody the personification of American politics under the guise of "filmic characters", the films emplot and walk the audience through geopolitics with "a lent eye/I". In other words, as the audience is gradually embedded into certain geopolitical emplotments through the eyes of the soldiers, military and civilian subjectivities are transposed and enmeshed in a framework which construes geopolitics as a personal stake. This enables a political transposition between the sovereign eye/I and the subject eye/I. SEALs become the embodiment of US politics[18] and are portrayed under the guise of humanised, victimised perpetrators of geopolitical violence. Furthermore, thereby the audience is enabled to walk in the shoes of people who are running and facing the deadly consequences

[17] "The clandestine global force capable of striking anywhere, killing anyone, the tip of America's military spear" (Cole, 2017).
[18] "No single military unit has come to represent American military success or heroism more than SEAL Team 6" (Cole, 2017).

of geopolitics and expected to answer certain geopolitical questions on their own in a certain way. The embodied geopolitical situatedness/positionality experienced through a lent eye/I encourages certain conclusions and forecloses upon the possibility of alternate approaches. In that sense, the films lead the audience to ask "what else I could do if I were in their shoes?" questions and arguably limit the answer to the procedurally emerging ones in the film that are conducted by the protagonist. Hence, by initiating the audience to the so-called ground reality of geopolitics through a set chain of events, the films aim to empathically garner audience power for geopolitical purposes.

6.1. Zero Dark Thirty

6.1.1. Introduction

One of the most critically acclaimed and controversial films about the post-9/11 era is *Zero Dark Thirty* (*ZD30*) (Zero Dark Thirty, 2012). Directed by Kathryn Bigelow and written by Mark Boal, *ZD30* covers a morally shifty ground as a combination of war film, thriller, and docudrama that depicts the years-long manhunt for Osama bin Laden. Before *ZD30*, as Peter Berg maintains, "studios were adverse to making films about the war in the Middle East", and favouring the ones on super-heroes, for financial success (Buchanan, 2013, para.4). Nonetheless, *ZD30*, *LS* and especially *AS* certainly changed that, both by underlining the heroism of ordinary Americans, and by upholding huge revenues compared to earlier films on Iraq, Afghanistan and GWoT in general[19].

According to the storyline, Maya (Jessica Chastain) is a young and passionate CIA agent, hired by the agency at a young age. Assigned to Pakistan in 2003 by a top CIA official, "the Wolf", a Muslim, she gradually takes the lead in the hunt for bin Laden. She is an authority-defying character who is "resilient, goal oriented, focused, and not distracted by any romantic interests or [familial] obligations" (Ritzenhoff & Kazecki, 2014, p.4). The viewer is invited to witness her decade-long and painstaking search to locate bin Laden`s compound, and dramatizes a spatiotemporally compressed narrative in a matter of two-and-a-half-hours. Furthermore, the film`s director and producer Bigelow states that *ZD30* depicts the story from a "boots-on-the-ground perspective" (Filkins, 2012), which adds a horizontal layout to the narrative. Furthermore, it grants us a new violent imaginary through the way it candidly presents torture and violence as a necessary evil for a greater cause:

> *The violence that ZD30 explores from its initial moments to its deflating conclusion represents something new in American cinema, a portrayal that is at once intimate and*

[19] While some super-hero films used some GWoT themes, for instance Iron Man fight with a terror cell in Afghanistan in the beginning, these are not based on "non-fiction" GWoT accounts.

inseparable from the large scale violence that dominates the short history of the young century. In the course of the film, violence is rendered in immediate close-up, both acoustic and visual, and gradually dilated to read as a defining historical motif … Rendering the concrete terror of 9/11 in an acoustic montage, followed by a brutal portrayal of interrogation and torture, Zero Dark Thirty maps the specific contours of what might be called a new violent imaginary, shaped by endless threat, by the constant possibility of attack, and by the willingness to use force as default response (Burgoyne, 2015, p.247).

6.1.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

Bigelow and Boal`s public statements compose the crux of *ZD30*`s paratextuality. Accordingly, their statements mostly revolve around three issues: the film has not enjoyed any exclusive production support from the US government; it has a personal focus rather than a political one thanks to the way in which the film depicts the events from a boots-on-the-ground perspective, and hence, it has a non-political agenda (Bigelow, 2014). They argue that the film dramatises real geopolitical events from a subjective point of view, one that goes beyond the top-down political reality, objectivity and correctness concerns. "I was interested in putting the audience into the shoes of the [American] men and women in the thick of this hunt … and give people a glimpse at the dedication and courage and sacrifice they made" (Barnes, 2012). Nonetheless, "[u]pon reading Bigelow's own reflections one could easily be led to believe that the film constitutes an accurate historical reenactment of the CIA's decade-long hunt. In fact, when she appeared on the Colbert Report, she referred to the film as a `first draft of history`" (Carnegie Foundation, 2012). Nonetheless, while the film "shows [that the] information elicited through torture play[ed] an essential role in the tracking down of Osama bin Laden (Froomkin, 2013, p.1), "that impression", representing torture as a useful asset "is false" (McCain et al., 2012). Moreover, although the producers of the film attempt to hide the support they garnered from CIA officials by claiming that the film does not have an agenda (Filkins, 2012), they received a substantial amount of institutional support (Leopold & Henderson, 2015):

It subsequently was revealed that Bigelow and Boal had received an unusual amount of access to CIA officials who had a keen interest in peddling the virtues of waterboarding, and this spawned a cottage industry of investigations and articles.

… According to the documents, at least 10 CIA officers met Bigelow and Boal at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia, as well as at hotels and restaurants in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. In addition, the CIA director at the time, Leon Panetta, met Bigelow at a dinner in Washington and, soon after that, shared a table with her and Boal at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner. It also turns out that Boal read his script over the phone to CIA public affairs officials on four separate days in the fall of 2011 (Maass, 2015, para.1-2).

Nevertheless, Bigelow insists that as producers they do not condone the use of torture, and claims that they showed candidly what "really" happened "on-the-ground" as "[torture] is a part of the story [that] couldn't [be] ignore[d]. War, obviously, isn't pretty, and we were not interested in portraying this military action as free of moral consequences" (Bigelow, 2014). In that vein, although they claim that they did not whitewash or sanitise the war effort by excluding the use of torture, what they did with the way they represent torture scenes as necessary means for greater ends sanctifies the use of torture and yet worse, desensitise the public view on it and on war. Indeed, the use of torture is rendered visible, and while not directly endorsed, it is, arguably, condoned with the way it is sequentially used.

The way Bigelow frames the transgression of moral lines by boots-on-the-ground point of view can be summarised through her own words: "Bin Laden wasn't defeated by superheroes zooming down from the sky; he was defeated by ordinary Americans who fought bravely even as they sometimes crossed moral lines, who labored greatly and intently, who gave all of themselves in both victory and defeat, in life and in death, for the defense of this nation" (Bigelow, 2014). Hence, such statements prime the audience to see the story from ordinary Americans` vantage points, showing their intentions, frustrations, and desperate resorts to immoral techniques in order to save lives. Yet, as Evans argues this is the puzzle with which we are left. Whereas Bigelow "aims to provide a truthful view of CIA field agents and to convincingly simulate the view from where they stand, to offer at-home audiences an accurate account of what these agents undergo" (2014, p.355), she concomitantly replaces the disembodied, top-down, political process with an embodied, ground-level, personal one.

Put differently, we learn how, for instance the CIA, or the US government, operationally work and see through the eyes/Is of everyday Americans who work for these agencies. As Satia (2008) put it, states do not see the world simply through techno-institutional gadgetry, but rather, as a result of a skewed, embodied, and encultured faculties of its operatives. Hence, Bigelow personifies the eye/I of geopolitical institutions by offering to the audience a sneak peek from the eyes/I of the CIA operatives. Yet, this outlook enshrouds geopolitics, and the institutional vantage points, with everyday American people`s inlooks, feelings, frustrations, fears and instincts. Therefore, such a replacement, rather than showing reality "institutionally" as it is, generates embodible vantage points that swervingly reduce the politics behind GWoT to a matter of personal survival, revenge and desperation.

As Burgoyne contends, depictions of protagonists with bodily risks lie at the heart of new war films (2012) and this is exactly how Bigelow slips politics into the narration through the vulnerabilities of the personal, which invokes visceral reactions and empathic identifications. This empathic identification is significantly crucial to the politics of the film. Although empathy can be thought as a peaceful feeling, it might lead to the justification of the use of violence towards the Other of the person with whom we empathically relate ourselves (ten Have et al., 2016; Buffone & Boulin, 2014). Put differently, "caring

for one person can foster baseless aggression towards another" (Bloom, 2015), even without provocation. Hence, empathy can be geo/politically misused for bellicose ends. Since once we embody a protagonist, we not only see, reason and judge from its perspective; we also care, emote and protect from that point of view (Pomarède, 2016; Welland, 2015).

Recapping the politics behind *ZD30*, as Axe points out, "to support the production, the White House, Pentagon and CIA all offered Bigelow and her screenwriter Mark Boal unprecedented access to government sources and facilities" (2012). In this regard, both the production and the neutrality of *ZD30*, contrary to Bigelow and Boal's claims emerge as points of contention. Although to Bigelow, what they did was a "journalistic approach to film" (Filkins, 2012) without any political agenda, Maass maintains that this journalism is at best, a sort of "embedded filmmaking" (2012), as the film`s so-called factual accounts are nurtured by the very political agency with which it purports to have no exclusive association. Therefore, it can be argued that the extent of its non-fictive neutrality is quite the same with those of embedded journalism accounts.

Furthermore, a case in point, especially in regards to the film`s paratextuality and intertextuality should be mentioned. The video game *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* (2012) distributed a *ZD30* map-pack offering the players the chance to play the combat scenes of the film and the event as *themselves* a day before the film`s limited release (EA, 2012c), and hence enhanced the paratextual aura of the filmic narrative even further at a ground level. To illustrate how such a paratextual context and the problematic non-fictionality claims continue in the opening sequences of the film, a brief discussion on the beginning scene would highlight the way the audience is slowly plunged into the narrative.

6.1.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetization

"Beginning … is the first step in the intentional production of meaning", and hence "isolating it analytically" (Said, 1985, p.5) enables us to see the initial engagements between a narrative and its audience (Pötzsch, 2012). In this regard, apart from paratexts, the opening sequences of films also function to guide the audience in specific ways. The "transitional character" they have connects "the world of the film with the world of the spectator" (Pötzsch, 2012, p.156), thereby they are functional in initiating a sense of suspension of disbelief. In this regard, following the paratextual stage, opening sequences continue to prime the viewer for the filmic world and enable a gentle transition towards its reality. Therefore, these stages gradually distill the narrative to the audience and the audience to the narrative.

As already discussed, *ZD30*`s paratexts prepare the viewer to watch a geopolitical story allegedly based on real events. Underlining this, the film opens in a documentary fashion, with real voice recordings of the 9/11 victims` last minutes. These sad conversations generate a sonic aura around the viewer. Hearing these last moments, for instance, aroused empathic feelings in me, and I re-experienced the

real event in an embodied manner from the victims` points of views. This "emphasis on embodied perception" is crucial (Burgoyne, 2012, p.17). Although we know that thousands of people suffered in 9/11, witnessing these individual moments sent shivers down my spine. On the other hand, this affective immersion, while evoking an exclusive empathy for the 9/11 victims, also contextualises the use of torture against the Other. Hence the bodies are split open, in the name of, for the sake of and by the hands of open societies without a further need to justify the conduct.

Confirming, according to Pötzsch`s (2012) distinction, that *ZD30*`s opening sequences combine an objectifying rhetoric with a subjective one. "Some films blend the two strategies throughout their opening sequences or negotiate their discursive potentials, without however activating a reflexive mode by critically playing them out against each other." (Pötzsch, 2012, p.166). In this regard, the viewer embodies the event through those very personal accounts and embodied experiences. As objective and subjective storytelling blur, the viewer enters and experiences the torture scenes with mixed feelings. While the detainee is being interrogated, the film also invites the viewer to interrogate themselves on the objective and subjective grounds of such wrongdoings. For instance, I asked questions to myself by positing myself in the shoes of CIA operatives in the film: Is it morally wrong? What else could I do? How else would I get that information to save lives? Would I do the same? Even if I intend not to hurt, what are the alternatives? And such a questioning instigated by the context and causal relations in the filmic narrative mostly constrained my take on alternatives. Although my answers may differ, in general, with other audience members, the viewers` reasoning to reach divergent answers is implicitly limited within the ongoing procedural experience of the film. As will be seen in the "the sequences of events" section, the constant flow leads an implicit argumentation that is aiming to lead the viewer to feel in a certain way. In other words, the film goes on to incite such moral dilemmas by foretelling mortal causalities which they refer to through recurrent themes and visuals. To incisively demonstrate how the viewer is entangled and nudged with those dilemmas, the section will continue with a thematic analysis. Below is the elaborate analysis of the themes found in the film.

6.1.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitisation/Desanitisation

Since the wars of the 1990s, specifically the ones in Iraq and Kosovo, it has been argued that the graphic realities of wars at the ground level are hidden away and sanitised through visual culture to prevent a wide range of political, social and legal backlashes (Eken, 2017). Accordingly, wars become virtual and virtuous at the same time. Yet, a contrary move in visual culture has been taking shape since the last decade. In this regard, we increasingly witness graphic scenes of bodily vulnerabilities. As an exemplary case, *ZD30* does not conceal the bodily results of the political use of violence as well. The resultant bodily vulnerability and pain of torture victims are especially made blatantly visible.

Moreover, during the raid scenes, we are also enabled to witness the moments where people are hit and bleed. Apart from bin Laden`s body, none of the violence-inflicted bodies are hidden away. Dead bodies and terrorised reactions of mostly children in private households are made visible as well. Additionally, these instances are not accompanied by rhythmic rock music, but by a soft and dark incidental soundtrack designed to send quivers of harrowing and appalling sensations that complement our jarring experiences. In this regard, *ZD30* blatantly reveals how violence impairs both the corporeal and the psychological integrity of bodies.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things)

From its beginning, the film politicises the viewer by depoliticizing and personifying geopolitics. Hence, by making the viewer gradually dwell on and question the effectivity, necessity and hence the morality of the use of violence, without leaving any space for alternative answers, the film depoliticises geopolitics, which means reducing and naturalising its essential political aspects into seemingly common sense. Through the recurrence of certain thematic sequences, the film guides us to weave certain narrative threads within a consistent path of reasoning which legitimises the use of violence. Hence, arguably, this is subtly achieved by walking the viewer through certain cause and effect sequences, whereby the viewer can reach a certain message on its own, rather than being told what to make of it. Simply put, the viewer is nudged to procedurally process the film`s rhetorical claims, and reach the subtle message seemingly on its own.

For instance, following its initial scene which covers the radio recordings of the last calls of 9/11 victims, the film takes us into one of the notorious CIA black sites, wherein the much disputed enhanced interrogation techniques are used. The scene begins with a close-up of Ammar, who apparently sustained torture for a considerable amount of time. Throughout the ensuing torture scenes, Maya initially looks hesitant and innocuous, appearing to be taking a dim view of what is materialising before her. Yet she slowly acquiesces in the brutality of interrogation techniques. For instance, while she was trying to look away, cringing her head on impulse and fidgeting her arms in agitation, whereupon being asked for help from Ammar, we see her respond in an unexpectedly strict and didactic way: "You can help yourself by being truthful" as an interpellating offer for his self-subjectification. This scene reveals a threshold in her reasoning which is contrary to what is expected from her gestures. Thereafter, we see her determinedly chasing a lead to determine the whereabouts of bin Laden, visiting other black sites in different countries, watching various interrogation videos, and even applying various torture techniques herself through the people under her command.

In this vein, the film does not only depict intense torture scenes but also ostensibly discloses the reasonable ground reality of the GWoT through the eyes and reasoning of Maya. And as her initial emotional hesitation fades into a sense of professional determination, the viewer finds itself entangled

in a much more complex ground reality. The political becomes personal: what else could be done? What else would I do? Yet the weaving of thematic and visual sequences procedurally guides the viewer to the legitimisation of the use of torture as the only viable option. Therefore, whilst it seems like an unbearable, horrendous and repellent act which would be deemed inhuman otherwise, the way it is shown and contextualised gradually renders the deed as an act of necessary evil. Thus, while the film does not tell or argue for an overt pro-torture rhetoric, it does foster a subtle pro-torture stance by leading the viewer to concur with what is procedurally shown. Put differently, by structuring a certain path of reasoning that guides the trains of thought of its viewers, the film frees the audience to make up their own minds ostensibly on their own initiatives, yet within the limits of a leeway, which means the possible field of actions endowed to the free subject. Hence, the film delicately rests its case by making the viewers walk in the shoes of a CIA operative.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

None of the people tortured were the `wrong people`. Rather, they were either fearful informants or recalcitrant detainees withholding information. Hence, supposedly, the suspects were mistreated for a just reason, and by the use of right tactics, information can be extracted from anyone expected to have enmity towards the US. For instance, though Ammar had been tortured in many different ways, he continually exclaimed that he did not know anything. Yet the operatives were so sure that he knew something. After being tricked into believing he had already become an informant, the desired data was extracted from him. In a similar way, while Maya was still dwelling on finding bin Laden`s courier by connecting the dots extracted through detainees, Jessica, another CIA operative, was warning her against what she believed might simply be a confirmation bias. However, the procession of events leads to a point where Maya`s reasoning was correct and obviously was not led by bias. In the same way, unable to confirm bin Laden`s presence in the compound, the location is nonetheless struck by the SEALs. Therefore, chance, probability, and the intuition of the good guys" prevail and allow them to right the wrongs. Hence, all they need to do is to take action. Suitably, as one former top SEAL officer puts it briefly: "Do I think there was more killing than should have been done? Sure. I think the natural inclination was, if it's a threat, kill it, and later on you realize, 'Oh, maybe I overassessed the threat" (Mazzetti et al., 2015).

In terms of geotagging, while the detainees are shown helpless, tortured, and narrated only through their answers to specific questions, Pakistan, in general, is depicted as an erratic landscape, devoid of an intelligible grid, reliable system and friendly order as a characteristic Oriental space (Gregory, 2004; Sharp, 2008; Funnell & Dodds, 2016). For instance, when asked by the CIA Chief in Pakistan on how she found Pakistan, Maya answers by saying "it`s kind of f…d up". Hence, the areas within which the GWOT is conducted are geotagged as places where danger, hostility and disorder are normalised and

abundant. Thus, in a way, the moves to securitise, medicalise, and restore order in such places by the US are underlined, contextualised and justified.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

On the other hand, there are institutional regulations, hampering heroes from taking action. As Rachel Marsden, a former Fox News host put it: "the bureaucracy was almost a character unto itself in the movie - like the ghost in a horror film that we never see but constantly tortures the protagonist" (Marsden, 2012). For instance, while Maya was certain with her lead, she was surrounded by unconvinced, restraining and unwilling bureaucrats. In a meeting to decide whether to take action to strike the compound, most of the bureaucrats state that they give a 60% chance of locating bin Laden there. Yet, Maya exclaims, "Okay, fine, 95%, 'cause I know certainty freaks you guys out. But it's 100". Hence, while there are obvious subtleties and uncertainties, Maya trusts her gut-feelings and complements certainty with her intuitions. "No one's sure if bin Laden's in there, not definitively. He's still invisible to the CIA's spying eyes, silent to its prying ears. But Maya knows. In her gut she knows" (Asay, 2016). All is needed is action to slip in and split open the compound to reveal it. Similarly, when asked by one of the SEAL Team members regarding the reliability of their intelligence, she cannot give a certain answer, and hours before the raid, one of the SEALs asks the other: "What part of the story convinced you?". The response is a mischievous confession: "Her confidence. That's the kind of concrete data point I'm looking for". Following that, we see one of the SEALs pitching a horseshoe, winning the bet, and the team finding the target in the compound.

Hence, notwithstanding the institutional and rational setbacks, the mission is accomplished thanks to Maya`s gut-feelings that complement her reasoning. "Maya's conviction is the product of what she sees and feels, the immediate knowledge that comes from her senses" and "viewers are supposed to trust her instincts: when Maya's fellow agent Dan accuses her of pushing a theory [based on her intuitions] ... Maya emphatically agrees, as if it is a point of pride" and "we do not see Maya guessing wrongly" at all (Evans, 2014, p.365). She always reaches certainty through her feelings. However, for instance, in reality, earlier raids conducted by DevGru and other military assets to kill or capture Osama bin Laden, which were similarly based merely on visual cue-driven "suspicions" (Cole, 2017) that led to various civilian massacres are entirely overlooked in the film.

As Satia argued (2008, p.6; Stoler, 2012, p.49), "intuitions guided intelligence strategies in the Middle East in the 1920s" as `rational knowledge could not` give what the British colonialists wanted to see. As rationality faltered their preconceptions, they deployed their intuitions to guide their geopolitical conduct. "It was a conscious tactical preference, which developed in the years before the war when British agents first deemed the region fundamentally unfathomable and invented a new intelligence

epistemology that prioritized the intuition of gifted persons over, and in default of, mere, unverifiable `fact`" (Satia, 2008, p.100).

5. Voiceless Other:

Throughout the film, the Other is rendered visible, yet left voiceless. We never hear anything from them, except their answers they give under interrogation. For instance, the things we know about Ammar are only what CIA knows of him as an enemy. Hence we know CIA`s accounts of him, yet not his account of anything. The other detainees are also only visualised while suffering and confessing. The only human account we are enabled to know of them is limited to primitive faculties and actions, such as, attacking, suffering, fearing, eating, defecating, and dying. Nothing walks us further through their lives. As such, rendered into primitive, savage, and inhuman incarnations, they are "placed outside of 'the Civilisation', which warranted a particular treatment" (Bilgin, 2012; 2014). In the words of a former DevGru Leader, quoting the common rationalisation of DevGru operators: "Often we'd hear, `well, they're savages. They don't play by the rules, so why should we?`" (Cole, 2017). Hence, left outside the moral borders and orders of the civilisation, the Other`s ability to articulate itself and our ability to communicate with it are limited to the language of violence and psychological warfare.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

Contrary to the Other, we are able to delve into the reasoning and experiences of the heroes, the good guys. We learn why they do what they do from their points of views. Although we do not know about their family ties or lives back home, we both witness their human sides, and their passions and frustrations to do their jobs. For instance, we see Dan, first as a cruel and fierce interrogator with messy hair and a short fuse. Yet, the way he feeds and pets monkeys, and later expresses sadness about their deaths, articulate a sense of his professional and private self. We also see one of the SEALs listen to Tony Robbins on the way to the raid in the helicopter and learn that he has other *plans* for his *future*, and we also see one of them expressing a sense of grief for one of his female victims later in the raid. Yet more conspicuously, we chase Maya, see her human side, and the whys and wherefores behind her fierce actions as well. And as in many Hollywood films, for instance, *Rambo, Mission Impossible and The Bourne Identity* series, although being confident and bright, the protagonist must endure a period of loneliness in her journey, that presses her to be a law unto itself (Tasker, 2015). Hence, she is described by "the Wolf" as "it`s her, against the world".

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

ZD30 does not visualise this theme until the last scenes. Yet with the introduction of stealth helicopters and the SEALs, we start to see and learn about the cutting-edge aviation technology, the military gadgets and the weaponry the SEALs use, the highly disciplined and trained warriors, and their capability to do harm in a professionally dispassionate and mundane manner. For instance, during the raid scenes, we

see through their four-eyed night vision goggles,[20] which enables soldiers to see a wider area in the dark. We also see them silently slipping in and out, operating with deadly force and breaching obstacles. Further for the joy of gun fans, the website International Movie Firearms Data Base painstakingly detailed every weaponry and gadgetry used in the film (IMFDB, 2012).

6.1.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

Bigelow contends that she wants the audience to see the reality of the GWoT as seen through the eyes of the "boots-on-the-ground". In this vein, Bigelow wants the audience to see, judge, reason and feel through Maya`s perspective. Yet, apart from being transported to Maya`s world, during the raid scene, we also embody the SEAL members. As the camera angles are aligned with their footsteps and as we experience the raid through their green night vision goggles, we `man` the images they see. As Evans (2014, p.364) put it:

> *"the film`s audience is positioned to see through these agents' eyes, or feel ourselves in their shoes (to feel their frustration as al-Qaeda pulled off attacks in Saudi Arabia, Britain, and Pakistan; also to see "what went down" in agency-run "Black sites," or have a green-tinged night-vision of what it is like to move stealthily into ... a family compound and shoot whoever is seen) ... What Bigelow and Boal clearly believe is that the more closely we approximate what Maya sees, the better we will see [as] Maya".*

Starting from the very first moment, the film incorporates emotional moments, from the last calls of 9/11 victims to the bodily vulnerability of detainees, to sudden attacks and gunshots. For instance, during the analysis of my facial recording for my affective display, I found out that I started to watch the film without any facial expression. Yet towards the end of the first scene, the last calls of the 9/11 victims got under my skin. I inadvertently began to express grief by grimacing and wrinkling my chin. Moreover, the following torture scenes were all built upon the same facial expressions. The affect hindered my critical reasoning. Apart from the sudden jerks and cringes at the sight and sound of gunshots and explosions, I specifically twitched my head a few times during the last raid scenes. As a result, the film sent quivers of excitement and affective resonances throughout my screening, enabling me to embody a situatedness within the film.

6.1.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

Apart from the contents, the sequence and weaving of the themes are also of significant importance. In this sense, unless the procedural argumentation put forth through the sequence of certain themes are uncovered, the line of reasoning offered to the audience cannot be fully understood. Since, arguably, the sequences of events are set in a way to enable the viewer to refute and approve certain arguments by making them experience and judge certain events with their preceding causes and succeeding effects,

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[20] https://www.sixnightvision.com/

application of an "after this, therefore because of this" reasoning is supported. This allows the narrative to pose its counterarguments to alternate approaches without overtly telling what to think to the audience, but by enabling them to conclude by tailing the order of events. Furthermore, as this order of events share a common framework with other visual cultural mediums (Chapter 6 & 8), they further aid the inferences of the viewer as well. Hence, the viewer finds a tokenistic account of a very isolated ground reality in which alternative options and critiques are not muted or concealed, but rather visualised and refuted, based on post hoc fallacies. As Gross states, *ZD30* "shows but refuses to tell" (2012). By showing the exquisitely detailed torture scenes as a means to success, as an important part of a certain succession of events, the film endows the viewer a path of reasoning to argue and refute, without telling directly to them what to think.

For instance, while the film starts with 9/11 victims` last calls, the following scene`s torturous content ties the suffering of bodies and the reasoning behind the use of violence to 9/11. The scene we see Ammar tortured and put in a box is also followed by a scene necessitating and justifying the torture in which terrorists exclusively shoot white western people in a hotel in Saudi Arabia while sparing the ones with headscarves and thawbs. In another instance, Jessica criticises Maya about the likelihood of her confirmation bias. "Confirmation bias -- assessing a theory or a piece of information as valid because you desperately want or think it to be, and excluding other information for the same reason -- is mentioned several times throughout the film as an impediment to good intelligence work" (Marsden, 2012). Yet, within seconds, we experience a bomb attack, prompting that Maya might have a point. Similarly, following Joe`s "actionable intelligence" demands which highlights the need for concrete information to act on, the London bombings shake the news.

Hence, we constantly experience attacks while looking for concrete data points and alternative approaches. This nudges us towards a causal link to associate naïve attitudes and bureaucratic barriers with explosions and attacks. Therefore, we learn 1) that "killing is not easy" for the US as it operates *if and only if* there is actionable intelligence, and 2) that while bureaucracy is restraining its power with intelligence measures, "bad guys" continue to do harm even at the expense of good guys and their best intentions.

Another similar sequence takes place when Jessica attempts to use an alternate approach. She arranges a meeting with one of the terrorists in Camp Chapman, Afghanistan. Her aim is to turn him into an insider and retrieve information on bin Laden`s location. We even see Jessica happily baking a birthday cake for her contact. Once the expected party reaches the Camp`s gates, Jessica asks the guards to let them through without a security check. Yet, despite Jessica`s optimism and enthusiasm, her contact detonates a bomb and kills all of them. Such sequences of events cue the viewer that alternate approaches do not work, and doing bad things to bad people to save good people is the only viable

option. Therefore, the existence of alternative options is not dismissed, muted, or told off. Rather, the impossibility and ineffectiveness of other approaches are visually refuted by being shown as resulting in deadly consequences. As a result, these sequences depict the received structure -realist approaches- as the only possible field of safe and sound actions and imaginations.

6.1.7. Conclusion

As a result, Bigelow and Boal claim that film is a representative account of CIA`s manhunt, as seen from the eyes of the CIA operative on the ground. Yet the way the film is framed and supported, the ways it selectively connects certain themes, and the way it ostensibly shows the ground level reality of geopolitics are significantly problematic, political and non-neutral (Evans, 2014). While, Bigelow incessantly argues that "depiction is not endorsement" (Bigelow, 2014), it is argued here that, not only what is shown, but more exactly how it is procedurally shown makes the film political. Even though the film`s politics is hidden under the guise of a torture tokenism, it is the procedurality that guides the audience, not merely the content itself.

Kander`s Trump photograph that covers Time Magazine is a good illustration in this regard. While Kander subverts the way we see Trump through colour, pose and details of the chair to portray Trump without active endorsement (Romm, 2016); Bigelow`s use of torture leads the narrative towards a triumphal success that accredits every means for desired ends. To conclude, torture, as the most controversial aspect of the film, is not made visible to show the repellent, outrageous, and horrific aspects of the GWoT as candidly as possible. For instance, while *Rendition* (2007) depicts torture as useless and inhumane, to the contrary, ZD30, uncritically and "misleadingly promotes the efficacy of torture" (Evans, 2014, p.356) and portrays it as a necessity, albeit grudgingly, for a good purpose, by the everyday unsung American heroes on-the-ground. Moreover, the film also incites the viewer the necessity to stay sharp, vigilant and uncomplacent.

6.2. Lone Survivor

6.2.1. Introduction

Lone Survivor (2013) (LS) is another war biopic, based on the eyewitness accounts of Marcus Luttrell, the sole survivor of an operation carried out by the US Navy SEALs in Afghanistan in 2005. Built on Luttrell`s book of the same name (2007), it has a non-fictional docudrama aspect like *ZD30* and *AS*. It purports to cover the moral dilemmas of the "real" people on-the-ground and the mortal consequences they are faced with based on their decisions. By focusing on the sufferings of warriors who are fighting for their lives on the frontlines, and dismissing the wider political reasoning behind the fighting per se, the film develops the same themes found in other cases. It generates and incorporates similar affective supports to ground audience reasoning, and procedurally guides the audience by playing out certain

themes and affects through similar sequences and references. Overall, three aspects of the film should be pinpointed: (1) political denarration – the erasure of the narrative- disguised under personal narration, (2) corporeal vulnerability and victimhood of the hero (3) the transgressions of moral and territorial borders. As a result, the film affectively adds up to the composite narrative that propounds the GWoT.

The film depicts the story of the members of SEAL Team 10's sufferings during Operation Red Wings in Afghanistan, and Luttrell`s survival thanks to a local Pashtun tribe member`s efforts. Accordingly, Luttrell and his team were deployed on a reconnaissance mission to locate a Taliban leader in Afghanistan. Upon encountering local goat herders, including a child, the team faces a moral dilemma between killing and letting them go. They could kill them, without knowing their relation to Taliban and might face mediatised trials, or they could let them go and might risk their own lives. Their eventual vote to choose the latter leaves the team with a mortal situation in which they are heavily outnumbered in an intense firefight. Retrospectively, it is a choice Luttrell regrets today since the mission ended with the loss of 19 special forces operators in total, including the rescue team members (Luttrell, 2007).

6.2.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

In terms of production, "in 2006, to boost Navy recruitment numbers, the DoD actually commissioned the book *Lone Survivor* — hiring a British spy novelist as the ghostwriter" (Bonner, 2015, para.21). Notably, U.S. Special Operations Commander Admiral McRaven pledged his support to director Peter Berg for the film as well. Furthermore, Berg`s unique embedding with an on-duty SEAL team for a month in Iraq before the shooting makes the film one of the exemplars of embedded filmmaking (Maass, 2012). Accordingly, he became the first civilian to experience Navy SEALs in action (Buchanan, 2013; Horn, 2013; LADN, 2016). During the film`s production, Berg and the whole production crew continued this close contact with the military and were under the guidance of other SEAL veterans, including Luttrell himself as well. As one of the VFX supervisors of the film, Bernhard says: "[w]orking at the Army base in Albuquerque was a very interesting experience. We worked together with the US Army, Navy and Air Force ... They were incredibly forthcoming and open to our ... needs" (Kjolsrud & Kimbacher, 2014).

On the other hand, in terms of paratextuality, apart from Luttrell`s book and the news coverage surrounding the incident, media statements, newly released books and documentaries continue to provide a rich paratextual environment for the film. For instance, Berg continues to shoot documentaries about the lives and missions of special operations teams. In 2016, he released two documentary series both focusing on US Special Forces: *Live to Tell* (History, 2016) and *The Warfighters* (History, 2016). The first episode of *LT*, for instance, features the story of Marc Lee, a close

team mate of Chris Kyle, whom we know from *AS* (2014), while the second episode covers the story of the *LS*.

Furthermore, the unique access granted to Berg further generates a paratextual aura around the film, making it seem closer to reality and even credible for the military. Berg regards his embed-experience as a formative, journalistic one, providing him with the ability to make an authentic film. Moreover, cliff jump sequences in the film is situated by Berg as a "reminiscent of 9/11, when people were jumping out of the World Trade towers, just throwing themselves out of the towers because it was the only option they had" (Buchanan, 2013). In this sense, the paratextuality of the film claim to reveal the limitations and situatedness of the SEALs, by offering a non-fiction, journalistic, experiential access to the GWOT, and the way SEALs live, emote, decide, train, fight, kill, sacrifice and die. Following this, before thematically detailing the film as a whole, in the next section, the way the film begins and continues to direct and pull the viewer inside to its own reality will be shown.

6.2.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetisation

The opening sequences of films aim to align the viewer`s decoding process with that of its encoder from the very beginning. They prime the viewer and manipulates its viewing position for a better engagement. Put differently, they locate the audience in a certain interpretative position to ease its transition to the filmic world, and to activate/deactivate certain interpretative freedoms and memory processes the audience possess. As Pötzsch notes, "opening sequences in historical reenactments frame audience engagement and assert relevance for historical discourse and memory politics" (2012, p.156). In that regard, the opening sequences of *LS* are particularly important. The film initially grants the viewer access to the rigorous training of SEALs through archival footage, which is "commissioned by the Navy" (History vs Hollywood, 2014). Enabled to have a glimpse on the secretive unit`s training course (BUD/S), the audience gradually sets foot into the world of the SEALs. We see candidates crawl, shake, suffer, and even faint. The crux of these sequences is summed up when an instructor exclaims: "All this shaking and all this cold. Harness it. Turn it into aggression". Meanwhile, the audience simultaneously trains and readies itself to discern the scenes to come, by learning how SEALs are actually trained and readied themselves for the wars to come. And before the next scene, where we will see Luttrell (Mark Wahlberg) being transported by helicopter to a hospital with significant wounds, the screen warns us that the film is "based on a true story".

Ensuing scenes take us to three days earlier. We see the rooms the SEALs live, while the camera lingers on real photographs hanging on their walls. We can see their childhoods, family, children and friends, and understand that SEALs are not only warriors but are also beloved human beings. For instance, as

soon as Murphy, one of the teammates, wakes up, he checks his laptop to read his fiancée`s message. Likewise, following scenes revolve around family, friendship, daily jokes and habits that make the SEALs human. Nevertheless, the ensuing sequences bring the bad guys into the equation as well. We see Taliban fighters ruthlessly chopping a man`s head, while these scenes are constantly being interjected by the mission briefing.

Most notably, while the notorious bad guys are shedding blood, an officer briefs the team with the Rules of Engagement within which they are confined. In that particular moment, the real Marcus Luttrell, in his cameo role in the film, appears stooping down and shaking his head to sideways, cueing the viewer he despises those rules, and the decision he and his team had made under their influence.

In that regard, the opening sequences of *LS* revolve around four things: the training and capabilities of SEALs, their relationships as human beings, the inhuman aspects of the Other, and the rules of engagement (ROE). In that sense, the opening sequences, similar to that of *ZD30*, combine the objectifying rhetoric with a subjective one and depict the situatedness of the SEALs in a way that eases the viewer`s transition and interaction with the film. Through paratexts and these opening sequences, viewers immerse themselves into the reality of the non-fictive accounts of the film and are equipped with the intended decoding tools. The objectifying and subjective rhetoric given in the beginning initiate a certain process of diegetization, "the construction of a story universe by audience" (Pötzsch, 2012, p.359). As Pötzsch puts, the aim of this is to disable the reflexive mode of the viewer, "restrict the interpretative freedoms of receiving audiences and support one particular perspective on a historical incident" (ibid.). The following section will be detailing the organising themes and visualisations of the film.

6.2.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. *Desensitization/Desanitization:*

With full of combat scenes, the film does not conceal the bodily consequences of war. Yet the wounds that are shown are exclusively American ones. In a stark contrast with *ZD30*, we see the bleeding and suffering heroes throughout the film. We see the various ways that the SEALs are wounded, as a result of falling, tumbling, hitting, and being shot. We witness how bullets pierce their bodies and how they try to cope with extreme pain while fighting to survive. For instance, what was written in Luttrell`s book has been visually captured with graphic details in the film:

> *"I stared at Danny's right hand. His thumb had been blown right off. ... I saw him grit his teeth and nod, sweat streaming down his blackened face. He adjusted his rifle, banged in a new magazine with the butt of his hand, and took his place in the center of our little gun line"* (Luttrell, 2007, p.207).

We also see the deep scars on their faces, bullet wounds they fill in with dirt, the way they fix broken bones and remove fragments from their bodies. Therefore, the film does not shy away from showing how *heroes* fight, bleed and die. Yet, although we see enemies hit by bullets too, they disappear instantly as opposed to the SEALs. We see the instant impacts of shots on their bodies, yet not the lively and social effects on their lives.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things through Violence):

Despite the two other films that emphasised the need to do the dirty work for the homefront to keep it safe and secure, this film does not deploy overt conversations regarding the use of violence. Rather, this aspect is visually embedded in the film by showing the bodily sacrifices of the lost comrades. As we witness the various and horrific instances of bodily sacrifices, we see how the boots-on-the-ground people take responsibility, and bite the bullet.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

Afghanistan in general is depicted as a charmless, inhospitable space on earth. Although they are deployed to a specific area, without going out to attract and extract enemies as they pop up everywhere, the way the team encounters with a group of goat herders is telling. They cannot judge their innocence. They cannot distinguish them from Taliban sympathisers. Once one of the teammates says that it is a cursed mission, Luttrell interrupts: "It`s just Afghanistan". Ultimately, they are quickly surrounded, outnumbered, and killed by the Taliban. While the two other films both cover spatially larger and temporarily longer frames, LS covers only a three-day period of the SEALs, and in this vein, it is a more mission and area specific film. Thus, although some of the sequences can be analysed under this theme, they would be vague ones.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

From the opening sequences to the last moments, hand tying limitations and bureaucratic carelessness permeate the film. At first, we are cued with the way real-life Luttrell shaking his head to sideways during the scenes where ROE are instructed. Next, we see them struggling with the rules to decide what to do to the goat herders. When Luttrell says that "the rules of engagement says we cannot touch them", Axelson exclaims: "I understand. And I don't care. I care about you". After a while, a sense of carelessness in the top brass is briefly shown when a senior officer overlooks the warning of Lt. Cmdr. Kristensen. Next, we see Apaches being removed for another mission, leaving the Chinooks unprotected from enemy fire. This results in the death of 19 crew members who took off for the rescue mission.

5. Voiceless Other:

From the beginning to the end the enemy talks unintelligibly and in a hostile manner. The only way they articulate themselves is through violence, hence the language of the other is objectified as ferociousness and brutality. The first time we see the enemy, they shout and order the people around in a hostile way.

We do not understand what they say. No subtitles are provided. The only way they articulate themselves to us is through weapons. And violence becomes the only way to communicate and negotiate with the enemy.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

We always see the Self/the Hero morally, militarily and personally voiced. We see them personally address and tease one another, discuss the moral intricacies of the situation they are in and tactically liaise with each other and with the command centre during the combat. While we do not see any communication attempt from the enemy, SEALs continuously communicate. They operate together, willingly, consciously and intelligibly. And the only tool to communicate with the other appears to be violence.

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

From its initial moments, the film depicts military training, combat sequences, weaponry, and vehicles. Specifically, weapons and combat are at the heart of the film. After seeing how SEALs are trained in BUD/s courses, during an initiation ritual of a new team member, we see him brag about how being a SEAL enabled him to tour the world and enjoy various weapons and vehicles.

> *"Been around the world twice, talked to everyone once… Drove all kinds of trucks. Two by's, four by's, six by's… Anything in life worth doing is worth overdoing. Moderation is for cowards".*

As the sequence moves, we see various military vehicles on the screen. We also see all the team members, including Luttrell in his cameo role, checking and assembling their weapons on a long table full of weapons. Allegedly, a famous gun brand, Beretta also inserted its M9 pistol to this and other scenes for advertisement purposes, while, in reality, SEALs were toting SIG P226s at the time (IMFDB, 2013; Brand-in-Entertainment, 2013; Soldier Systems, 2013). The details of every weaponry used in the film are also featured in many webpages, specifically in IMFDB.

6.2.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

As Adolphs and Damasio (2001, pp.32-33) put it, emotion and attention circuits in the brain are closely related. "[W]hen we experience anxiety in a current situation, that activates memories of anxiety in earlier situations" (Hogan, 2008, p.51). Likewise, the viewing of *LS* was interestingly different in terms of its affects on me. It grasped my attention and emotions from the beginning by triggering my memories. Following the BUD/s training sequence, the scene where Luttrell being transported and attended by the doctors moved me to elsewhere. Oblivious to my consciousness, it suddenly harnessed

my emotions and garnered my tear drops. As I was aware that I was recording my facial expressions to extract and transcribe my affective interactions with the screen before me, I timidly suppressed myself. This was way more than I expected. My reaction was not to the film or Luttrell, but to a completely different referent.

The scene operated simply as a conduit to transport me and my affective reactions to another memory from my private life. Less than a year before my viewing of the film, I lost a beloved family member. I was away, and I did not see the scene. However, I overheard that he was tended in the same way in his last moments. Details of his final moments permeated every part of my thinking at the time. Yet I was not aware that they were dormant in my unconsciousness and waiting to be triggered and harnessed by a film on GWoT. I am not sure whether this initial affective resonance outside my control worked as a platform for my decodification process, but the film succeeded to grasp my very private memories by making me take an inferential walk in my mind. A completely alien signifier contaminated the woods in which I was taking walks. An affective connotation confluenced my private self, with the geopolitical self. Since, while the signifier was Luttrell, the signified was my beloved family member. As a result, certain references in the film affectively conducted my conduct.

Apart from these moments, the combat scenes were also intense. The much talked about falling scenes were particularly disturbing. Seeing the squad tumble down through the mountainous area, hitting their torsos and limbs on tree logs and large rocks made me cringe. I later learned actual stuntmen were used who actually broke many of their bones during those scenes. The aim of using and even harming real bodies in the film was to more convincingly depict the scenes, to viscerally immerse the viewers into the film (Buchanan, 2013; Gettell, 2014; Patches, 2014; Sluis, 2014). Seeing them shot in the hand, arm, leg, head, were harrowing, and sensing the whiz of bullets were further haunting and immersing.

6.2.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

The film is infused with emotional and affective elements, and the sequences of events enhance the overall effects of them. In that regard, the consecutive use of certain themes augments the affective reasoning of the viewer, which refers to the appeal to emotions and intuitions in thinking (Blanchette, 2014). Moreover, like the other films covered in this thesis, *LS* also presents certain themes in a succession that makes the viewer follow a certain train of thought to have the viewer procedurally reaches the film`s argument as though on its own. This is how the film enables certain ways of decoding and disables the alternative ones. Hence, the film walks the audience through complementary and opposing views, and by playing them against each other makes the viewer sequentially reach an implicit argument on the personal, not political aspects of war-making.

For instance, the film blurs the line between fact and fiction by its claim in the beginning that it is using archival footage and caption like documentary films. As mentioned, the moment we are introduced to

the Taliban leader as they cut off the head of a man under the gaze of the villagers, the confines of aggression directed to them are also instructed. Hence we learn that SEALs operate within a formally restricted moral realm; even though their foes are freely roaming and exercise violence without any restrictions. Moreover, before they encounter the goat herders, we see the team members talking and joking about their lives on the homefront, which indicates that they are not contract killers, but are social and sentient beings, as opposed to the enemy, who is demonized. The fast-paced combat sequences are also presented as the deadly result of their dilemma between risking their lives and terminating the goat herders. Following fast-paced dramatic combat scenes in which we witness the susceptibility of the SEALs, another Afghan villager aids and shelters Luttrell at the risk of his life. Eventually, his life is saved by another "good" Pashtun villager, and the film underlines the benevolent role of the ones who can collaborate with and support Americans. This aspect of the film is a rare exception in such films. However, the main recurrent themes and arguments continue to support the necessity of violence to save the good. "This suggests that the popular western imagination cannot find any other form of resolution except through combat" (Murray, 2010).

6.2.7. Conclusion

By bringing forth the survival motive of the soldier, and thereby sidelining the political motive of the war, the film is critically important for analysis. As in many of the second subcycle of GWoT films (Decker, 2017), the political background of the war effort is enshrouded in the personal survival of the warrior. Since war is made personal as the "visually manned" warriors fight for their lives, the distant geopolitical threat environment that the warriors find themselves in bear relevance for the citizenry lives at the homefront. Moreover, as these soldiers are depicted through their social skills and vulnerable bodies, rather than Rambo-like superhuman features, they offer more relatability to everyday lives of the audience. As the stunt coordinator, Kevin Scott put on *LS*` commitment to realism "[s]pecial ops soldiers aren't superhuman. They're really talented, physically strong humans but they're not superhuman. It was important to Pete and I to show these guys in a humanistic way physically and emotionally" (Sluis, 2014).

Hence, unconcerned with the wider facts, the film seemingly aims to transcend the political in order to transcribe the personal to show what "real" people have to go through while running geopolitics. As such, what is depicted in these films is that despite the best intentions and efforts of these people, they are enforced to transgress their moral confines. And once they do not transgress these barriers, the mortal consequences emerge. In this regard, the dictum of "extraordinary times oblige extraordinary measures" is justified for the sake of the warrior. As a result, by procedurally inverting the "personal is

political" to have the viewers own geopolitics as a personal issue on their own, the film can be illustrated as a prominent exemple of procedural rhetoric.

6.3. American Sniper

6.3.1. Introduction

The highest-grossing film of 2014, *American Sniper* (2014) (AS) is also one of the most controversial and award-winning films of recent years. Produced and directed by Clint Eastwood, it is a war biopic, loosely based on the book written by Chris Kyle (2012), known as the deadliest sniper in the US military history. Similar to the films discussed earlier, *AS* purports to transcend the political to ostensibly transcribe the reality of war to the audience through warrior`s eyes. Overall, three aspects of the film should be pinpointed: (1) the way it simplifies geopolitics through its protagonist`s eyes into black and white; (2) its emphasis on bodies at risk and the necessary use of violence for their survival; (3) and its humanisation and victimisation of the perpetrator. In that regard, similar to the other films discussed above, it will be argued that *AS* also depoliticises geopolitics through personal narration, corporeal vulnerability and psychological victimhood. Thereby, this section will analyse the ways *AS* uses personal experience as a human shield that simplifies and defies the questionability of geopolitics.

The film dramatises the two aspects of Kyle`s life: one as a deadly sniper on the frontlines, the other as a caring, yet passive-aggressively abusive husband at home due to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Kyle is a Navy SEAL sniper who joined the military in the pre-9/11 era. We see him chasing an Iraqi sniper who is responsible for killing many American soldiers, as well as Kyle`s close friends. Hence, similar to the Maya character in *ZD30*, Kyle is portrayed as a hero anguished with loss.[21] Vowed to find this enemy sniper, played by Sammy Sheik, whom we see as another "bad guy" in the *LS* as well, he goes back to Iraq for four times with an unremitting will for vengeance. Yet before finally killing his archenemy, we see him struggling to weigh up his choices to shoot a shapeshifter of an enemy, sometimes in the form of women and children, and sometimes as various gunmen. Nevertheless, despite seemingly having no remorse, these acts take their toll on him, and he suffers from PTSD, which miserably affects his relationship with his wife back home. Hence, the film encompasses a constant rollover between the homefront and the battlefront, between his lethality and humanity.

6.3.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

In terms of paratextuality, *AS* also has a rich and ceaseless paratextual hype. However only three aspects of it will be discussed here for these are the central elements of the film`s making: Kyle himself and his

[21] Yet, while we do not know anything about Maya`s social background, we learn more about Kyle`s gender, class, family and professional situatedness.

book “American Sniper” (Kyle et al., 2013), Eastwood and his remarks on the film`s so-called anti-war stance, and AS` so-called non-fictive, boots-on-the-ground perspective. Beginning with the release of the book in 2012, Kyle`s fame was exalted into a legendary status due to the “kill record” he owns (Pomarède, 2016). Despite that the book`s factuality has been marred with controversies in many respects, *AS* became a critically acclaimed GWoT narrative two years prior to the film`s release. Hence, the film`s paratextual atmosphere mainly begins with this best-seller autobiography, which sold over 1,2 million copies (Lewis, 2015). And the success of the book continued as Kyle appeared in many different media outlets, from Fox News to the Conan O`Brien show. In that vein, arguably the book, and Kyle himself, imparted to the audience the first tips of what to expect from, and how to read, the film.

In the book, Kyle describes his upbringing, military experiences, and also confesses his addiction to war and violence (Kyle et al., 2013). He portrays how he sees, divides and orders the world, and states the reasoning behind his actions and addiction to armed violence. Notoriously, he has no regrets for his conduct in war, which produced over 160 kills (Kyle et al., 2013). For him, he just did what he had to do as a warrior to protect his people. Gifted with a lethal skill, he assumes himself a right to kill to protect and punish. Yet, the scene summarising this responsibility in which Kyle`s father divides people into three categories as either sheep, wolves or sheepdogs does not exist in the book itself. This infamous categorization from Kyle’s father is apparently a creation of the film’s screenwriter. Originally, it belongs to Dave Grossman`s book “On Combat” (Grossman, 2004). Nevertheless, the schema not only resonates with the storyline but also summarises it in an intertextual way (Kyle et al., 2013).

As the producer and director of the film, and as a famous cultural icon of the `hard body` masculinity (Jeffords, 1993), Clint Eastwood`s conservative political stance also sustained a certain aura that helped the marketing of the film and the priming of its audience. However, Eastwood claims that both he and the film are anti-war. “I think it’s nice for veterans because it shows what they go through, and that life—and the wives and families of veterans. It has a great indication of the stresses they are under. And I think that all adds up to kind of an anti-war [message]” (Dockterman, 2015). Similar to Berg, Bigelow, and Boal`s positions arguing that their story is not political, but non-political for conveying the personal; according to Eastwood, his film is anti-war, for primarily portraying the tolls war took on Kyle`s life (Ibid.), as opposed to those who he killed or the wife he terrorised. In another interview, he says that “[i]t was not just a war movie. [...] This is mostly about the dilemma of leaving family and then where do you go from here” (NBC News 2014). Further supporting Eastwood`s position, Hall, the film`s screenwriter says:

> *“People see the movie poster, and it’s got a guy and the American flag, and they know Clint Eastwood—the Dirty Harry guy and the Republican convention guy—directed it. So they think it’s some jingoistic thing. I would challenge that in a big way. The movie isn’t about*

whether we should have been in Iraq or not. It's about how war is human. I hope every time a politician decides to send us to war, maybe they saw this movie and know the cost of it" (Dockterman, 2015).

Certainly, the film does not question the Iraq war itself, nor raises the issue of who counts as human while claiming to depict human side of war. Although Eastwood might be interpreting his film as anti-war for showing the human costs of war, the tolls and burdens counted as costs are only the American ones. Though we momentarily see the anguish of an Iraqi family, their loss is caused by the insurgents, not by the Americans. What war costs to the other side does not fit in any part of the movie. Hence, we merely see the Other while attacking or dying, confessing or acting treacherously, but not suffering or speaking as Americans do. In that regard, the film enjoyed a particular traction as it offers a seemingly non-fictive and non-political account of the GWoT from a personal perspective. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that it is a perspective humanising the `personal` of the protagonist while detracting humanity from the existence of the Other. This is why, I argue that, contrary to Eastwood`s, also to Berg and Bigelow`s claims, the extent of the film`s anti-war quality is confined into the exclusive humanity of the American people. Therefore, the film can be interpreted as a self-portraiture of a self-pitying warrior, at best, but not as an anti-war film for conveying the toll war can take on soldiers.

The book and the film equip the people who are curious about the war with an instant on-demand access to the boots-on-the-ground realities of it. As such, being able to vicariously experience it as seen through the eyes of the warrior, further enables the audience to make sense of the war at a personal level. Yet this personal level is political, though hidden under the guise of empathy-calling "personal costs" of embodied war narrative. For instance, in a book review, Dibbert claims that, for voters to understand America`s role in the world, which is important to do so in the context of US elections, "sometimes it's helpful to set aside the complexities of geopolitics or grand strategy and examine Iraq through the lens of one soldier's story" (Dibbert, 2015). Therefore, seeing geopolitics through the eyes of veterans compels the viewer to simplify the war effort through the vulnerability of the personal survival, and impels them to give credit to the hero for his deeds. Conjuring up images of geopolitics through the embodied confines of the hero`s life-or-death situatedness merely distorts our access to geopolitical agendas. While geopolitics becomes personal, what is personal does not account for the political. As a result, a problematic stance, empathic to hero`s survival, yet apathetic to the Other`s, prevails.

Hence two things should be underlined in terms of *AS*` paratextuality. First, the book offers the story of the most lethal sniper in US military history, and it is written without any concerns for political correctness, which prompts, allures and repels various audiences. Second, though the film portrays various costs of war - PTSD, personal loss, relationships and bodily impairments - these do not make a film anti-war alone. As Bourke argues, exaggeration over anti-war films` possibilities should be more carefully weighed, as they "simply relocated the conflict and quickly re-entered the romanticised canon

of war" and even entranced many viewers (1999, p.6). Despite the best intentions, many people might enjoy watching a film about war, and romanticising and capitalizing on it, rather than reflecting critically on it (Fletcher, 2002; Junger, 2016). Therefore, this paratextual atmosphere cues the viewer to see the film as an apolitical biopic account of a warrior, struggling for personal survival. And as seen from the eyes of the hero, the war simply becomes an embodied issue of personal survival; devoid of the concerns of politics.

6.3.3. Initiation, Immersion, and Diegetization

The opening sequences of *AS* are comparatively longer, as it opens various parentheses to Kyle`s life. Soundwise, it starts with the Islamic call to prayer on a black screen, which is soon to be mixed with the sound of a tank tread. Next, we see Kyle perched on a rooftop, watching the passing of a US military convoy. A male figure talking on the phone appears on the crosshairs of Kyle`s scope. Unsure of the man`s intentions, Kyle does not shoot. However, in a few seconds, a woman and a child appear in front of the house, and walk towards the road. Within seconds, we see the woman handing a big grenade to the boy in the middle of the road. The scene is shot and edited in a way to not to miss the overt hostility of both. She explicitly hands over the grenade to the child, in the middle of the road, and in front of the convoy, which is in a running distance, although she could have slipped it into the boy`s hands before coming out, or on the roadside at least. Yet, the way she visibly does so aids the viewer to qualify these unusual threats readily as legitimate targets.

Kyle, unwilling to shoot, reports the scene from the headset. We hear that the decision is left to him: "It`s your call". His marine guard tells him that if he shoots an innocent kid, he would be jailed. The camera lingers on Kyle`s face, prompting us to think, whether he has any inner struggles to take the shot. While we are expecting the gunshot, the muzzle changes, the film cuts to a scene where young Kyle shoots a deer in a hunt with his father, whereupon we are left with a question: Did he kill the boy as he shot the deer?

Over several scenes, we witness the childhood of Kyle. We see him pocketing a Bible from the Church, being lectured on the roles of the three kinds of people in the world, and embracing himself as a gifted sheepdog with the responsibility to protect and punish. Following scenes take us to the days where Kyle is in his late 20s, feeling the urge to do something to protect his country upon seeing the August 1998 terrorist attacks on TV. Later, we see him enlisting and going through the rigorous BUD/S training to be a Navy SEAL.

We hear his instructor lecturing during a sniper training session: “We master our breath, we master our mind. Pulling the trigger will become an unconscious effort. You will be aware of it, but not directing it”. Also, in another session, his instructor tells him to close his non-scoping eye to better focus on the target. Nevertheless, he refuses to do so, saying that he needs to see what else is outside his scope. Despite being told that there is nothing else, but the target, and reprimanded with 50 push-ups, Kyle proves his officer wrong by shooting a snake next to the target.

We also see the moments he meets Taya, his future wife, the shocking moments they learn of the 9/11 attacks on TV, and their subsequent wedding. Contrary to the warrior Kyle, we see a domestic man, caring and attending to his significant other in these scenes: A sense of selfish selflessness, internally domestic and externally lethal to protect. Hence, during the interval embedded in the opening sequence of the film, in which Kyle has to take a decision, we learn the humanising backstory of Kyle is woven around three basic values to be protected by the gift of his aggression: religion, family and country (Carter & Dodds, 2011; Weber, 2011). Consistently, in a close-up on the way to his first mission, we see him with his wedding ring, bullets attached to his wristband, and the Bible he pocketed from a church in his childhood. These sequences coalesce Kyle`s integrity into an epitome of the modern civilised warrior monk. Seeing these sequences just minutes before we see him shooting a child and his mother, suggests that he does only what needs to be done and he always serves for a greater purpose which benefits the flock.

Following this long interval, the next scene takes us back to the moment where he was in the middle of a decision to shoot the child or not. Finally, he takes the shot without visibly exuding any feeling, as he was instructed both in his childhood and military training. The bullet pierces the boy`s torso, splashing blood. Next, we see the shocked woman, probably his mother, running towards him. However, she passes him over for grabbing and lobbing the grenade herself. Her obvious hostility demands Kyle`s next shot, and he re-pulls the trigger. As the blood gushes from the bullet hole opened in woman`s chest, the grenade explodes without harming any Marines, thanks to Kyle`s “hell of a call”.

Yet, Kyle says “get the f… off me” to his overjoyed teammate next to him. The way he exclaims cues us to the inner struggle Kyle has faced with and only partially solved by shooting. Could he not take the shot? Could he neutralise them with an alternative hit to the feet or arms, to deter them? However, alternatives to securing a target are not any part of the discussion. What is needed is the framing: a cue-driven visual assessment of someone to pose a threat. As one officer described, a “SEAL sniper killed three unarmed people, including a small girl, in separate episodes in Afghanistan and told his superiors that he felt they had posed a threat. `Legally, that was sufficient` (Mazzetti et al., 2015).

Correspondingly, although Kyle is depicted in a way he protects the sheep and punishes the wolf, we see him killing a deer, a kid, and a woman as though they are the wolves, and Marines are the sheep. We see the same victimisation in the documentary *TF* as well, when Sgt. Shriver expressed how he felt himself as a sheep. Hence, the vulnerability and sensitivity of the warrior subjects are underlined as though their lives are the referents of geopolitical insecurity. Hence, geopolitical perpetrator-hood and responsibility of the soldiers are transposed with a sense of victimhood. And the highlighted victimhood of the US is being placed over the victimhood of the countries on which it waged war.

6.3.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitization/Desanitization:

AS does not linger on the suffering bodies of the Other. Although we see unlikely military targets, women and children, they are regarded as "enemies in different shapes and forms" in Kyle`s words, and disappear instantly. For instance, I was unsure of whether the character the Butcher killed the boy in a scene with the power drill he put against the child`s head. Likewise, when Kyle shoots the villain sniper, the scene changes back to the protagonist in seconds. Thus, the camera does not hide the effects of violence, yet changes its direction instantly to focus on other characters when the suffering is the Other. However, we see dying comrades` wounds much more clearly and longer. For instance, when Ryan "Biggles" Job`s machine gun was hit, we see where exactly the bullet impacted on, how his face is tormented by shrapnel, and his disfigured, ghastly facial gashes. Similarly, when Mark Lee is shot in an ensuing gun-battle, we see him dying while the blood gushes from his neck.

Furthermore, when Biggles and Mark were shot, their blood splashes to a white material, signifying their innocence. Yet, whenever an insurgent is shot, his blood splashes onto coloured materials, leaving no trace behind, signalling the "ungrieveability" (Butler, 2009) of his life, guilt and futility. In this vein, while *ZD30* shows the bodily effects of violence on the enemy as though it is simply what they deserve and what is necessary to protect the flock, *LS* and *AS* make us privy to the intense feelings and bodily vulnerabilities of the US soldiers, since the enemy is cruel. Put differently, although each of these films focus on the different bodily effects of different sides, and while the first one procedurally clarifies that this is what needs to be done, the latter ones make it clear that this is what they do to us. In that regard, none of the films criticises the use of violence when it is done by "the Americans". Instead, they all humanise "us" while dehumanising the Other in different ways.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):

Kyle has to carry out acts which were unthinkable to him before: "that was evil like I never seen before". He realises that now he must confront the evil in other shapes, even under the guise of women and children. The context of the discussion turns from women and children to good and evil. So, we are

primed to see the Other, as a possible incarnation of evil, whereas Kyle, as a sin-eater, saviour of the flock, has to carry out evil deeds to confront the evil. In that sense, whatever he does becomes necessary and just as even sportsmen who participated into Olympics, like Mustafa, can be the harbinger of evil. Hence, the diligent presence of a rare breed is depicted as foundational. As in his father`s advice:

> *"There are three types of people in this world: sheep, wolves, and sheepdogs. Some people prefer to believe that evil doesn't exist in the world, and if it ever darkened their doorstep, they wouldn't know how to protect themselves. Those are the sheep. Then you've got predators, who use violence to prey on the weak. They're the wolves. And then there are those blessed with the gift of aggression, an overpowering need to protect the flock. These men are the rare breed who live to confront the wolf. They are the sheepdogs".*

Therefore, his rare gift of aggression compels him to do good by doing bad to bad people. In other words, he eats the sins on their behalf, and feels no regrets. Correspondingly, when asked by the doctor, whether he has any regrets, he states that he only has regrets for not being able to save more of his "guys". Thus, "a sheepdog and a wolf act much the same way, and in the dark of a Guantanamo torture chamber, it can be hard to tell the difference" (Isquith, 2015).

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

Iraq has been portrayed as a hell, wherein evil dwells in many forms. From the weather to the taste, and the threat environment, Iraq is tagged negatively in many instances according to different sensory faculties: "It's a fucking hot box. Man, the fucking dirt here tastes like dog shit", "Welcome to Fallujah. The new Wild West of the old Middle East". The film is also initially envisioned as a revisionist western film by screenwriter Jason Hall and actor Bradley Cooper. "Like so many westerns, "American Sniper" revolves around the tensions between a hypermasculine hero, who only feels at home on the frontier of "civilization and savagery," and a heroine who embodies domesticity" (Young, 2015). The last thing his brother said to Kyle in Iraq is also "fuck this place". Therefore, it is not only its dwellers, or the war per se, but Iraq itself as space that is geotagged as hellish. When Kyle`s close friend Biggles seems to lose his belief in the war effort, Kyle tries to cheer him up and reassure him in a corresponding way: "There's evil here. We've seen it. There's evil everywhere. You want these motherfuckers to come to San Diego or New York? We're protecting more than just this dirt". Moreover, as enemy lurks in everywhere with an indistinct shape, it can pop up anytime too. Such as, when Kyle and his comrades are invited to dinner by a local man, he notices the rubbed raw elbow of the man. Driven by this cue, he starts searching the house and finds a hidden weapon stash, bespeaking the insurgency of the man. Hence, being diligent and suspicious to find a hidden, dormant hostility anywhere benefits the protagonist.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

We see Kyle responding to his inner feelings, and acting based on the intuitions he experiences many times in the film. In the first scene, the orders from the radio headset leave the decision to him on the

basis of rules of engagement. Yet once Kyle kills the child and the woman and the grenade explodes in front of the marines, it becomes clear that he actually saved more lives. The act of protecting is superimposed on the act of killing. Disinhibited use of intuition and violence is promoted. In another scene, when he is talking to his wife, he says that their child will be a boy. When Taya curiously asks him how does he know, he replies: "I just know". Hence, the viewer is primed to trust Kyle`s intuitions which are proving him always right.

Likewise, we see him struggling with the orders he has. Although he shoots the infamous villain from almost 2000 yards away, he is ordered to stop and wait for the incoming backup. Knowing that this is a rare chance to shoot the villain, he insists. The commander here is one of the bureaucrats we see in other films, playing the game by the book, lacking the bravery of the hero, unwilling to take risks, and preventing the hero from doing his divine deeds. Still, Kyle sidelines the book, takes his shot, killing the sniper from a very long distance. He instantly calls his wife in the middle of the fight and says that he feels ready to come home. As a hero, he fulfilled his quest. Hence, he always prevails, just like the Maya character, thanks to complementing his proofs with his intuitions.

5. Voiceless Other:

As mentioned earlier, whenever we see an Iraqi, they are only seen, but without narrating anything. We almost never hear the Other talking in the film in general. They either confess or threaten. They only speak when they are enabled or forced by the Americans. Hence, we do not know what the mother told the boy in the beginning scene, or what the man on the rooftop speaking about. Similarly, while Kyle is helping to protect the Marines during their door-to-door raids, they find a family still staying in their house. The man speaks when Kyle forces him to speak. In another scene, we see the villain character, the Iraqi sniper sitting in his house. There is also a woman carrying a baby close to her chest. The man looks serious, almost cruel, and does not seem like a caring father or husband. Instead, he is the opposite of Kyle, unattending, silent, and sinister. The woman, possibly his wife, on the other hand, reins in her emotions with an inscrutable face. Both the man and women are called savages both by Kyle himself and by his general in various instances. For instance, during the helicopter scene, the general says to Kyle: "I want you to put the fear of God into these savages".[22]

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

Contrary to the Other, the film moves forward with Kyle talking to others, and they talk to Kyle. We are virtually set in motion through his actions and experiences which are accompanied by many forms of conversations. These include the ones with his family, wife and comrades. We see him having casual conversations, making jokes, smiling, yet also feeling, struggling, exuding his sadness with both bodily

[22] "If a guy cuts off another guy's head and nothing happens, that becomes the standard," said one of the former SEAL Team 6 leaders. "You're moving the bar and buying into an emotional justification, 'War is hell.' If you're not disciplining your force, you're saying it's OK." (Cole, 2017)

reactions and words. In a scene where he talks to his wife during an overwatch, what he utters summarises the way he juggles the homefront and the battlefront at the same time: “I got a phone in one hand and a gun in the other”. Moreover, we witness the intense moment in which Taya struggles to reach Kyle. While they were talking on the phone, their conversation is interrupted by gunshots. We see Taya, pregnant, in front of the hospital, devastated and shaken by what she hears on the phone, alone. She gradually feels the intensity of the combat. Unsure of what happens there, she begins to cry, horrified. The way she is seen voices the horrors of war for those on the homefront. As confusion, fear, and visceral feelings set in, the battlefront starts to move to the homefront.

Therefore, while we are enabled to see the way family members and comrades feel for and tend to each other, the Other seems to have no such feelings. They do see each other as disposable beings, without social and emotional bonds. Hence they do not live as humanly as the Americans, and not part of the civilised world. This is also what we were initiated into at the beginning when the mother passed by her dead son to grab the grenade. Correspondingly, when a veteran notices Kyle to thank him for saving his life, he also thanks his son for lending his dad to them as well. Since, after all, warriors are lent citizens, and apart from their job, they are social, sentient beings with many roles.

7. *Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:*

Kyle is known for his addiction to war and violence (Kyle et al., 2013) and his alleged number of kills turned him into a legend. In addition to that, the attraction SEAL teams receive lures many trigger-happy gun-loving viewers to the cinema. The film albeit does not focus on the techno-fetishist details regarding weapons, military masculinity, weapons and kill counts continue to remain at the heart of the film. Nevertheless, confirming Bourke`s point (Bourke, 1999), interested viewers visit Internet sites, such as the Internet Movies Firearms Database (IMFDB, 2014). The page covers the details of every piece of military equipment used in the film. Moreover, in due course of the film, the audience is enabled to see the various phases of the famed BUD/s training course, see through the scope of a SEAL team sniper rifle, and witness various gunfight scenes. Admittedly, we do not see Kyle bragging about the weapons he uses or looking joyful while killing, nor does the camera linger on the bodily impacts of shots on insurgent bodies. The only thing we see in the film is the killing, yet not the death. In other words, AS “transforms the act of killing into an intriguing and fascinating reality” (Pomarède, 2016, p.9) to be experienced. Every kill is being counted as a point, and every death is being counted as a saved life, yet nothing is dwelt on any further. Also, illustrating the affective impacts of shooting on military masculinity, one of the veterans with amputated legs says: “I got my balls back” when he hit the target at the gun range.

6.3.5. The Un-Scene Affects:

Although I started to watch the movie without any significant facial expression, the moment I saw the way the woman handed over the grenade to the boy, it made me smile sarcastically, as the scene is overtly shot to designate them enemy targets. However, at the sight of Kyle shooting them, I blanched

and wrinkled my forehead. Yet the most affecting scene for me was when Kyle was pinned down with his team, while he was talking to Taya on the phone. As Taya tries to understand what is going on, without any response but gunshots, and as she crouches to the ground out of devastating shock and sorrow, I re-experienced similar personal moments. The scene hit me hard and harnessed my past to make sense of the film. I re-lived certain moments hidden in my memory. Seeing the Butcher character putting a drill against a crying child`s head further led me to read into the scene emotionally. An affective suspension of disbelief surrounded my screening. Despite my initial sarcastic stance, I obliviously was turned into an emoting credulous viewer. I felt the despair of the woman and the father caused by the insurgents. In the ensuing scene, I jerked my head when Kyle was hit from his helmet and fell, and was left face-to-face with a barking dog. For about two minutes surrounding this scene, I unintentionally grimaced my face out of pain and despair. More importantly, this happened against the backdrop of my critical stance. The last combat scene affectively pulled me inside the film as well. As a result, the film sent quivers of excitement and affective resonances throughout my screening, thereby suspended my disbelief in various moments, despite my initial sceptic stance.

6.3.6. The Sequence of Events/Post hoc fallacies:

"It is easy to be critical of a war film if it doesn't give two equal accounts" (Bury, 2015). Yet there is more to be critical in this film. From the beginning to the end, the film successfully makes use of certain themes in the continuous track of sequences, which ultimately humanises the violence of the "self", and dehumanises both the life and the violence of the Other. Hence, when the Other resorts to violence against "us", it becomes a matter of personal survival, rather than a geopolitical one, which confines our possible reaction scale to brutality, and dismisses the possibility of alternate approaches. For instance, in the aforementioned scene, when Kyle was left alone with a mortal decision to make, the scene cuts back instantly to its childhood stories, paternal and didactic metaphors, the reasoning behind his choice to become a Navy SEAL, and his role as a caring husband. In that, we are made to think of the reasoning and humanity behind his inhuman action. How his upbringing and gift of aggression enabled him to bring down a deer and the kid, in the same way, becomes clearer. Yet, despite the metaphor, he did not kill a wolf, but a deer in his childhood. Furthermore, the possibility of an alternate shot that would not kill the child and the woman is out of the scope of the discussion.

The background sequences are also woven in a way to be cohered through the main tenets of Kyle: God, family and country, under the protection of sheepdogs, with calm confidence and disinhibition. Hence, after the betrayal of his girlfriend, he finds a divine reference to devote himself. We see him during BUD/S training sessions, struggling, but not quitting. Withstanding the physical and psychological difficulties of the training, he emerges as a SEAL, gets married and is deployed to Iraq. Once we rewind back to the beginning scene, we re-evaluate Kyle, through his situatedness. Hence, the sequence of these beginning scenes remediates and precontextualises his situatedness to us.

Moreover, similar to ZD30, whenever we see Kyle and his teammates out and chatting joyfully, it is followed by an attack, which reminds us the consistent need for diligence, as in the words of General Mattis. Before Biggles is shot in the face, they confirm that "the rooftop is secure", and start talking about the ring Biggles bought for his girlfriend. Yet within seconds, he is hit, which strikes the same chord in us that makes us think that nowhere is secure, anything can happen anytime by anyone.

Therefore, the film coheres through a set of rollovers between Kyle`s battlefront survival and saviour complex and his homefront role as a caring husband and father. Though both roles are ruined by his inner struggles and dilemmas, he is nonetheless also constructed as a male protector figure which endows him with the use of violence. Hence whenever we see Kyle out there fighting, killing, saving and surviving, the next scenery takes us back to the homefront. He either talks to Taya, who is extremely curious and worried; or he is seen back home, unable to re-blend into the everyday life. As such, we are continuously being put back in a track to empathise with him, feel through his corporeal and psychological situatedness, and to humanise his inhuman deeds. As the story is relayed in a way that superimposes the personal on the geopolitical, we are also encouraged to simplify geopolitical decisions and dismiss alternate approaches under the guise of the personal survival of a living being which we vicariously embody.

6.3.7. Conclusion

As Pomarède argues, "[t]he political dimension of American Sniper paradoxically emerges from an apolitical discourse that claims to tell the 'real story' of a soldier on front lines" (2016). In other words, corporeal vulnerabilities and personal sufferings of the soldier are affectively used as a human shield against the wider geopolitical agendas that caused them. Truism to say that war is a contexture and it has its complexities at every level. However, in *AS* "we end up talking about Chris Kyle and his dilemmas, and not about the Rumsfelds and Cheneys and other officials up the chain who put Kyle and his high-powered rifle on rooftops in Iraq and asked him to shoot women and children" (Taibbi, 2015).

In this vein, although for some *AS* might stand as an anti-war film, as it portrays the grim and internally pacifistic aspects of veterans` lives, its externally violent, and politically blinding aspects should not be side lined. As Mann (1992) maintains, while liberal western nation-states appear to be pacifists, their histories are founded upon an externally oriented form of military violence to exploit other parts of the world. For him, both the colonial and the post-colonial eras` policies should not be overlooked while making such pacifism tirades. However, in *AS*, the globalised evil can be anywhere and from anywhere. The new war is depicted beyond the limits of nation states as a struggle against all the roaming, off-the-grid, shape-shifter evils beyond borders, a view manifesting the extreme vetting policies of the US. Hence, the message of the film is a vision that coheres through the use of violence to protect god, family

and country, with a calm confidence and disinhibition. As a result, "regardless of whether or not it was Clint Eastwood's intention, that this film acts as propaganda of the highest degree" (Bury, 2015). Similarly, whereas the ability to use violence is regarded as a gift, as a blessing only for those who guards America and American values in the film, the way Chris Kyle, himself, is killed in a gun-range in the US by another veteran poses a challenge to such dichotomic views.

7. Video Games: *These are Your Stories*

This chapter substantiates the analysis through US based FPS games released during the GWoT which are advertised as opportunities to play and gain geopolitical experience. Although FPS video games attracted the interests of IR and PG scholars who are focusing on popular culture, until now, this interest has been restricted to the analyses of the most-selling FPS series, Call of Duty (*CoD*), produced by ActiVision, and America`s Army (*AA*), officially developed by US Military. Nonetheless, many other FPS games are released every year by many other companies and share the market sales as well. These include Battlefield *(BF)* and Medal of Honor *(MoH)* series developed by EA, ArmA series by Bohemia Interactive, Ghost Recon series by Ubisoft, among others. Therefore, the literatures` sustained overlook towards these leave a growing gap to understand other valuable game designs and aims. That does not mean that these games counter the socio-political context offered by *CoD* and *AA* series. Yet, while many different films are analysed each year in regards to their relations to geopolitics and their varying depictions of combat, analysing only these series, as though they are the most representative samples for the industry for IR and PG literatures, hinders the prospects of understanding the convergences of popular culture and world politics.

Therefore, the ways in which other FPS video games cover, develop and offer alternative and similar approaches to geopolitical gaming experiences are under-analysed in the literature. For instance, while *CoD* series are mostly renowned for their fast-paced action driven combat logic, *Battlefield* series is famous for its squad-driven, more tactical choice-based games: "Activision's ethos is to give lower skilled players the chance to kill relatively frequently, retaining their attention by facilitating faster results, a sense of self-improvement and greater satisfaction" (Guzman, 2014, p.9). Moreover,

> *Many would argue that these two games are for two different types of gamer[s] [sic]. The reason being that Call of Duty is designed for fast paced arena style action, and Battlefield 3 is designed for slow paced strategic gameplay. For that reason Call of Duty is more accessible to all types of gamers, whether casual or hardcore* (Swaby, 2013).

Therefore, as each game offer different styles of experience, narrative and geopolitical setting, enriching IR`s objects of analyses in terms of FPS games benefits the literature to understand how various games converge, alter and develop other media forms as well. Furthermore, while CoD offers a relatively superficial combat experience, for instance ArmA series offer a substantially different, and more realistic combat experience, similar to video games designed to train real-life soldiers, while having a smaller share in the market sales. As will be seen in the below examples, many different video games both technically and paratextually incorporate and harness the usages of each other. Hence, changing tack, I argue that studying *BF* and *MoH* series would be a departure from the literature`s focus on *CoD*

and *AA* series. However, specifically for EA`s exclusive focus on US` warriors` and its paratextual relations with the military and film industries, I prefer to limit my sample with these games. Further studies, for instance, by focusing on ArmA series, might show other implications of these games pertained to IR and PG literatures as well in the future.

In this context, while documentaries and films illustrate the war zone environment from the perspective of the soldiers, FPS video games offer a more direct, simulated, first-person experience that converge with those mediations. Put simply, FPS games buttress the geopolitical experience offered by other media, and reinforce people`s embeddedness in a visual cultural enclosure by seemingly enriching their points of views. Therefore, the implications of this, in terms of the aim of this research are manifold. While audiences are channelled to witness the bodily hardships and sentimental moments of soldiers in films and documentaries, thanks to FPS games, they may directly embody and see geopolitical agendas through the eyes/I of the soldiers. This involves, for instance, a practical terrain for understanding the issue of killing and sacrificing. In other words, we practice the GWoT narrative, -which justifies turning the globe into a warzone to keep the US homeland and its way of life safe, by stepping in the shoes of combatants and by exercising a simulated sense of agency through certain experiences. And we learn how that is the way geopolitics is from experience. Moreover, as the viewers and players embed themselves in geopolitics from a personal dimension, they miss the institutional and political sides of the issue of killing and dying in combat behind the wars. As a result, a personal level, complementing war narrative emerges and overlays political aspects of understanding geopolitics. While war-making is being rendered to the personal accounts of American soldiers, the political aspects of war can be deemed irrelevant. This increases a certain apolitical register that distempers the war effort itself by depicting soldiers` use of violence as the only option for their personal survival. In what follows, three FPS video games offering the playing experience of the ground-level combat reality of the US soldiers will be analysed.

The selected FPS video games are Battlefield 3 (*BF3*) (EA, 2011), Medal of Honor: Warfighter *(Warfighter)* (EA, 2012) and Battlefield 4 (*BF4*) (EA, 2013). While each of those games are developed with the consultancy and support of military institutions, and active and retired military personnel, the first and the last ones offer a fictional combat experience through embodying fictional warrior characters. Nevertheless, the second one offers an embodied experience of a non-fictive warrior. In terms of criteria to choose these video games: **First**, developers of these FPS games argue that they avoid being political, but are aiming to offer authentic combat experience for entertainment purposes. I argue that this seemingly apolitical framing is itself political, as it naturalises war-making, while denaturalising the political aspects of it. **Second**, each of those video games offer an American warrior embodiment which justifies the use of violence as a requirement for survival.

Third, while geopolitical experience is offered through the embodied perspective of American soldiers, the Other perspective and narrative are sidelined. **Fourth**, relatedly, the games depoliticize and personalise the war effort through offering entertainment. **Fifth**, these games present themselves as authentic sources to experience war-making on-the-ground, and introduces the social, sentient, and vulnerable aspects of US soldiers. **Sixth**, arguably, the embodied warrior experiences that are relayed through emotional and affective registers embroil the players to the soldierly situatedness on the frontlines as well. **Finally**, the themes and the sequential usages of them as causal links that lead the narrative to be gradually unfolded and owned by the viewer is a central aspect of all the games under analysis.

7.1. Battlefield 3

7.1.1. Introduction

Battlefield 3 (BF3) (Battlefield 3, 2011) is a first-person shooter video game developed by the American video game company Electronic Arts. Having sold around 20 million copies around the world and featuring both single-player and multi-player modes, the game is the eleventh instalment of the Battlefield franchise and it can be played on various platforms, including PC, PlayStation, Xbox and iOS (Streitfeld, 2013). During the single-player campaign mode the player assumes the roles of four different characters. Nevertheless, it is mostly the main protagonist SSgt. Henry "Black" Blackburn, a member of the U.S. Marine Corps 1st Recon Battalion. The other playable characters are Sgt. Jonathan "Jono" Miller, a M1 Abrams tank operator deployed in Tehran; Lt. Jennifer "Wedge" Colby Hawkins, an F/A-18F Super Hornet weapon systems officer; and Dimitri "Dima" Mayakovsky, a Russian GRU operative.

The campaign story takes place during the fictional "War of 2014" in the Iran–Iraq region, whereas there are also several other locations including the Azerbaijani border; Paris, France; and New York. Operation Swordbreaker, the second mission in the campaign mode takes place in Suleymaniyah, Iraq, on 15 March, 2014. According to the plot, US Marines are undertaking "pacification" operations in the region. While travelling in a light armoured vehicle, the fireteam, in which we are embedded as SSgt. Blackburn, is ordered to dismount and locate a missing squad. Following a briefing, we, the fireteam, begin to search for the squad in the city. Going through such an urban landscape on foot reflects direct visual quotations to the film *American Sniper*. Although *BF3* released years earlier, their imaginary combat landscapes converge and allow the player to experience the same settings in different ways. Overall, three aspects of the game should be pointed out: (1) the way it poses the geopolitical problems into black and white through its protagonist`s eyes through a survival motive; (2) its emphasis on

procedurality based on killing to solve the mystery of the synopsis; (3) and its emphasis on the protagonist`s instinctive confidence that drive his actions.

7.1.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

In the franchise, each game has its own stand-alone synopsis and characters. They all have new elements, modes, weapons, technical upgrades, and their unique marketing strategies as well. In this sense, *BF3* has three new paratextual features: (1) new military consultants, (2) a novel accompanying and developing the campaign mode`s storyline, and (3) advertisement partnership with a Hollywood film, specifically commissioned by the military, *Act of Valor* (2012).

A year before the release of Act of Valor (Anderson, 2012; Hornaday, 2012; Zakarin, 2012), a film featuring eight active SEAL Team members, *BF3* advertised it on its own website. The game offered three "*dogtags*", a feature enabling players to customise their skills and appearances, only to its users in North America, on the condition of watching the film`s trailer on the website. Yet by doing so *BF3* was paratextualising its content via the military, as "Act of Valor was born not in Hollywood, but in the Pentagon. It was commissioned by the Navy's Special Warfare Command" (Zakarin, 2012, p.4) for an increase in the recruitment numbers.

> *The battle scenes were shot during live SEAL training missions, plotted out and blocked by the troops themselves, with cameras placed atop their helmets for a video game-like first-person view of the action. To a generation well-accustomed to guiding digital soldiers through combat zones, all that's missing is a PlayStation controller in a theater seat (Zakarin, 2012, para. 34).*

Similarly, Navy's Special Warfare Command`s dedicated official website for Navy SEALs, which works as a recruitment office, paratextualises itself through video games as well. The homepage of the website welcomes the visitors with a "begin your training" caption, as though the visitors begin their trainings in a video game. Furthermore, the images put to the public domain for new recruits appear to be taken from video games as well. Especially the gear used in winter warfare photographs are very similar to the ones used in video games.

Also, the famed ex-SAS member and best-selling author Andy Mcnab wrote an accompanying novel (McNab, 2011) for *BF3* to bring realism to the storyline, who helped the developers "with the writing, coming up with plausible bridges between missions, doing some of the dialogue" (Stuart, 2017, p.4). He also contributed to the video game`s technical consultant team consisting of ex-SOF soldiers from Frogman Inc. "Frogman Inc.'s operators have most recently been involved in the Bandito Brother's film "Act of Valor", and video game and television projects with Activision's "Modern Warfare 3" and EA's "Battlefield 3" (GreenGalaxyent., 2017). Hence, we can see the various links between the military, ex-operators, films and video games. Such practical relations not only link these realms into each other in a continuum, but also converge them into a symbiotic culture through intertextuality. Yet worse, these intertextualities co-inspire each other (González, 2016).

This interdependency becomes apparent in the words of Andy McNab as well. When asked if there are moments in *BF3* that have reminded him of genuine missions, he says *BF3* does look like Iraq. Also, when he was asked whether *BF3* reminds him the emotional experience he genuinely faced in real-life missions, he again says "yes ... once you're engaged with the character, you're part of it. You get fear, anxiety, you get the same rush of endorphins if you're successful" (Stuart, 2011, p.8). Moreover, when asked about if "soldiers tend to be very good at shooters", he says,

> *Absolutely. The military uses games to as a teaching tool; soldiers in training have always used games. Conflict is progressing, it's becoming more about stand-off attack – you don't want to face the enemy, because people get killed. So, war is becoming much more technical and soldiers do play a lot of games. They get it.* (Ibid., p.9)

Hence, practically, whether received any political support or not, FPS video games, and *BF3* in particular, offers a vicarious experience of war through pre-structured entertainment designs. And this is marketed through a multi-dimensional paratextual realm which is culminated into an interdependent relationship. Therefore, all these mediums use each other as their paratexts, and frame themselves through each other. In this vein, the practical dimension of this relation becomes more overt in terms of video games. As *Call of Duty 4 `s* military advisor, Keirsey states in an interview:

> *Someone asked me, "Could you use this game as a rehearsal tool?" And I actually said, "Absolutely. You could, but it's not the intent of the game." The last thing on the mind of the developers was making anything that could be used by the Department of the Army or anybody else. But what they did by making the game so authentic... By getting all the physics exactly right, getting the weapons exactly right, the ballistics right, frankly—you know—if you had a hit squad to go in on Osama bin Laden ... you could do a hellacious rehearsal. Headset-to-headset, man-to-man. [You] still got to go do it ... But the commands, the coordination between people, rehearsing contingencies — [Call of Duty 4 is] a tremendous engine to do that with. Again, it's unintentional. It just happens to be because [Infinity Ward] made it so close.* (Keirsey, 2007)

7.1.3. Initiation, Immersion and Diegetisation

The game begins in a fast-paced action scene with a first-person point of view. Without any initial cutscene[23], it directly aims to immerse the player by making it perform. Within ten minutes, the player learns the basic tenets of the story and gets entangled with the narrative flow. We suddenly start seeing from the eye/I of the protagonist and judging from audio-visual cues, we realise that we are in the NYC. Possibly to evade police, we cross the road and jump on a metro train from a bridge, break the windows and get in the compartment. Once we get in the train, we start fighting with masked individuals. A handcuff hanging down from one of our wrists draws our attention, confirming that we are not only fighting with the bad guys, but also wanted by the cops. With a pistol, we chase in through the compartments and shoot several people. Without knowing who we are, who we are shooting at, we simply try to survive by shooting people. Suddenly someone with a mask jumps on us, grab the rifle we just found from our hands, and we begin a melee fight with him. Upon kicking him out of the train, we see someone else with a detonator from the window of the next compartment. We jump in the next compartment from the side window by breaking the glass. Nevertheless, the guy inside shoots at us, and we get on top of the train. We start crawling to get on board from a hole on top. Once we get in, we get caught by someone who is holding a pistol against our head, and asking us whether we act alone.

The scene suddenly cuts to a third person point of view. A marine is being interrogated by two intelligence officials. We learn that the Marine is Sgt. Blackburn, the main protagonist with which we experience the story. They ask Blackburn several questions on a possible attack to the city and about the person who caught us in the earlier sequence: Solomon. We still do not know why we are detained, interrogated and to whom we are against. One of the officials says, "[w]hat you`re going to do is help us clarify the attack scenario. [...] All you have to do, is fill in the blanks. [...] When did you hear first about Solomon and the PLR?". Blackburn answers: "It was nine months ago. Operation Swordbreaker. Iraq Kurdistan". And the scene cuts to a scene to nine months ago, Iraq. And we start seeing from the first-person view again and start moving across the Iraqi streets, very familiar to the ones we know from the film *AS*.

Hence, as McNab argues (Stuart, 2011), *BF3* really crafted a visually persuasive Iraqi landscape, instantly immersing us in a realistic way. I especially, personally felt myself familiar with the environment, as I played the game after watching the film *AS*. Although the game does not base itself on a non-fiction story, the graphical realism of the Iraqi city landscape played a realistic feature for me. Upon arrival, exiting from the military vehicle, rather than following the team, I wanted to stroll around and move slowly.

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[23] Cutscenes in video games develop the storylines. They play a similar role of opening sequences in films.

In that regard, the opening sequences of *BF3* revolve around four things: an unknown enemy, NYC in imminent danger, the key role of the protagonist we embody, and Iraq as the beginning of everything. Hence, apart from this line of thought, we do not know anything. And we start constructing the story universe by filling in the blanks as the official put it bluntly in the first minutes. In this sense, the opening sequences of *BF3* use subjective rhetoric and situate us/Sgt. Blackburn as the keystone to cohere the storyline and solve the geopolitical puzzle. This eases the player`s transition and interaction with the fictive world of the game. Through these opening sequences, we immerse ourselves into the reality of the fictive account of the game and are equipped with the intended decoding tools that channel our interpretative freedoms.

7.1.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitization/Desanitization:

Our first mission after the opening scene takes place in Iraq. While running through alleyways and streets similar to the ones we saw in films, the guy in front of us suddenly get shot by a sniper. His blood gushes and splashes on our screen. By pressing the "space" button, the games pushes the player to carry this wounded combatant to safety. The ensuing gunfight was destabilising and hard for me. Yet this sudden incident slightly affected me to feel the combat tension to kill to survive. Near the end of the first mission again, another melee fight occurs. The player comes face-to-face with an insurgent and has to kill him with its hands. For the first time, the target to kill transpires in front of us with a legible face. As I was not expecting to fight in this way, and did not know which buttons to press, I died and spawned for a few times. Yet, during the embodied rush to survive the game, without thinking whether the enemy has a face, the killing is achieved.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):

Similarly, as I was channelled towards filling in the gaps in this geopolitical puzzle in the beginning by the officials as SSgt. Blackburn, I had to survive the flow of the gameplay. As I cannot jump to a next scene as we can do in films, I had to continue playing. Meaning, I had to kill to survive, to understand and to fill in the gaps. Therefore, by experiencing the killing, I had to put an order and organise the facts. And I killed everyone I saw as killable targets throughout the gameplay to solve the puzzle, as that was the only way of tracing the facts. Hence, my embodied survival motive moved me to desensitise my actions.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

In the third mission, we play the character of a fighter pilot, Lt. Hawkins. She is responsible from targeting of the aircraft. The other pilot tells us that we received satellite images, and depending on that "they think they know where al-Bashir is". After a brief journey, we reach to target destination. During

the ground bombardment, we gaze on the screen through an infrared radar. Three vehicles emerge, and they are verified as targets. A helicopter lands next to them and the individuals surround it to board. Yet, while these individuals are seen merely as white objects through the infrared device, and we do not know whether they are hostile, we are "cleared to engage", as over the radio they are declared as the insurgent group "PLR". After the first strike, the surviving individuals run, and over the radio we hear: "You are cleared to take them out too". In this sense, all we do is pulling the trigger, not calling the shots. Simply put, the limits of our agency are reduced to enemy recognition and killing.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

When McNab is asked why there is "a lot of cynicism among the soldiers in" *BF3* and why they are "often very sceptical, even sarcastic, about their mission objectives. Is that realistic?", he answers: "Yes, I think it's in every soldier's job description!" (Stuart, 2011, para.18). From the first scene, the main protagonist is depicted in a limbo – as a lone wolf. He is running away from the police, acting not institutionally, but individually, to stop the bad guys from doing bad things. He is also seen as detained and interrogated by security officials during the gameplay. Hence, what is left to him to is to take action without the support of institutions, individually and intuitionally. And he single-handedly prevents a terror plot. Therefore, throughout the whole play, to solve the puzzle, to understand the geopolitical mystery and to find a solution, we take action. As Dinicola put it: "The game ignores every opportunity that it has to let you do something other than just shoot. Every potentially memorable moment is so forcibly on-rails" (Dinicola, 2011, p.2).

5. Voiceless Other:

Despite we are endowed with moments where we can scrutinise the face of our enemy, the faces are mostly covered. The first time we see an enemy face is when get caught in the first mission. In the next level, as mentioned, we have to have a melee fight and kill the enemy by looking at its face. However, we do not know anything about the story of the Other. Although, storywise, *BF3* in general is very puzzling to scrutinise our very own story as well, the voice and the story of the Other are utterly enigmatic. Yet, thanks to the route allowed by the gameplay, unconcerned with the wider facts, we can skip the reasoning, shoot and continue to find it.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

Shooting flow of *BF3* is immersive, paratextually, it is promising, yet, narrative-wise, the game does not offer an attraction. It is mostly puzzling and to solve it, the only way offered is shooting more people

with different weaponry. Embodying multiple characters in different levels do not enrich our way of composing a story as well. From the beginning, we do not know why are we chased by the police, why are we detained and why are we interrogated. Therefore, the player has to apply intertextual connections of the GWoT to fill in the gaps, while abducting and shooting to understand the game`s cause. For instance, while running with a fire team in the streets of an Iraqi city, I did not know why we were put retrospectively to such a mission in Iraq. Yet, finding myself with a sniper rifle on a roof top to cover the exfiltration of another team reminded me the film *American Sniper*. Hence, rather than thinking of the game`s narrative confusion, I simply filled in my role through what I learned in films. As Eco (1979) argued, I took a stroll outside the woods, and tried to find something to aid my understanding of geopolitics and war-making.

7. *Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:*

The number of weapons the player is enfurnished with is almost limitless (IMFDB, 2011). From dozens of handguns, submachine guns, shotguns, assault rifles, machine guns and sniper rifles to dozens of rocket launchers, grenades, explosives and mountable weapons, the player gradually expands its arsenal. Each level comes with new weapons. When you kill the enemy, you can try its weapon and swap yours with it if you like. For instance, if your gun`s depleted of bullets, you can pick up a loaded one by scavenging the dead soldiers`. Some machine guns come with scopes, some with grenade launchers. Some are stable yet slow, some are unsteady yet spitting fire. Moreover, you can also fly and shoot from a fighter-jet and a tank as well.

7.1.5. The Un-Scene Affects

I felt myself affected by the game specifically in three instances during *BF3*. The first is when the soldier in front of me get shot instantly. The sound, the image, the imminence, everything was affectively harrowing. At that moment, out of shock, I cringed my head and jumped. The ensuing gunfight is carried out by the residues of that affective rush. However, at the end of the mission, when I was attacked by an insurgent from the back and had to carry a melee fight, the scene bodily moved me. I jerked my head to sides, tilted my torso onwards and backwards, tightly grabbed the mouse, clicked to buttons harder to survive. The corporal proximity of the fight was challenging. It was virtual and visceral, vicariously sensational. The next time I felt such a moment was when as a team moved on a rooftop. The sudden noise of a gunshot, and the impact of the bullet on the metal bars next to me made me shiver and jolt my head backwards. Hence, despite the narrative flaw of the game, the experience itself the gameplay offered was viscerally immersive for me.

Väliaho claims that "video games could be characterized … as 'sentimental education` tools" (2014, p.31) as "[m]uch of gameplay happens on the levels that words cannot reach" (p.37). These experienceable narratives are designed to reach players affectively. Thus, gameplays are not only

cognitively but also somatically affect bodies, "[v]ideo game imagery possesses the power to literally make us move by evoking fundamental feelings of arousal and kinesthesia at the heart of self-experience" (Väliaho, 2014, pp.29-30). Therefore, during the gameplay, players give bodily reactions mirroring the avatar's actions, and "[p]eople move their hands, bodies, eyes, and mouths when they play video games" (Galloway, 2006, p.4). As the body becomes the node where the real and the virtual converges, simulations stimulate subjugations, narratives "resonate and coincide with other key practices and imaginations defining the political reality of life today, from scientific formulas to military (ir)rationalities and economic pursuits" (ibid.). As a result, an unseen yet affective social milieu pervading the understandings of contemporary international politics emerges out of the gameplay.

7.1.6. The Sequence of Events/Post Hoc Fallacies

Strikingly, in *BF3*, all the narrative, cutscenes, and the sequence of events focus on the intuitive actions of Sergeant Blackburn that are pitting him against the US institutions. Until the last mission, we do not understand whether Blackburn, whom we embody, is a good guy, or are the officials detaining him are on the side of terrorists? Officials ask questions, Blackburn remembers them, and the scenes cut to a new playable episode in retrospect for us to get involve in the narrative. Yet in the final episode, we learn what Dima told to Blackburn to crack open the geopolitical mystery: "We can avert war between our nations. Just two of us. No politicians, no money changing hands. Just two soldiers speaking the truth." Thereafter, to deter a nuclear strike and a war between Russia and the US, Sergeant shoots his commanding officer under the influence of Dima`s seemingly benign offer. He seems to change his allegiance. Although it seems that was unnecessary, and the Sergeant was trying to do the right thing, he embarks on such an action.

Learning this, we understand that the officials are unwilling to believe Blackburn and intend to put him in jail. Yet at that moment, one of the officials receive a call on the hijacking of a train. In a few minutes, left without options, Blackburn and his friend, another detained Marine, Montes, escape from the building by attacking the officials in the room. The scene goes back to the initial sequence we started seeing from the eye/I of Blackburn. Amidst police sirens, he jumps on a metro train, and try to secure a nuclear bomb from detonating. And we learn that the person we are embodying was the hero which means our intuitions were safe and sound, and our geopolitical actions were righteous and moral.

7.1.7. Conclusion

Most of the cases analysed weave the sequences between family values and sentimentality of the homefront with the brutality of the battlefront and combat making to disclose the domesticity of the protagonist/warrior subject. However, in *BF3*, the sequences are aligned to reveal the necessity of immoral action to reach moral consequences. The ambiguities on the morality of the protagonist (us)

and its (our) actions are intuitionally assumed to be good and just. Throughout the gameplay, the player is forced to reach the denouement of the narrative by fighting, shooting, and killing. Geopolitical revelation, narrative disclosure, and personal and national security are offered, only as a result of constant fighting of the player. Therefore, the player should trust her/his hunches, collaborate with the gameplay, and embody the protagonist, even though killing is made necessary to solve the geopolitical problems and mysteries.

As a result, I, as a game player become the protagonist, and assumed the subjectivity of the soldier through its eyes/I. Our agencies, experiences and subjectivities are amalgamated. Thus, the burdens and responsibilities of geopolitics devolved on my embodied survival motive. I also intertextually drew on the film, *American Sniper*, as during the first episode of the *BF3* I did a similar job in the same landscape. Also, as the protagonist, it was my responsibility to solve the puzzle of the gameplay. To solve it, I had to fight. And as fighting involves killing and dying, the geopolitical issue, the resolve of the puzzle, and the victory become hinged on my embodied survival. Hence, the entertainment tool became a geopolitical tool, and geopolitical became personal. Put simply, it became my war and I experienced the corporeal vulnerability of soldiers in an extracorporeal way. Moreover, as Dima told to Blackburn in the final episode: "*We can avert war between our nations. Just two of us. No politicians, no money changing hands. Just two soldiers speaking the truth*", soldiers are shown as legitimate authorities to talk about war and its naked truth, as they experience it from the first hand. And the same authority and experience are cloned in (viewers`) my subjectivity as well.

7.2. Medal of Honor: Warfighter

7.2.1. Introduction

Medal of Honor: Warfighter (Warfighter) (2012) is an FPS video game developed by EA as well. It`s the fourteenth instalment of the Medal of Honor *(MoH)* series. As a sequel to its 2010 edition, it is also set during the GWoT. While the single-player campaign mode takes place in Bosnia, Pakistan, Philippines and Somalia, its *Zero Dark Thirty* map-pack features two tribal areas close to bin Ladin`s hideout in Pakistan. Nevertheless, it sold around only 3 million copies around the world, compared to its prequel, *Warfighter* received poor critical and commercial reception, and this influenced the way EA designed and marketed the Battlefield series from 2012 (Makuch, 2013).

Hence, *Warfighter* is included as a case study for its exceptional status that re-directed the EA producers` focus into player experience and narrative aspects of the gameplay design, including a resolution with geopolitical realities and militainment fantasies. In that sense, for instance, while the gameplay of the *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012) did not please the players for its overt criticism of geopolitics,

achieved by leading players to make moral choices during the gameplay (Jørgensen, 2016; Payne, 2014), *Warfighter* offers us to analyse the other pole of the same spectrum: jingoistic military realism extremely overlaid with paratextual content. As Payne put it, for similar reasons, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 4* (2007) tried to market itself to "suggest particular textual readings over others with the goal of insulating [itself] from interpretations and criticisms that might link the violent play on-screen to the worldly violence unfolding in Iraq and Afghanistan" (Payne, 2012, p.305).

In this vein, first, the game`s production and paratextual structure blatantly reveals the relations between military and entertainment industries, which enabled the game to promote itself through non-fictionality claims. Yet, second, such an overt paratextual alignment and marketing campaign with the military industry led players and reviewers to brand the game as a propaganda material. The game, hence, discloses how overt military alignment and jingoism repel audiences, and causes apathy. Third, despite its promoted realism claims, the flow of the gameplay narrative is confusing and does not allow a smooth character engagement for the players. Hence these problems led the company to constrain its focus on the narrative and experience aspects of video games from *Battlefield 4.* Therefore, a trade-off between reality and fiction is sought after by EA to provide a liminal space in between militarism and entertainment without real-life consequences to ponder for players. In this vein, the game is analysed to understand how and why EA changed its development and marketing focus starting after *Warfighter* towards narrative and experience-based player immersion.

In terms of storyline, while the previous titles of the series take place during World War II, the last two editions are set during the GWoT. Therefore, the games' single-player campaign continues from where its 2010 edition left off. The player embodies *Preacher*, a SOF operator from DevGru, and assumes his homefront and battlefront mindsets. Thus, similar to the protagonists we see in previous chapters, *Preacher* is also depicted both as a family man with domestic duties and sentimentalities, and as a warrior subject with lethal skills and bodily vulnerabilities. We see the ways he suffers, survives and struggles to protect and reunite with his family through various settings. Therefore, the player does not merely enact his warrior role, but also experiences his domestic world as he returns home to find his family torn apart from years of deployment.

7.2.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

As aforementioned, the game is a direct sequel to its controversial 2010 edition which had been officially supported during its development phase by the US Army. However, when the company added playable Taliban characters to the online gameplay, the Army pulled its support and banned the game from being sold in its bases (Crecente, 2010; Flaherty, 2010). Furthermore, the 2010 game was loosely based on the events surrounding the *Battle of Roberts Ridge* in 2002, which claimed the life of the first SEAL Team member to die during the GWoT. This event is specifically important for its ramifications on the

mindsets of the US SOF operators, and DevGru members in particular. According to the testaments, the habitual war crimes committed by DevGru members during the GWoT triggered by this battle:

> *`To understand the violence, you have to begin at Roberts Ridge, ` said one former member of SEAL Team 6 who deployed several times to Afghanistan. "When you see your friend killed, recover his body, and find that the enemy mutilated him? It's a schoolyard mentality. 'You guys want to play with those rules?' 'OK.' Although this former SEAL acknowledged that war crimes are wrong, he understood how they happen. `You ask me to go living with the pigs, but I can't go live with pigs and then not get dirty* (Cole, 2017, para.19).

Hence, the specific involvement of the Army in the game, and its focus on this battle can be seen as a remediation attempt of the US military to reframe the events. Nevertheless, *Warfighter* is entangled with further interesting paratextual features, in terms of its relationship with SOF operators, marketing ties with tactical gear and weapon companies, and its *ZD30* content. **First**, the game is developed through the consultancy of active DevGru members. According to the press release, "[w]ritten by actual U.S. Tier 1 Operators while deployed overseas, Medal of Honor Warfighter features a dotted line to real world events and provides players a view into globally recognized threats and situations letting them experience the action as it might have unfolded" (EA, 2012a). Thus, the game allows players to experience geopolitical events first-hand. These events include, popular geopolitical events as well, such as the *ZD30* map pack and the rescue mission of Captain Philips which took place in the Somalian Coast in 2009. Moreover, according to Sipple (2012a; 2012b), the playable character of the game`s campaign mode, *Preacher*, is also an operator who took part in bin Laden`s killing. As we later learn, he and six other DevGru operators who provided consultancy to the company were reprimanded for disclosing sensitive material information regarding the teams` weapons, tactics and gears (Kube, 2012). Nevertheless, the punishment was non-judicial and "[t]hey [only] received letters of reprimand and forfeited half of their pay for two months" (Ibid., para.2).

Second, beyond these playable events of geopolitics, the sale of actual weapons is promoted by the game`s website (Bramwell, 2012; Narcisse, 2012; Smith, 2012). The game`s website sponsored links to certain company websites that sell and make assault weapons and tactical gear. Through those links players could visit the real-life manufacturers of the gears and weapons they are able to use in the game. Most notably, one of those weapons was a special edition *Tomahawk* axe which could be bought online for $75 from *SOG Knives* that features "an extended cutting head" (Smith, 2012). Yet, as Cole (2017) reveals in his investigation, similar axes were received by the members of DevGru operators upon having a year of service in the teams` Red Squadron. Costing $600 apiece and paid by private donations, the hatchets were custom made by Daniel Winkler, who also designed and produced the ones used in the film "*Last of the Mohicans*" (1992). More interestingly, while these items were symbolic in the beginning, under the influence of an obscure war novel, "*Devil's Guard*," by George Robert Elford

(1971), operators from different squadrons started to use hatchets in combat to mutilate the body parts of the insurgents (Cole, 2017).

> *These fucking morons read the book 'The Devil's Guard' and believed it," said one of the former SEAL Team 6 leaders … "It's a work of fiction billed as the Bible, as the truth. In reality, it's bullshit. But we all see what we want to see." Slabinski and the Blue Squadron SEALs deployed to Afghanistan were "frustrated, and that book gave them the answers they wanted to see: Terrorize the Taliban and they'd surrender. The truth is that such stuff only galvanizes the enemy* (Ibid., p.67).

Through this example, we see the affects of convergence culture in geopolitics. On one hand, the real perpetrators of geopolitics are being inspired by films and novels, and conduct combat operations according to these fictional dramas. On the other, another work of fiction in the form of an FPS game consults to these operators to re-fictionalise those combat operations in the form of video game scenarios. Furthermore, to make it seem more real, the video game company promotes links to sell similar hatchets to players. As a result, the lines between fiction, non-fiction and reality gradually blurs. They converge and become co-constitutive. And civic engagements with geopolitics steadily get entangled with fictional inspirations and aspirations.

Lastly, as mentioned, before the release of the film *ZD30* (2012), *Warfighter* announced a featured map pack, promoting the film about the ten-year-hunt for bin Laden (EA, 2012). Although this map pack does not enable players to play the killing as in the film, it takes place in the same area. Therefore, while furthering what *BF3* did with promoting *Act of Valor*, a film commisioned by Pentagon, *Warfighter* tried to boost its marketing share through *ZD30*, a film supported by the CIA as well. Furthermore, operating together with Sony Pictures, EA promised to donate $1 million minimum to charities benefiting the US Armed Services and their families, as part of its Project Honor that supports combat veterans as well. Thereby, the players could support the veterans by buying this map pack, as each purchase contributes to the donations (EA, 2012d). Therefore, *Warfighter* can be regarded as one of the prime examples of paratextuality and convergence culture. To illustrate how such a paratextual context and the problematic non-fictionality claims fail to immerse the players into the game narrative, a look into the opening sequences would be revealing.

7.2.3. Initiation, Immersion and Diegetisation

As mentioned, albeit most opening sequences cover a span of ten to fifteen minutes to introduce the main issues in the storyline and immerse the viewers/players in it, in some cases the duration of these sequences may exceed. In *Warfighter*, not only these sequences are extended, but also mixed with various cutscenes and playable episodes. Cutscenes are mostly retrospective in content as in *BF3*. Yet, in *Warfighter*, some of the cutscenes feature the familial issues of Preacher, while some others inform us about other characters` combat engagements, such as Stump and Argyrus. Hence, the flow of the narrative and playing experience is constantly disrupted between these varying embodiments.

Therefore, not only the unapologetic patriotism of the game`s paratext, but also the internal currents of the gameplay disturb the player from locating itself to the life of one character.

The game opens at an undisclosed ship dock in Karachi, Pakistan with a caption, “Preacher – Eight Weeks Ago”. The protagonist we assume the role of slowly emerges from the sea in the dark with his combat fatigues and assault rifle as part of Task Force Mako, which is a newly designated team assigned by DevGru to sabotage a black-market arms deal involving an Al-Qaeda affiliate. As Preacher, we sneak into the enemy territory, silently kill the guards and plant a charge on a truck. Yet, when we detonate it, a secondary and bigger explosion happens and an unexpected gunfight transpires. With the impact of this second explosion, cargo containers start falling on us, and the ship starts to sink. After a few minutes of sprinting while circumventing falling containers and enemy bullets, we reach to the safety.

Yet the scene suddenly cuts to an unexpected daytime location. We see a man in a bedroom talking over the phone. We gradually understand that the man is Preacher and he is talking to his wife, Lena. She says: “I know how this works. You make million promises. Get Bella`s hopes up. We start making plans and then you start taking calls in the other room and you disappear.” Shortly after, the call drops, and we see Preacher, looking sad, gazing down the window toward another woman and her daughter. Lena, calls again and we learn that the line dropped while they were driving through a tunnel. In the next few seconds, we see sadly looking Preacher trying to reconcile with his wife.

However, the scene cuts again to a dark room where we witness the phone conversation between Preacher and his teammate Mako. They try to understand what happened during the mission and contemplate the existence of another enemy group. To understand the issue, Mako briefs us about the presence of a covert asset infiltrated into a terror cell in Arabian Peninsula. Thereafter the scene cuts again with a caption “Argyrus”, and an Arabic speaking man starts to talk. After a brief confusion, we learn that we assume the role of that covert asset, Argyrus for a short time. The Arabic speaking man from the terror cell trains us on how to prone, jump, toggle, scope and shoot the rifle.

Typical to FPS games, to make us adjusted to our new virtual body, the game takes us to a short training camp. With a first person view of only seeing our hands and legs, we learn how to jump, sprint, prone, crawl and stand. Put differently, we learn how to command and control our extracorporeal faculties. A few minutes later, we are instructed with weapon systems. From using knives to pistols, to shotguns, sniper rifles, and automatic machine guns, to hand grenades, and rocket launchers, we learn how to hold, aim, fire and reload various weapons at this stage. We even try night vision goggles and exercise

our new capabilities in a model passenger plane. Moreover, we learn how to communicate with, give orders to and ask for bullets from others.

The ensuing scene takes us to a military cargo plane and a warzone environment again. This time, embodying another DevGru operator, Stump, we jump from the plane somewhere near Mogadishu, Somalia, and strike a beach. Following a-ten-minute-long gunfight, we jump back to the scene where Preacher and Bella argue over the phone. This time we learn that Preacher took honourable discharge from the military, and went to Madrid to save his marriage. We see him going to a train station to meet with his wife and daughter. However, while waiting, he sees a familiar face in a compartment and suddenly starts running after the train. Within seconds the train explodes.

Shortly after, we learn that Preacher survived the incident with injuries and his family is safe as they missed their train. In the hospital, Lena understands the importance of Preacher`s role in taking the fight to the enemy, and convinces him to go back to the teams. This familial resolution is particularly striking, as once Preacher settles his homefront issues, the battlefront flow of the game releases as well. In other words, his homefront settlement consolidates his will to fight, and from this moment, the game is not disturbed with consecutive introspective and retrospective aspects of the protagonist.

In that regard, the opening sequences of *Warfighter* orbit around five aspects: (1) an unknown enemy is lurking everywhere, putting everyone in the civilian world in imminent danger, (2) the key role of the protagonist we embody as a SEAL in taking the fight to the enemy to protect the homefront, (3) the protagonist`s marred marriage determining his will to fight, (4) the constant communicative brotherhood between the SOF operators, (5) and the frequent reminders stating that the episodes are "inspired by real events".

In that sense, the opening sequences of the game, combine the objectifying rhetoric with a subjective one, and aim to situate the player within the world of three characters: Preacher (mostly), Stump and Argyrus. However, the transience of this triple embodiment does not ease the player`s interaction with the narrative world of the gameplay. The immersion ability of the player is disturbed by the constant transitioning of subjectivity. On the one hand, the player finds itself in a realistic world which is inspired by the non-fictive accounts of real SOF operators, on the other, experiences problems in constructing the story world (Pötzsch, 2012) stably as one subject. Despite the game aims to initiate a certain process of diegetization in its opening sequences to aid the player to disable its reflexive mode by channelling its interpretative freedoms in a specific direction, *Warfighter* does not offer a stable narrative flow to sustain a firm gaming experience. This is why, from *BF4*, EA began to prioritise stabling players` gaming experience and their narrative engagement over authenticity.

7.2.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitization/Desanitization:

Warfighter mostly does not clearly depict bodily injuries and consequences. We only witness the death of the terrorists within instances. Yet, there are certain occasions where we witness the death of our comrades. For instance, during the last episode, we see Preacher`s close friend shot dead. As it happens within close range, we witness the moment the bullet pierces his head and comes out from his face with a gush of blood. Therefore, the game does not sanitise war. Rather, with consecutive scenes of violence involving killing people with many different weapon settings and by what is called "kill streaks", the game desensitises the player`s engagement with geopolitics and war. As Sipple put it, through *Warfighters*, "[now] we can add the homefront to the list of latest battlegrounds" (2012a, para.2).

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):

Although the operators we embody do not question the violence they utilised against the enemy, they are depicted as characters who sacrificed a lot. For instance, during the opening sequences we also see Stump talking to his teammate over his ex-wife. This short exchange, coming after Preacher`s talk with his wife, portrays how most of the SOF operators are experiencing various levels of pressure both at the homefront and at the battlefront. Beyond the physical strains and corporeal vulnerabilities of the battlefront, they are depicted as sentient characters, sacrificing their relations with their beloved ones to do their jobs and to protect them. Put in other words, they are shown as the sin-eaters of geopolitics from the homefront perspective.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

In the beginning of all the episodes, we see a caption in the corner saying that the story is "Inspired by actual events". Hence, the player is constantly reminded of real-life possibilities of the screen world before him/her. Put differently, like an Easter Egg Hunting game, anyplace can be geotagged as a hideout for terrorists. For instance, before the team land on a village, the command over the radio is heard: "All targets are hostile [...] Every target is designated as an enemy combatant". In other words, according to the gameplay, no civilians exist in the area, and anyone seen is a target to be killed. Similar to aforementioned drone policy of Obama administration, the Other is seen in chunks as hostile targets. In this sense, possible operational dilemmas are again dealt with mortal probabilities based on intuitive judgements. The player must stay on alert to shoot to survive as the enemy can appear anywhere in many different formations.

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

After the first mission, which was disrupted with an unexpected explosion and helicopter fire, we see Preacher and Mako talking over the phone to understand how the operation transpired in such a way. During the first cutscenes, Preacher implies that there is a political issue undercutting and even ravaging their devoted sacrifices: “Once things get political, they want us to stop shooting and start dancing. I don’t dance”. In another instant, Preacher tells his wife how and why everything is changed: “It`s all political, you know that. Twenty-two years in and we get PNG`d [persona non grata] for doing the right thing”. Thus, whereas, on the one hand, the characters operate comfortably within the remits of their official geopolitical licence to kill, on the other hand, depending on the politics of the homefront they can be regarded as dispensable units by the very political institutions. Hence, they are depicted as people of action. Dissimilar to the impurity of politics, they are pure, blatant, untainted, honest, sentient, sacrificing subjects. And they serve for they feel the responsibility to protect their nation, families and beloved ones.

5. Voiceless Other:

While there are instances where we can understand what does the Other say through subtitles, these are limited to fanatic utterings they talk about their cause. Therefore, as expected, the Other is depicted as insentient, wild, cruel subjects in *Warfighter* as well. The Other is always seen through the devoid of domestic realm, lacking civility, familial ties and sentient motives. All their subjectivities are subsumed under either zealotry, bigotry or greed, whereas the American soldiers are seen as sacrificing their domesticity, familial ties and even their lives to protect their beloved ones by taking the fight to the enemy.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

On the other hand, as shown in the beginning sequences, the American soldiers are always depicted through different layers of their subjectivities and their differing domestic and international responsibilities. Most conspicuously, Preacher, is a family man, who has a lot to protect, suffer and lose. Hence, he prefers to keep its homefront and battlefront subjectivities together by taking the fight to the enemy. Yet, this is only achieved through the supportive attitude of their beloved ones at the homefront. For instance, at one point, Mother`s [A good friend, and a teammate of Preacher] wife relieves Lena, by saying that “I`ve been married to that man for 22 years, and one of the things I`ve learned, that some of the other wives didn’t is that it`s better to have them happy, than to have them safe”. Hence, we learn that while the American soldiers have a story to tell, the Others do not. As written in the game`s website, they do what they do blithefully to protect their loves ones:

Medal of Honor Warfighter tells the story of U.S. Tier 1 Operator, "Preacher" as he returns home from overseas only to find his family torn apart from years of deployment. Trying to pick up the pieces to salvage what remains of his marriage, Preacher is reminded of what he's fighting for - family. But when an extremely deadly explosive (PETN) penetrates civilian borders and his two worlds collide, Preacher and his fellow teammates are sent in to solve the problem. They take the fight to the enemy and do whatever it takes to protect their loved ones from harm (EA, 2012b, para.3).

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

One of the most interesting features unique to FPS video games is the weapon arsenal you are enabled to choose. As detailed in IMFDB again, players are endowed with using 8 different handguns, 15 types of assault rifles, and 7 types of machine guns (IMFDB, 2012a) among others during *Warfighter*. Moreover, *Warfighter* allows players to customise their weapons in a detailed way. While in many games this customisation process is limited with weapon, optics, and colour choices, in *Warfighter,* players can even customise their playstyle by changing the accessories of their weapons. For example, you can change the optics, stocks, muzzles, magazines and even barrel assemblies. If you are fighting in close quarters, you should customise your weapon with a *Close Quarters Barrel Assembly, Reflex Sights,* and *Close Quarter Receiver Group* for increased agility. If you pick *Precision Barrel Assembly* in close quarters, it increases your shooting precision on long range, but lowers the weapon`s agility and your efficiency. Thus, this feature informed me a lot about weapon parts and assemblages. In this sense, as the game offers hours of shooting experience through a campaign and an online mode, players can learn about various types of weaponry, their technical capacities, the pros and cons of each for different operational settings and needs from experience.

7.2.5. The Un-Scene Affects

Despite most of the critiques blamed the game for being overly jingoistic and attributed its market flaws to this, as mentioned, one of the things that made the campaign mode problematic originates from frequent cutscene intrusions and changing character engagements. For instance, during the first twelve minutes of the gameplay, we experience five different settings, while playing three different characters. These events are introduced in a non-linear fashion of retrospective cutscenes. Hence, this prevents players from experiencing a steady flow of engagement with the characters. Put differently, the gameplay itself disables the player`s ability to stably embody and experience the narrative from the eye/I of a character. Nevertheless, during the first mission, while trying to circumvent the falling cargo containers, I felt a brief embodiment that bodily moved me. I felt an urge to evade those falling steel chunks. Moreover, I briefly felt a despair when Preacher`s friend is shot from the head as well. However, unlike *BF3* and *4*, the overall gameplay did not stably affect me. As Vanord put it, while the game aims to generate a sense of sensational respect for the soldiers on the battlefield, it minimally achieves this.

Upon completing Medal of Honor: Warfighter's campaign, you are met with a heartfelt dedication impressing upon you the heroism of the men in uniform the game depicts. The attempt at sincere emotion is commendable--but it rings hollow, coming as it does at the end of a bog-standard military shooter that celebrates the killing of hundreds. The battlefield fantasy itself offers a few surprises, but they're crowded out of your psyche by the indifferent hours of shooting and military chatter that surround them (Vanord, 2012, para.1).

7.2.6. The Sequence of Events/Post Hoc Fallacies

Similar to the case analysed earlier, we engage with the character in two generic settings of the homefront and the battlefront. Therefore, the whole narrative of the gameplay is weaved around the domesticity and ferocity, vulnerability and lethality of the soldiers. Yet, the family aspect of the narrative is exceptionally prioritised to underline the homefront responsibilities of the warriors, and to legitimise the GWoT as a cause through the securitisation of the domestic realm. Hence, the sequence of events are woven between these realms to give particular importance to this. For instance, as mentioned, when Preacher and Mother goes out to have a dinner together with their wives, upon receiving a call, both men leave without saying anything.

At that moment, Mother`s wife approaches to Lena and says that: "I`ve been married to that man for 22 years, and one of the things I`ve learned, that some of the other wives didn't is that it`s better to have them happy, than to have them safe". This scene is also introduced to us as a retrospective moment, while both men were captured by the enemy. And a minute after this cutscene, Mother is killed. We see how the bullet pierces his face when the enemy shoots him from the back of his head in front of us.

7.2.7. Conclusion

In each FPS game, subsequent to gearing up our avatars with various kits and picking up our guns from various options, mission briefings ensue. They inform us on the geopolitical context, geographical location, key objects of the mission, and enemy's firepower. In other words, we do not simply turn on our gaming device and start shooting for fun. Rather, the design of FPS games aims to personally immerse players into a combat situation with a certain geopolitical context. Thereafter, we gradually get under the skin of an avatar and turn ourselves into combatants with legitimate rights to kill in varying warzones around the world. In that respect, we actually occupy a point of view, a sight of an extracorporeality, a specific vantage point in an extraterritoriality to do geopolitical deeds with our weapon arsenal.

Yet in *Warfighters*, unlike many other FPS games, a constant emphasis is put on the sentient homefront subjectivity of the warrior as well. Not only we witness the relationship issues of a warrior, but also subtly experience how the bonds between the homefront and the battlefront affects the

fighting capability of soldiers. This responsibilises us to support the troops, even if we do not support the war effort. Moreover, we also see how soldiers emotionally and corporeally risk and sacrifice their lives to protect their beloved ones in the homefront, by taking the fight to the enemy in other parts of the world. This refers to the classical binary opposition of IR, which supposes a domesticised orderly self in the inside, and an anarchic and violent Other at the outside. By lending the eye/I view of a warrior, and by making us personally exercise the survival motive of the warrior/state, *Warfighters* subtly shares this `geopolitical truth` with us. Thus, basing its precepts of belligerence to such dichotomic cues, *Warfighters* communicates three aspects of the GWoT narrative (1) constant need for warriors, (2) constant need to grant warriors to have an access to wars, (3) and constant need to brutally take the fight to the enemy.

7.3. Battlefield 4

7.3.1. Introduction

Battlefield 4 (*BF4*) (Battlefield 4, 2014) is a first-person shooter video game developed by the American video game company EA. Being the twelfth instalment of the Battlefield franchise, it can be played on various platforms. Unlike other games, players will assume the role of solely one character throughout the entire campaign: Sergeant Daniel "Reck" Recker. Nevertheless, players will be able to execute squad commands through Recker. The game`s changes include a less linear single-player, destructible and interactable environment with a more open sandbox multiplayer feel. EA DICE claim that the single-player and multiplayer experiences will allow players to feel a seamless transition between the two modes (2013).

The campaign is set in the year 2020, six years after the events of the previous game, *BF3*. While the War of 2014 has ended, tensions between the US and Russia are at an all-time high. Meanwhile, Admiral Chang, the main antagonist, looks to overthrow the Chinese government by blaming the US for the assassination of Jin Jié, the country's future leader and voice of peace. If successful, China would gain Russia's full support, resulting in all-out war with the United States. Hence, tasked with stopping Chang and preventing another great war, we embark on a geopolitical journey through embodying Recker.

7.3.2. Production, Politics and Paratext

BF4`s production phase, development goals, marketing strategy, hence framing are different than the two previous games. First, while the two earlier games are produced and framed through the technical assistance of military consultants, for *BF4*, EA did not engage with veterans. Instead, as the developers put it clearly, storytelling aspects become their main focus and they wanted to find inspirations in Hollywood films. The company stated that “it does not look at the military, but to the Hollywood for

much of its inspiration" (Olsen, 2013). As a result, as part of an ongoing marketing campaign for the series, EA made an agreement with *Paramount Television* and *Anonymous Content* for a Battlefield TV series (EA, 2016). *Anonymous Content* is known for producing the Oscar winning film, *The Revenant* (2015) and famed TV series, *Mr. Robot* and *True Detective*. Hence, apart from the two tie-in books (Grimsdale, 2013; Robinson, 2013), with *Battlefield 4*, EA chose to develop and underline the visual, narrative and visceral elements of the shooting series and continues to do so, instead of authenticating itself through direct military paratexts. As Patrick Bach from EA says:

> *There's a big shift in mindset at the studio when it comes to creating experience rather than just creating technology ... Next-gen needs to be more than just more polygons. To us, it's like, how do we evolve the gameplay? How do we evolve the narrative? How do we evolve the things around the technology? How do we make it more Battlefield? ... How do you get people to care about the characters, is also lifting the bar, rather than just doing the stereotypical stupid shooter, where you don't care about the missions or why you're doing what you're doing, and why do these guys around you even exist?* (Yin-Poole, 2013, para.18)

FPS "games [in general] drew inspiration from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the real-life exploits of the Special Forces. Studios often worked in collaboration with former members of the United States military" (Streitfeld, 2013, para.14). Nevertheless, with *BF4,* EA chose to develop its gaming experience with the player, deliver a more emotional, engaging and impactful story, rather than simply offering authentic military nuts and bolts directly cloned from the experiences of the veterans of the GWoT. In this sense, paratextually, with *BF4* we see a change towards a more cinematic, emotional and experience-based focus in shooter games.

> *The most surprising part of Battlefield 4's reveal was DICE's desire to tell a more emotional story that the team hopes will touch and affect the player ... The opening moments of the game sees your team trapped inside a car that's slowly sinking in water, with soldiers panicking about what to do next. With your squad leader Duun trapped in the wreckage, he gives you his gun and orders you to shoot out the window to escape before you're all killed."* (Reynolds, 2013)

Also, the game`s campaign mode is designed to give an open sandbox environment to the player for tactical freedom. Hence a balance between player autonomy for tactical freedom and player experience for emotional engagement with the gaming is aimed. "Using a vehicle, for example, you're able to drive around and engage enemies however you want to. Destructibility is also key to this more open experience" (Reynolds, 2013, para.8). For instance, a new environmental destruction feature called "levolution" had been developed to enable the players to interact with the environment for this very reason. This means, if the player wants to take out a sniper on a rooftop, instead of shooting him/her directly, its environmental settings can be targeted. Therefore, you can destruct the balcony or part of

the building and kill the enemy with a larger and indirect hit. Or the player can merely enjoy the ability to interact with the environment and destruct it.

> *A bigger priority is making the game more vivid. Video games aspire to the level of virtual reality, where the players are in so deep that they forget they are in a game. There is nothing that shooter players hate more than a lack of cause and effect. It breaks the dream* (Streitfeld, 2013, para,47).

Nonetheless, while the game was dropping the marketing strategy of direct military references with *BF4*, and while trying to develop its narrative content, the storyline continues to be based on a vaguely defined geopolitical reasoning and enemy formation. Geopolitics is again cut out of the narrative, and warring itself is offered as a reasoning for global enmities. As Tobias Dahl from EA says:

> *we wanted to explore real people's reactions and actions inside that world, rather than tell the story about the geopolitics. Of course there will be a geopolitical reason for the war, but that's not necessarily the story we want to tell. It's much more interesting to see desperate people taking desperate actions to achieve their goals in this war, rather than have scenes of politicians sitting around a table talking about solving the war. That's what we're trying to explore this time around.* (Yin-Poole, 2013)

Notwithstanding these might seem to be purely marketing oriented alterations to avoid *MoH:W*`s sales, they reveal three important aspects on convergence culture: (1) Increased focus on player engagement and autonomy, (2) Increased importance of storytelling and cinematographic features over geopolitical context (3) embeddedness of the players into the convergence culture to the degree that they are expected to fill in geopolitical lacunas and cohere gaming story themselves. This means, they do not need ultimate geopolitical reasoning to immerse themselves as a shooter into such gameplays, or the direct military authentication. The emotional engagement of the players with the characters can make them embody the necessary reasoning of war-making. Hence, players and fans can cohere the narrative themselves through their surrounding symbiosis of militarizing convergence culture, and they do not need so much authenticity. Rather, they need engagement and experience. In other words, the symbiotic relationship tipped at a level where entertainment industry does not need to convey or authenticate itself in the eyes of the players through the consultancy of veteran soldiers, military-industrial framing, and geopolitical contextualisation.

7.3.3. Initiation, Immersion and Diegetisation

While the two previous games begin with fast-paced action scenes, *BF4* begins with a Bonnie Tyler song: "*Total Eclipse of the Heart*". The camera steadily pans down underwater. Someone is heard saying: "I don't wanna die to this song". And suddenly we see a four-man squad stuck in a sinking car in the sea near Baku. We begin to see through the eye/I of "Recker" who is seated in front of the wheel. Other characters try to wake us up and thereby immerse us in the gameplay. Whereas Pac and Irish are in

panic, the one stuck in the back, Dunn, seems to be wounded, passes me his gun: "Recker, take my gun. It`s yours now". Despite the protests of Irish and Pac, Dunn continues: "For the wolf to survive, it`s got to chew off its own leg. Fire!". While Dunn orders me to shoot the window to save ourselves, Irish asks me not to do it. Without any other option, I pull the trigger, and the scene cuts to 14 minutes earlier.

I suddenly find myself alone in an alleyway of a deserted building and start running to find my way. A caption emerges: "Reach the Safe House". When I find a door to open, suddenly someone points his gun at me, yet his recognizable face relieves when he sees mine. Thereafter, another squad-mate comes in from another door. They chatter over the identity of the enemy and whether they retrieved the intel. Next, over the radio, we learn that Irish is "coming hot" and requesting "cover fire". Pac tells me that I can get some ammo from the weapons crate next to me. In a few seconds a gunfight ensues which continues on our way to the extraction point with several intervals.

However, this time the gameplay allows us to operate in a vast terrain similar to a sandbox environment. I can manoeuvre across the area, try alternative routes to reach the extraction point, and even choose different tracks to attack the enemy. And in about ten minutes, after a series of gunfights, we almost reach the extraction point. Yet an attack helicopter begins to strike us. Although we circumvent the successive explosions, when we almost reach our extraction helicopter at the top of the building, a bigger explosion causes the parts of the building to collapse. Our helicopter gets hit and begins to crash down on us. As it gets closer to me, its blades begin to whiz pass my legs while I was crawling backwards. And all in a sudden the whole storey collapses and everyone begins to slide down the building.

A few seconds later, I see Dunn lying next to a pool of blood gushing from his leg. Apparently, his right leg is crushed underneath the rubble. He wants me to cut it off: "A wolf stuck in a trap will chew its own leg off to survive". Hence, for a second time, I listen to his orders, and cut his leg off. He passes out from pain instantly.

Although the sandbox environment allows us to manoeuvre in the area, the main rules and orders within the gameplay do not offer alternatives. To continue to experience the game, the player has to cooperate with the designed field of possible actions of the narrative. Thereafter, we get a car and try to escape from the enemy helicopter with it. On our way, it strikes again. While shooting it down with a grenade launcher, I lose the control of the car, and the car jumps to the sea. It is the moment where we get back to the beginning scene.

In that regard, the opening sequences of *BF4* orbit around four aspects: omnipresence of an enemy, the role of friendship and trust between the teammates, which is overlaid with a clear understanding of the chain of command, and the role of sacrifice. Therefore, the key role of the protagonist we embody is set

from the onset to obeying the orders and commanding the squad after Dunn`s sacrifice. In that sense, the opening sequences initiate the game by the means of a subjective rhetoric and aim to situate the player within the world of Recker. Sticking to a single character embodiment simplifies the viewer`s transition and interaction with the narrative world of the gameplay. The immersion ability of the player is thereby uninterrupted. Hence, the player does not find itself in an over enthusiastically authentic world of geopolitics inspired by non-fictive accounts of real SOF operators` memories. The player finds a rather stable subjectivity to embody, and thereby it can carve out its own niche in the construction of the story world and geopolitical experience. This is how, starting from *BF4*, EA aimed to stabilise the gaming experience and narrative engagement of the player.

7.3.4. Recurrent Themes & Visuals

1. Desensitization/Desanitization:

As in other games, when we pull the trigger to kill an enemy combatant, we understand whether our shot has reached the targeted body from the splash of blood. Yet, the blood splashes from the enemy body as a red mist. Hence the gameplay does not hide the 'real world' consequences of our actions. It simplifies the issue of killing under the generic of red miasma of blood visualisation. Red mist also implies someone being overwhelmed by anger to the extent that rational self-reflection is no longer possible. As will be seen in the next theme, "sin-eating", while the player is making sacrifices and trying to survive, the moral weight of killing becomes less concerning.

2. Sin-Eating (The Ordering of Things):

From the beginning, we are ordered to make sacrifices in *BF4*. Although the players are seemingly in control, vested with power/authority to make choices, at certain instances, there are no options. In the beginning scene, I had to actuate the gameplay by shooting the window; in the following scene, I had to attack the enemy, and cut the leg of my friend. In another mission, I had to leave the drowning soldiers unaided. Only in the last mission, the player is asked to make a choice to whom to sacrifice: your good old black friend, or the Asian woman who helped the squad during the last missions. Therefore, you, as the player, are not allowed to do the job yourself, you are only allowed to make a choice within the remits of given options. Hence, while in other cases the sin-eating theme is used to render the questionability of killings categorically moral, in *BF4*, the necessity of making sacrifices in war is rendered normal. Put differently, not killing the Other, but making self-sacrifices is underlined as a necessary stake for the survival of the *flock*.

3. There be dragons: Geotagging/Sin-Easter Egg Hunting

According to this theme, the world is a hideout swarming with enemies. Only at the sight of gunpoint the reality of their true intents can be revealed. Therefore, hard power, the use of violence is a necessity

to keep the world in order and in peace. This necessitates absolute obedience: you should play your part as a warrior. As once we are told by Kovic, a spooky CIA agent who commands our squad during the gameplay: "We are all in the dark about what`s happening, marines. But this is your opportunity to help shed some light. Don`t fuck it up." On the way to the carrier, Irish questions the motive of Kovic: "What exactly are we eyes on for, Agent?", he retorts, "Sit back and enjoy the ride, Marine. You will be briefed when we get there." "You`re leading us to the unknown, what`s to enjoy?", "You`re here to do a job, and I`m calling the fucking shots". Hence, similar to the overall gaming experience, the reasoning we base our conducts on are actually ambiguous. Should we question the mission, the game, the action, or the agent in each step? Or should we just enjoy the ride, the gameplay, and experience each level by killing more to reveal more?

4. Intuitions against Institutions: Take Action

Although we mostly see Irish as a humanist soldier who has problems with orders and authority, the theme makes itself felt mostly through the necessity of sacrifice. During the cutscene bridging the first two missions, over the radio, we hear Captain Garrison and Oracle chatter. When Garrison learns that the intel gathered in this operation was already known by the officials, he asks: "So Staff Sergeant Dunn was killed for something we already knew?". Oracle retorts, "There's rioting in the streets of Shanghai, Captain, and the Russians are getting involved. We needed to know for sure. That we had to lock down Suez is delicate enough. One wrong move and we're talking war". Hence, we learn that Dunn not only sacrificed himself, he was sacrificed to confirm an already known intelligence. In another instant, in the third mission, called "South China Sea", we are taken to board a stricken US Navy carrier to locate another valuable intel.

A few minutes after boarding the carrier, while trying to locate the intel, we find survivors in the ship, stuck under the floor. Irish, determined to save them, is ordered by Kovic to stick to the mission. Concerned with the sailors` lives, and defiant to the orders, Irish punches Kovic in the face. While Irish empathetically tries to save the sailors, Kovic contemplates the prospect of not being able to save them before the already sinking ship drown them too. Hence, we leave the sailors to their faiths for the benefit of the flock. Similar sacrifices are made or ordered to be made in almost all the episodes of *BF4*. Hence, the main narrative of *BF4* is built around the necessity of sacrifice for the greater good.

5. Voiceless Other:

While there are instances where we can see the face of the enemy we kill, we never hear the Other talking, even through subtitles. All we know about their cause is limited to what is briefly told to us by the Captain. Accordingly, the reason of violence originates from the assassination of a Chinese politician

who “was on deck for presidency. Progressive [who] pushed the government for transparency, fairness, freedom of speech” by a warmongering faction entailing Russians and the Chinese. Therefore, as this faction will lead a war against the US which represents “democratic freedoms” in the world, we need to kill them before they do so. Nevertheless, before embarking on a mission in China to secure a VIP asset, Captain orders us: “Unless absolutely necessary, do not fire your weapons”. However, despite our orders, we will need to use our weapons very much due to the belligerent nature of our enemies.

Therefore, by contrast, everything the Other represents is iterated through undemocratic, warmongering, authoritarian, and insentient hostility, devoid of any domesticity. Nevertheless, the American soldiers are depicted as the complete opposite of those generic features. For instance, during such a hard time, the US tries to secure the Chinese, make room for over four hundred refugees and make sacrifices outwardly for world peace and freedom of speech. Yet, the freedom allowed to the player is limited by a martial code in the gameplay. While we have options to strike with different weapons and tracks, we do not have options for alternative solutions.

6. Voiced Self/The Hero:

The player has a place in the chain of command, and he is regularly reminded of his duties by the game mechanics and by his teammates. Thus, his ability to voice itself is limited with the overall narrative of the gameplay, and hence the freedom of weapon choice. While in other games, we can see the protagonist from an outside perspective, in *BF4*, we never see him from a third perspective. Instead, we see through him. From the very onset of the gameplay, we assume his eyes/I, role and situatedness. This assumption, both enables and disables our agency as a seemingly active subject and observer. Put differently, once we embody Recker, we become a combat asset, therefore, the player is set to actuate the gameplay, not its self. Therefore, as the game often prompts the current objective to the screen in an imperative verb form; anytime the player has an interaction with one of his teammates, we take an order. These orders range from sacrificing a friend`s life for a greater good, driving a car to killing the enemy. For instance, during the first mission, a teammate breaks the radio silence to locate another teammate, who informs them that he is coming in ‘hot’ and needs cover fire. Following his request, the player approaches a window and he is prompted with the mission objective on the screen ‘Protect Irish’. As a result, the player locks, loads and prepares for the fire fight. And hence, the agency of the player is mediated and actuated through game-imposed orders, which keep the player focused on the objective at hand.

7. Visual Drills/Joys of Combat:

This theme is sustained throughout the game. The freedom of choice given to the player is limited with a freedom choosing a weapon. Despite the game`s improved visualisations, expanded area of mobility allowing improvisations to attack differently, and enhanced player engagement with the protagonist, its agency is again limited with weapon selection. Moreover, while the player could customise its weapons in Wargfighter, in *BF4*, it is not possible to do so. As seen in the image below, the player could choose its weapon out of a menu. As in other games, the menu details the technical features of each weapon. This entails the range of fire, damage, accuracy and stability of the weapons. Via the gameplay, a player can give a try to the different guns used around the world. Hence, the game can also be seen as a gun-range enabling the player to experience weapons` technical details.

7.3.5. The Un-Scene Affects

I felt myself affected by the game specifically in three instances in *BF4*. The first is when I fell down and crawling on my back to deter the approaching helicopters` blades as though they are literally passing through my legs. The sound, the image, the proximity, everything was affectively harrowing. At that moment, I moved my body and head backwards. The second is when we were swimming underwater in the sinking ship. The slow movement of underwater swimming caused me to lean my head to sides, as if I am inside the water and trying to make those movements myself. Third is a more diffused feature as whenever I try to dodge bullets and need to crouch or duck, I synchronically aligned my body movement with the character I embodied in the screen. Hence, as in other gameplays, the game moved me affectively, more than I moved the game. In other words, the imaginary space within the gameplay harnessed my body and turned it into an operational space, more than I tried to harness it due to the design of the gameplay.

7.3.6. The Sequence of Events/Post Hoc Fallacies

As in *BF3*, the player in *BF4* embodies a character trying to avert a war. Yet, while in the former we risk ourselves to deter war, in the latter we sacrifice our friends. Hence, each gameplay underlines a new reflection on the stakes of war, and as aforementioned, *BF4*, similar to *Warfighters*, is built around the theme of sacrifice. In almost each mission, we witness a sacrifice, and mostly we actuate it. In this sense, while in previous FPS examples, the sequences are woven to represent violent action as a necessity to survive in the gameplay, or to protect the homeland, in *BF4*, the sequences are aligned to reveal the necessity of sacrifice to reach moral consequences. Hence, *BF4* puts us in a position to experience the burden of sacrificing people, rather than showing a sentimentally torn protagonist. Although most of the cases analysed are woven through sequences overlaying warrior subjectivities with bodily vulnerabilities and sentimental features, in *BF4*, these features are not overtly communicated, but left to the player experience. Put simply, the player is used as an added layer in the gameplay. Hence, although we watch the sentimental impacts of geopolitics on the warriors in previous cases, *BF4* aims

the player to embody, witness and act. Thus, not only killing, but also sacrificing is made necessary to solving geopolitical problems.

7.3.7. Conclusion

In this vein, four interrelated aspects of *BF4* deserve emphasis: (1) Prioritisation of gaming experience, (2) increased sense of agency, (3) necessity of sacrifice, (4) command structure. As mentioned, following *Warfighters*, EA Games decided to prioritise players` gaming experience over sticking to authenticity. This led the company to improve the narrative and filmographic aspects of the game and find inspiration in Hollywood (Olsen, 2013), instead of military consultants. Thus, *BF4* came with a new game engine, offering better graphics and narrative flow. Moreover, gamers play *BF4*`s campaign mode through a single character embodiment, as opposed to *BF3`s* and *Warfighters*` transient character shifts. This provided a better gaming experience, a sturdier narrative engagement, and a sense of agency.

As the player is constantly referred to by the same name, and is endowed with a limited yet relatively extended sandbox environment, *BF4* empowers players to exercise their agencies. To compare with other games, while *BF3* and *Warfighters* offer an authentic war experience to players through paratexts and military consultants, *BF4* enables players to authenticate their own war experiences by expanding their field of actions. In addition to that, in almost each mission, the player is ordered to make sacrifices. While each FPS game necessitates players to shoot and kill enemies, *BF4*`s sustained emphasis on sacrificing friends allows players to feel a contradictory sense of agency on war-making as well. For instance, cutting a teammate`s leg, or leaving them behind are all presented as necessary steps to take either for self-survival, or for the benefit of the flock, or the mission. At such moments, we see how the limits of our agencies in war are defined by “mission comes first” rhetoric, or self-survival motive. Therefore, *BF4* both individualises and totalises our sense of agency just as pastoral power operates (Foucault, 1982).

Agency is defined as ‘socioculturally mediated capacity to act’ (Ahearn, 2010, p.28). Yet, through the enforcement of the game’s pop-up commands and the chain of command structure imposed by the teammates, the player both gains a simulated sense of agency to act, and at the same time loses the space to exercise the same agency. In other words, the player devolves this sociocultural capacity on the gameplay design. As such, the player becomes a subject of the system in a twofold manner, first, via the imposition of the game’s mechanisms; and second, through constant commands by teammates. Therefore, by letting us in on geopolitics, the game invites us to experience and realise the causes and necessities of war in a personal way.

8. Conclusion: *Observing the International through the Eye/I of the Subject*

8.1. Introduction

This thesis situates itself in the ongoing discussions taking place in critical geopolitics, popular geopolitics, and critical military studies, and advances them by analysing visual culture through the perspective of governmentality. As pointed out, the recent decade has seen the proliferation of geopolitical studies focusing on popular culture (Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Grayson et al., 2009). However, these studies tend to "focus on textual deconstruction that neglects the practices and performances that mark much of the everyday experience of the geopolitical" (Dittmer & Gray, 2010, p.1664). Thus, by attending to the practices available to everyday people relating and embroiling them to geopolitics, I showed how we can empirically examine and identify the ways in which geopolitics take shape and is experienced in everyday lives. Put differently, I demonstrated how certain geopolitical actions and imaginations find their niche in everyday lives by focusing on the diffused practices themselves to see how visual culture conditions the social dimensions and possibilities of understanding and conducting geopolitics.

In this sense, arguing that the diffused formation of power is embedded and manifest in everyday social practices, I examined the recurring patterns forming those practices in visual culture and the associated techniques and tactics employed to draw the attention of the viewers to those visual practices. Rather than aiming to offer a theoretical orthodoxy to understand the role of everyday practices in the operation of geopolitical power, I showed how governmentality framework can be applied to geopolitics through visual culture and the GWoT (Grondin, 2014, p.8), and methodologically examined it in an empirical way. By doing so, I identified the recurring techniques and patterns employed in the mainstream US visual culture that are rendering geopolitics available to everyday people during the GWoT.

Moreover, identifying those everyday visual practices as geopolitical technologies of the self, I argued that visual culture converges and ensnares our everyday subjectivities with the geopolitical conduct of the GWoT from an embodied personal perspective. This does not indicate that people turn into unvariegated uniform subjects following these practices. Rather, I argue that diffused availability of such practices and patterns reinforce each other in an intertextual way and offer subjects a wider arena to modulate their subjectivities in varying degrees. This is why not everyone turns into an enlisted citizen-soldier or an active supporter of the geopolitical. However, through such channels, sufficient

number of people pledge their support to the conduct of geopolitics and warfare. This shows us (1) how the diffused formation and micro-operation of geopolitical conduct in liberal democratic societies are sustained through visual culture and (2) how geopolitical power operates, and is orchestrated through everyday lives as an apolitical and personal issue that aims to devolve, diffuse and share the risks, burdens and responsibilities of geopolitics to everyday people.

Hence, rather than a direct causality, I show how visual culture structures the conditions of possibility for geopolitical conduct. Put differently, I do not argue that macro-power, an elitist, top-down agency simply intrudes, dupes and abducts the agency of the society for its own aims. Rather, I argue that, the geopolitical patterns practiced in everyday lives enable human beings to turn themselves into geopolitical subjects whereby aiding them to pattern themselves on the mundaneness and routine conduct of geopolitical practices. Moreover, these enable them to embody and personalise geopolitics. In this vein, neither the agency of the micro-power, nor the agency of the macro-power is overlooked. Rather, as in governmentality perspective, I tried to understand the practical ways in which these two dimensions of power amalgamate into each other and diffuse the operation of geopolitical conduct. Therefore, I argue that the mainstream visual culture of the US-led GWoT reinforces a composite narrative that practically offers a shared personal ownership of geopolitics. Although not everyone practices and embodies the same geopolitical experiences and narratives, and do not turn into uniform geopolitical subjects, many people modulate their subjectivity by consecutively interacting with the same patterns, and by referencing and negotiating with similar fields. And by showcasing concurrent and recurrent patterns diffused in the mainstream US visual culture, I pointed out one of the most influential social sources and breeding grounds of the US geopolitical conduct.

The calls for popular geopolitics 2.0 (Dittmer & Gray, 2010) put the emphasis on everyday practices, while the popular geopolitics 3.0 (Bos, 2015) aims to broaden this emphasis beyond the screen for a holistic approach, to factor in the production, representation and consumption aspects. Yet, in many respects while aligning itself with both approaches, this study`s main focus was the geopolitical subject, its practices, and the techniques and tactics deployed to immerse subjects into the world of visual culture in a convergent continuum. In accordance with this emphasis, *governmentality* and technologies of the self are employed in the thesis to understand how geopolitical power reproduces and organises itself in a diffused manner.

Why is it important? While many studies continue to focus on the ubiquity of victimised bodies (Wilcox, 2015), omnipresence of drones (Gregory, 2011) and hence the operation of techno-military power (Der Derian, 2008), this study enables and invites us to look at the perpetrators as geopolitical subjects. By analysing the everyday practices and patterns embedded and employed in visual culture, we can see how the operation of geopolitical power is inducted, diffused and reinforced. While both the drones and the victims of those drones are components of infamously bureaucratised kill chains (Gregory, 2011) of

the GWoT, merely focusing on them obstructs our view to understand how GWoT diffuses its mentality, justifies its violent scope, and finds its perpetrators that underpins it socially through everyday lives.

Merely focusing on the techno-military sources of geopolitical power, or solely underlining the unseen bodies and victims of geopolitics sustains a neo-orientalist perspective that neglects the everyday complicity, reproduction and operation of power. It also confines our critiques of geopolitics to a top-down political dimension. In that sense, current study, while theoretically and methodologically contributing to the recent discussions in the study of geopolitics (Bos, 2015; 2016; Dittmer & Dodds, 2008; 2013; Dittmer & Gray, 2010) also provides a counter-hegemonic attitude and a critical tool to the power/knowledge framework of IR and PG studies.

In what follows, first, I briefly reinterpret the theoretical dimension of the thesis through visual geopolitics. Second, I demonstrate how this thesis contributed to IR and PG literatures. Third, I discuss my findings, and fourth, I summarise the directions that can be thrusted through this research. In the sixth section, the thesis is completed by concluding observations.

8.2. Visual Geopolitics

Recent decades witnessed the enormous development of visual culture and its extensive ability in connecting countless people, various social realms, and different spatiotemporal settings into each other across the globe. Furthermore, the roles of globality and advances in internet technology helped visuality to expand its power and reach as well. As a result, a universal medium and a global grid-system emerged as a diffused, visually confined, ostensible freedom. As argued by Mirzoeff:

> *"In 2012, more than a third of the world`s population had access to the Internet, up 566 percent since 2000. It`s not just Europe and America that are connected [...] By the end of 2014, an estimated 3 billion people were online. By the end of the decade, Google envisages 5 billion people on the Internet. This is not just another form of mass media. It is the first universal medium"* (2015, pp.5-6).

Yet this visual and global connectivity is promulgated and consolidated by the development of a variety of popular digital devices and their on-screen practices as well. Among them, most prominently, were the inventions of FPS games in 1992, GoPro in 2002, YouTube in 2005, and Google Street View and iPhone in 2007. Each of these inventions instigated their own spill over trends, by-products and on-screen social practices as well. While the invention of FPS games, for instance, provided us with a new entertainment frenzy where we can embody a shooter to kill enemy combatants from a personal yet apolitical perspective, GoPro took this allowed embodied perspective of seeing from someone else` point of view to a new edge. While YouTube provided us the digital space to view and share almost everything we can visualise; Google Street View enabled us to view and map the world as though we are there, and iPhone permitted us to exercise, carry and pass these visual features everywhere with us via

touch-screen operated devices. Put simply, we began to guide and mediate ourselves in the world with these common visual features anywhere, anytime, on-screen and on-demand.

Therefore, arguably, such mediums holistically blurred the lines between our eye/I views and our viewing spaces. "In 1990, you had to go to a cinema to see films, to an art gallery to see art, or visit someone`s house to see their photographs. Now we do all that online [...] Networks have redistributed and expanded the viewing space" (Ibid., p.12). Hence, on the one hand, (1) they transfused our subjectivities by enabling us to lend the eye/I of another subject and to walk the world in their shoes; on the other, (2) they also diffused and transcended the conventional limits of our visual practices that are delineating our "specific viewing spaces", such as cinemas, TV sets, concert halls, and educational edifices. (3) Thereby, despite their variety, they standardised and cultured the ways in which we see the world and world events. As a result, visual practices spilled over into many instances of life and converged everyday people in a visual culture as well.

As the implications of visual culture as a fact of everyday life reverberated across the disciplines, to understand its wide-ranging interferences in world politics, a plethora of studies in the fields of IR and PG have emerged as well. These studies have sought to address the implications of visual culture in world politics through films, comic books, video games and the arts as well. Nonetheless, while most of these studies analysed the representative aspects of these mediums, a recent focus has been directed to their non-representative impacts as well (Bos, 2016; Carter & McCormack, 2006; Dodds, 2016; Eken, 2016). However, this attention also revealed the methodological challenges inherent in the discipline to understand the impacts of visual culture in world politics. As Bleiker put it, "[i]mages play an increasingly important role in global politics but pose significant and so far largely unexplored methodological challenges" (2015, p.872).

Hence, tackling with understanding how visual culture affects the ways in which world politics is run through the active partaking of people, this thesis addressed the theoretical and methodological challenges IR and PG literatures face. I argued that the challenge to understand the implications of visual culture in world politics, is not only methodological, but also theoretical. By applying Foucault`s governmentality approach to the mainstream US visual culture during the GWoT, I exemplified how and why visual cultural practices should be scrutinised as "technologies of the self", how visual culture is governmentalized and thereby the population is embroiled in the geopolitics of the GWoT.

Governmentalisation refers to the structuring of the possible field of actions of the population (Foucault, 1994). This means, power does not work from a dictating centre, rather it works through the cooperation of the population in a diffused sense. Yet such a diffused operation of power inevitably requires a certain subjecthood: free to operate on its own, nevertheless, only within the confines in which it is embedded. In this sense, technologies of the self is the key concept to understand the diffused operation of power.

Foucault (1988) argued that, through practising certain technologies, such as self-development, improvement, and actuating practices, human beings socialise and turn themselves into subjects that are necessary for the operation of power. On the one hand, while people could learn and see the world through certain practices to become a sovereign of their authentic selfhood, on the other, through the same practices people gradually turn themselves into political subjects, ready to take the ownership of their roles as citizens with vested personal interests in the operation of the system. In this sense, people re-confine themselves with new ways of engaging with the world, while transcending their prior limitations.

For instance, visual culture, is historically regarded as a tool to educate and emancipate people from subjugation. "For nearly two hundred years the camera stood as a sovereign metaphor for describing the status of an observer and as a model [...] of how observation leads to truthful inferences about the world" (Crary, 1988, p.3). It is believed that the interferences with the world through the utilisation of camera could allow us to acquire truthful inferences about the world, authenticate our subjective hold on it, and enlighten our selfhood in it. Nevertheless, these new abilities were not merely disclosing the reality and emancipating people. They were also obscuring/objectifying the reality by revealing it in standardised ways. Hence, new vision abilities were actually confining people into a certain vision of the world and of a specific observing regime.

In this sense, governmentality of geopolitics through visual culture refers to the structuration of the possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations of the people through the calibration of the ways in which people envisage their roles and their states` roles in world politics. In terms of geopolitics and the GWoT, the practices offered by the mainstream US visual culture are important tools to understand how -not all but- large segments of the population, suffice to sustain the willpower and the conduct of geopolitical conduct have been in tune with the geopolitics of the GWoT. I call these practices, visual drills, or visual technologies of the geopolitical self, and argue that through those visual practices -seemingly plural, yet standardised ways of seeing-, the population procedurally modulate their subjectivities, interpret their understanding of geopolitical conduct, and eventually crafts a geopolitical subjectivity.

Therefore, states are not simply disembodied institutional entities. Rather, they are embodied intersubjectivities. This is why power does not work from a centre, and instead, work in a diffused sense. To achieve this diffused self-organisation of the population, to conduct the conduct of it, states use narratives and through narratives, states socialise (with) their citizens. Nevertheless, narratives work in this way as long as they are able to craft a sense of belonging, a sense of identification with people` own stories. If, as Bhabha (1990) put it, the nation is a narration, quoting Eco (1979), people should find themselves in those stories, and participate in the construction of those story universes of states. In other words, they should embody states` fabulas (Hven, 2017) and goals (Gallese, 2001). Visual culture,

in this sense, offers practicable visual narratives to the population and "sustain[s] the "imagined" content of the nation-state as an `imagined community` [(Anderson, 2006)]" (Mirzoeff, 2010, para.17). For instance, allowing the population to see through the eyes of states` embodiments on-the-ground, such as through the eyes of SEALs, is crucial today to socialise the population with states` extraterritorial actions (Gallese, 2001; 2012). This allows people to get, experience and even embody insider knowledge on geopolitics. The diffused formation of such images in certain patterns turns into composite narratives instructing citizens to abduct a reasoning on world politics at a personal level. Hence, understanding the role of citizens in states` stories is critical for the IR and PG literatures.

In this sense, while the roles of, for instance, museums (Bennett, 1992; 1995) and civic media (Ouellette, 2002; Ouellette & Hay, 2008a; 2008b) are analysed through the perspective of governmentality and as technologies of the self in terms of welfare states, the role of similar civic visual practices in times of war or in terms of warfare states are not studied through the same prism in IR and PG studies. Yet, arguably, the role played by print-capitalism (Anderson, 2006), novels (Boltanski, 2014), museums (Bennett, 1992; 1995) and national education systems (Gellner, Posen, 1993; Mead, 2013) of the 18th and 19th century Europe, today is developed by visual culture to craft internally pacifist and yet externally belligerent and deployable citizens. Furthermore, beyond the confines of these mediums` static spatial settings, new visual mediums offer a diffused educatory potential and an ability to mediate their citizenships (Dill-Shackleford, 2016; Grossman, 2014; Nolan, 2006; Malykhina, 2016; Mead, 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006). For instance, the recent PlayStation video game commissioned by the US Air Force offers "people the chance to free fall as a special operations airman without any prior training — virtual reality style" (Panzino, 2017, para.1). The game has been bluntly commissioned for recruitment purposes. While people can gain the much coveted experience of High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) free fall, parachute control and night landing as a special force operator, the gameplay also offers link to visit "the US Air Force website and provide a pathway if someone is interested" (Ibid.).

8.3. Contributions to Knowledge

In this context, my aim goes beyond simply demonstrating how war is visualised, or how visual culture militarises the population. Rather, I aim to understand how the population is entangled in geopolitics through visual culture and how it sustains the reason of state understanding. Therefore, I tried to show how visual culture works as a governmentality tool that functions through the diffused convergences between various media sources and people. Hence, I looked at the ways in which visual culture embroils people in geopolitics through technologies of the self. The theoretical implications of this can be summarised in three main points. First, I used a governmentality framework that can be employed to analyse the role of visual culture in geopolitics. This particular framework goes beyond a panopticonic approach, and underlines the role of the subject. Second, I broadened the perspective on the relationship between governmentality and geopolitics by re-considering the engagements offered by

visual culture as technologies of the self: practices enabling human beings to turn themselves into geopolitical subjects. Third, I introduced a new explanation for visual culture which does not regard it as a top-down imposition or an exposition of geopolitical facts but sees it as an enclosure: a possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations enmeshing the population in a seemingly open, yet closed arena through their own practices.

Nevertheless, this theoretical assumption needed to be underpinned by empirical data. To do this, I used a methodology to elicit the data that allows me to show how the convergences between visual culture, geopolitics and everyday life offer people practical templates to pattern themselves on a certain understanding of geopolitics which procedurally embroils them in the GWoT. My methodological approach, PRA, is constructed to empirically analyse the common patterns in visual cultural practices from the perspective of the viewers and players. Informed by Eco`s work on "the reader in the story" and "open texts" (1972; 1979; 1984, 1992; 2011), Bogost`s work on "procedural rhetoric" (2007), and Jenkins` "convergence culture" (2006a), this approach aims to heuristically uncover the role of governmentality in visual culture through the connections set to lead people to desired political ends via seemingly their own choices. As a result, the project contributes to the IR, PG and PCWP literatures with a theoretical and a methodological framework to understand the visual cultural aspects of the formation of the geopolitical subject. For sure, this framework is heuristically employed for practical reasons, and entails certain limitations, which will be underscored in the following sections.

In this sense, while people multiply their crossover geopolitical practices by different means in their everyday life settings, understanding the practical patterns governing and governed by them should be addressed. By analysing various patterns in documentaries, films and FPS games in five stages, I aimed to detect how these seemingly civic popular culture assets with seemingly independent narratives are woven with similar militaristic patterns regarding the GWoT. As a result, I found interdependently co-cohering thematic patterns which could be assembled together by the subjects to generate composite narratives related to the GWoT.

This five-staged analysis strategy enabled me to gradually elicit the patterns embedded in visual practices. Arguably, these practices are designed to enclose the interpretative freedoms of viewers with expected decodification processes to guide them at-a-distance in the popular world of seemingly open texts regarding the GWoT. Hence, rather than solely analysing the themes governing the narrative experiences of the viewers and players, first I analysed how these media products are produced, politically supported and paratextually marketed. This allowed me to scrutinise how these media products anchor, relate and unrelate themselves to different settings. Second, I looked at the opening sequences of each media product to see how initial moments of these narratives are designed to invite the viewers to participate in the construction of the story world. Third, the thematic patterns and visuals governing the main texture of the narratives are analysed to reveal the main guiding lines. Fourth, by

adding the affective impacts of these visual engagements on me to the equation, I showed how those narratives are designed to make the viewers affectively embody the protagonist, and enable the media to harness viewers` bodies. These affective moments are analysed through my own bodily reactions as the autoethnographic dimension of the research. Fifth, the sequences of events putting the viewer in a certain train of thought are analysed to reveal the guiding thread common in those narratives. Overall, I tried to present how the empirical applicability of governmentality to visual culture and geopolitics is possible through analysing the recurring patterns embedded in everyday media practices and concurrent techniques employed to draw the attention of people into the GWoT.

8.4. Findings: *Human Shielding of Geopolitics*

I began this thesis by positing the importance of the mainstream US visual culture in terms of geopolitics. Regarding visual culture as a globalised governmentality tool, I argued that during the GWoT, by endowing the population with a variety of ways of observing the international, the mainstream US visual culture monopolised the vision of seeing geopolitical conduct and harnessed the population to sustain its geopolitical agenda at home and abroad. Moreover, I argued that, instead of revealing or exposing a truth about geopolitics, mainstream US visual culture offers practicable visual narratives as an enclosure. Thus, under the seeming diversity of visual practices enabling people to observe the international lies an overarching organising pattern related to the GWoT. In this sense, while the population is observing the various aspects of the wars waged abroad with seemingly differentiated media tools, narratives and protagonists, and while a variety of devices to observe the international which are enabling new autonomies and subjective vision abilities to people under the guise of new possibilities, they are simultaneously allowing new forms of control and standardization of vision too. Therefore, visual culture endows people with templates to contemplate on geopolitics, and patterns to pattern themselves on geopolitics. However, I do not claim that such practicable visual narratives are pushed forward directly by the US state. As shown in the case studies, the US state makes intrusions to change the way the narratives are told, or commission certain narratives and offer support for them. However, once the structure of certain narratives gains popular traction, they become popularised and gain their own foothold to be told over and over again in popular culture.

To support my claim, by applying PRA to three documentaries, three films, and three FPS video games, from the mainstream US visual culture regarding the GWoT, I found out that, while they seemingly offer a reality on US wars from the perspective of different US warriors, what they offer is a standardised view on war. Thus, I showed how the main tenets of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006a) are at work in the way the GWoT and geopolitics is told and re-told by the mainstream US visual culture. To verify my claims, I found recurring patterns and complementing arguments across diverse media assets. In this sense, whereas documentaries analysed claim to inform the audience with `true stories`, films claim to base their tales on `true stories`, and FPS video games claim to offer the audience to play their roles in

these geopolitical stories. In this sense, audiences find various possibilities to track, collect and enact geopolitics and the GWoT through visual culture.

Hence, instead of dictating a justification at the face value, through practicable visual narratives, these media sets invite viewers and players alike to experience geopolitics by stepping in the shoes of generic characters and cotton on to certain cause and effect relationships of the GWoT. Furthermore, these narratives can be gradually unpacked by the population at various instances in the continuum of various visual practices. Thus, mainstream US visual culture should be studied as a continuum which offers a monopolised understanding of the GWoT through certain design and thematic patterns in many different everyday life settings.

The findings I carved out during my case studies on these patterns offer two data sets: design patterns, common to all the cases analysed; thematic patterns, governing the storylines embedded in these media practices. Following a brief review of these findings, below, I discuss the wider implications of those practices as depoliticization and personalisation of geopolitics.

Design Patterns:

The result of my findings indicates that these media products are not self-evident instances, narratives and representations. They are practices needed to be actuated by the collaboration of viewers. Moreover, they all depend on a paratextual relationship beyond the confines of the medium. This means, the viewers are yet to complete the meaning offered by these mediums with the intertextual support they can find in other media, and thereby they can continue to experience the same meaning in their journeys outside the current text. Therefore, the seemingly democratic, self-organised, independent multiplicity of the intertextual environment offers an organised, dependent and monopolistic aid in terms of geopolitics. Furthermore, whilst offering an encyclopaedic aid to fill in the gaps, this environment is also patterned on common patterns across the media laden with a certain understanding of geopolitics.

Hence, the viewers are initiated into a geopolitical understanding, which is woven together with similar patterns. And this commonality sustains the immersion process, and influences the viewers` interpretative freedoms, and guide them to decode these patterns in a certain way. Their immersion is buttressed by the affective moments during the media practices. These affects guide the viewers to affectively decode the narratives, and underscore the sentimental aspects of the GWoT from a single perspective. Yet, as each media offer another protagonists` personal story, an ostensible pluralism monopolises the GWoT narratives. The sequences of events in these narratives also sustain a specific cause and effect relationship pertaining to geopolitics through which the viewers embody, employ and rationalise the protagonists` world view and acts. Put simply, viewers understand why protagonists act in the way they did and had to do so. For instance, if protagonists dare to not exert violence, they simply

die. Therefore, to secure the order of the homeland, the fight is expected to be taken to the world of international disorder.

Thematic Patterns:

Moreover, in terms of patterns analysed under the title of "recurrent themes and visuals", I found seven recurring motifs as mentioned in Chapter 4, which can be summarised under four conceptual headings: the onus, sin-eating, gut-feelings/intuitive action, and the first-person. They are not pre-existing categories, rather, I reached them following a complex colour-coding analysis I employed in each case through PRA. While some of those categories were expected prior to my analyses, some emerged to my surprise during the process. Below, following a brief review of these categories, I underline and discuss the implications of two patterns I found unexpectedly during the analysis process thanks to PRA`s thematic and sequential analysis stages.

Similar to what Rose meant by responsibilisation (Rose, 1990), these motifs offer a role to fulfil to the audience which leads them to self-knowledge and self-mastery. This role is lent to the audience by a particular eye/I view of a US warrior. It enables them to embody war-making from psychologically sophisticated, socially endorsed, corporeally vulnerable, and externally daring and heroic subject positions. This positions asks and permits the subjects to act and exert violence when necessary, by following the situatedness and the gut-feelings of the warrior. Hence, bundled with the hero`s first-person vision, these experience-based motifs initiate us into geopolitics and allow us to visually "embody the intended goal" (Gallese, 2001) of the state. And this initiation process is made continuous through other mediums. Gradually, we internalise geopolitics and the conduct of the GWoT as a realm of personal survival, which lead us to render certain moral misconducts that are based on intuitions as personally taken international actions, that are objective, necessary, inevitable and just.

Discussion: Intuitive Action & Depoliticization and Personalisation of Geopolitics

In this sense, as transitional (Graham & Shaw, 2010) "thinking spaces" (Carter & McCormack, 2006) to contemplate on geopolitics, documentaries, films and video games (Salter, 2007; Power, 2007) embed viewers in a possible field of geopolitical actions and imaginations. Nevertheless, rather than being reality as it is, this field is structured by visual cultural apparatuses and driven by a constant security hypochondria that encourages the hero/the audience to follow its gut-feelings and act. As mentioned, such a motif was not initially expected for me. What I was expecting was to see how the US operational decisions are made by strictly followed rational guidelines and constantly verified intelligence feedbacks. Instead, what emerged was a repeatedly employed template: the protagonist who has to solve the geopolitical issue always connects the dots by referring to its gut-feelings whenever a dilemma emerges deriving from partial geopolitical information.

Accordingly, no matter whether it is true or not, no matter whether it is fact or fiction, no matter whether it is right or wrong, what is needed is pure action. The exceptional American (Dittmer, 2011) protagonist found in these stories, with a constant faith in its intuitions, and yet without any need to draw on internationally agreed upon facts, can follow its path, intuitively judge, and unilaterally act. As action *per se* is praised as the most effective geopolitical conduct, there is no need to validate intelligence to deem it actionable.[24] This intuitive action logic can also be considered as the new geopolitical precinct that further transforms the transgressions of pre-emptive action logic which caused the war in Iraq. This logic gives larger room to the US to unilaterally act, intuitively tag, and lethally judge people as hostile and legitimately killable targets across the globe.

Apart from this intuitive action message, the analyses found another recurring motif regarding the self. Arguably, the political denarration through personal narration strategy employed by the mediums, invert and hijack the famous critical dictum "*the personal is political*". As every instance of personal violence has a social and political structure that enables it, and likewise every act of personal liberation is an uprising/defiance against that social and political structure, feminists deploy this phrase to critically uncover the uninvited influence of politics on personal lives (Enloe, 1988; 1990). Yet, it is argued that this new war imaginary uses it to wipe out and subsume these privacies, by confining them to the politically approved communal practices and identifications. As war-making demands the operational mobilisation of micro-power, rather than the crude extraction of manpower, the population should espouse the war effort as an issue of personal/familial/communal survival. Simply put, people should feel that they have vested personal interests in the survival of the state and its narratives. This is why, from an institutional perspective, wars are not only needed to be nationalised at the macro-level, but also personalised at the micro-level to find reliable citizens who can loyally enlist, selflessly act, wilfully kill, and faithfully die.

Therefore, visual culture, as a technology of the self has a significant role in this subjugating inversion process. Rather than exposing geopolitics, these visual mediums transpose subjectivities and enclose them in an echo chamber that structures a possible field to imagine geopolitics and to act on it by acting upon the self. The examples of each protagonist in the cases substantiate this critical inversion. Their personal narrations, and the ways in which mediums emplot audiences to geopolitics through their lives are not employed to transcend the complexities of politics for the sake of privacies, but to simplify and disguise, embody and transcribe the politics through the privacies. Therefore, entitled to see geopolitics from such intimate, non-fiction, ground-level perspectives, the audience gradually aligns their personal understanding of geopolitics with those of the heroes, and hence procedurally experience a possible

[24] For instance, US military officials told Reuters that Trump approved his first covert counterterrorism operation without sufficient intelligence, ground support or adequate backup preparations (Rascoe, 2017).

field of geopolitical actions and imaginations wherein the hero is situated. As a result, the audiences are activated to have/feel vested personal interests in the geopolitical dilemmas of the states.

Accordingly, this vague inversion is more critical than it seems. Since, it does not only further **cover** the ostensibly desired/mandatory impacts of politics on private lives, **but also make** the population lay claim to these decisions on their own initiative, as though they reached such conclusions all by themselves, and **frame** the policies as though they are the mere expressions of their own will. As such, subsumed within this mode of geopolitical subjectivity/communality, private primacies are made apolitical and hence trivialised, whilst the geopolitical ones are made personal and urgent. This can be argued as the emergence of the "transpolitical" (Baudrillard, 1999) in terms of geopolitics, wherein separate domains of geopolitics collapse into each other through "transparency and obscenity", through dehistoricisation and defactualisation, and through the decontextualized involvements of masses (p.163). The consequent indistinctiveness between the homefront and the battlefront, between the civilian and military spheres, does not reveal and prioritise the privacies subsumed under the political. It rather generates a mode of "disappearance", that disables the prospects of privacies within politics, that leaves them "with the zero point of politics" (Baudrillard, 1993, p.11) in its endless simulation. Hence, it is not only about a sense of sovereignty, but also involving subjectivities to simulate it in their own stead as substitutes of the sovereign. Hence, it is about having the population desire, or believe that the policies rendering them manageable and exploitable for political ends are addressing their core sensibilities and common sense. Faked battlefronts become the simulations of sovereignties.

Ergo, the mediums unpack geopolitics through a lent eye/I to the uninitiated and encourage them to cotton on to the geopolitical facts by themselves through the procedural givens of the mediums. As a result, the responsibility is pushed on the shoulders of the public, and the seemingly necessary political action is framed as the executive logic of popular common sense. This paves the way of registering and legitimising the imperial sovereignty claims under the guise of popular sovereignty demands. Therefore, this vicarious, experience-based new war imaginary should be dissected as a *technology of the self* to understand the ways in which human beings turn themselves into geopolitical subjects, whereby they prioritise geopolitics as a personal issue.

In this vein, the mediums` disguised or seemingly non-existent political agendas should be carefully considered through an elaborate analysis comprising their themes, sequences, affects and intertextual aspects, rather than isolated, text-based, content analyses. As argued, apart from the content of a medium, its contextual and paratextual background, and its opening sequences gradually distill the narrative for the audience and vice versa. These not only invite a particular model audience/reader group to consume the narrative but also ease their ability to participate in the construction of the story world (Pötzsch, 2012). This is why not only a medium`s content but also the way it is edited is also

crucial to its success. Through the succession of certain themes and visuals, the viewers are put on a train of thought to procedurally make sense of the medium in a given way.

As a result, visual culture becomes a liminal space for viewing and training for geopolitics. It diffuses warrior mindsets, transfuses civic and military subjectivities, transposes homefront and battleground vulnerabilities, and transplant meanings in between everyday life and geopolitics to craft war-making as an apolitical and personal issue demanding a prescient alertness from its civic followers.

8.5. Reflections on Research Design and Its Limitations

The theoretical aim of this thesis is supported by three interlinked issues - namely the method, empirics and case selection criteria. Yet the choices made regarding the trio also presents limitations to the thesis. Every method choice, while challenging and mitigating certain limitations to probe the relations between seemingly unconnected elements, also suffers from other limitations. In this thesis, I also experienced various limitations while trying to prove my initial assumptions on the relations between visual culture, technologies of the self, governmentality and geopolitics.

To transcend the need to use official data sources (Alford & Secker, 2017), and by emulating Foucault`s method on focusing on everyday practices (1982; 1986; 1988; 2005) in the form of a mixed-method informed by the studies of Eco (1984; 1994), Bogost (2007) and Jenkins (2006a), which is attentive to the role of the reader, convergence culture and procedurality of media sequences, paratexts, recurring themes and affects, I devised an analytical tool. By comparatively dissecting the case studies I chose into their various segments, themes and patterns, I found complementary recurrences prevalent in the mainstream US visual culture. This practice inherently carries the subjectivity of the researcher. Despite my intentions to clearly objectify both the criteria to choose these cases and interpretation of them, they continue to carry the subjectivity of the researcher. To surpass and acknowledge this fact, I incorporated autoethnography in my method and revealed the historicity of the evolution of my geopolitical subjectivity from my own point of view. Moreover, also to recognise and demonstrate the role of affect in visual cultural interactions in the way they influence viewing experience of people, I included the affective dimension to my analyses. This allowed me to integrate my lived experiences as a sample. Yet, it was never intended to be a pristine method to demonstrate how affect works. Instead, as mentioned earlier, its sole purpose was to acknowledge how a viewer honestly and subjectively experience and interpret certain moments through affect. And, to do so, I was the experimentee of my own. Thus, neither the sample size, nor the data analysed in this research manifest a generalizable and a directly causal phenomenon.

Also, case selection criteria suffered a long process before its finalisation. During the process, I analysed, dropped and changed some of the cases involved. While the film selection criteria are mostly determined by the top-grossing SOF genre, I preferred to focus on the Battlefield video game series both

to show that there are more to FPS games than CoD series, and to show how EA games leaned towards designing various gaming experiences for its users during these years. Yet, the most changed case study series were the documentaries. Although IR and PG literatures relatively showed a lighter interest towards documentaries, probably there are more GWoT documentary series compared to films and games. Hence, for instance, while I chose "Surviving the Cut" (2011) series of Discovery Channel and Korengal (2014) by Junger, I preferred to use "Taking Fire" (2016) instead of the former, and "Live to Tell" (2016) for the latter. The reason for this was, "TF" series was purely documented through soldiers` helmet-cams, allowing a more direct embodied experience of war through the eyes of warriors. In "LT" series, in line with convergence culture, the protagonist`s story was also covered by the film "AS" and by picking this documentary, I wanted to show how transmedia storytelling is geopolitically at play. Thus, rather than random choices, the criteria to pick the cases were strictly informed by the contents and possibilities of these cases under analysis. Yet, neither the mainstream US visual culture is restricted with the GWoT, nor are the whole GWoT representations in the US purely endow people with pro-war experiences. It should also be noted that applying the same analysis with different assemblages might engender different results, as shown in the Restrepo section. While Munster (2008) and Burgoyne & Rositzka (2015) interpret the documentary through art historical comparisons and pessimistic portrayals, my analysis found different patterns and themes in the film they consider as an anti-war one. Thus, visuality always carry multiple-meanings yet to be invoked by the eye of the beholder.

8.6. Future Research

The theoretical and methodological frameworks used in this thesis offer applicability in future research in IR, PG and visual culture. While I showed how governmentality approach, including its technologies of the self dimension, can be applied to understand the relations between visual culture and international politics and offered a methodological approach to do this, future studies can further this thesis` main tenets in various methodological and theoretical directions. Methodologically, first, by applying its theoretical lens and methodological focus to other elements of visual culture, such as strategy games, social media sources, and TV series, the cases can be multiplied. For instance, by tracing the ways in which a single event is told through transmedia storytelling in different platforms, current study can be tested, verified and multiplied. Second, by applying the same insights to other states, such as the UK, Russia, Turkey, or China, we can analyse how different states harness visual techniques of the self to mould their citizens as soldiers. Third, while I tried to inform my Foucauldian insight and method through Eco`s studies, the application of Eco`s theoretical standpoint offers a rich panorama for IR and PG studies.

Theoretically, as Collier put it (2009), Foucault`s last works offer a "'topological' analysis that examines the 'patterns of correlation' in which heterogeneous elements — techniques, material forms,

institutional structures and technologies of power — are configured, as well as the redeployments through which these patterns are transformed" (p.78). In this sense, a topological analysis, that considers various correlations between social and policy practices can reveal new theoretical dimensions. This allows us to consider convergence culture and transmedia storytelling`s broader roles in bringing about a worldwide affective interpretative repertoire. Considering this issue through international relations theories and the "international society" conceptualisations might drive us into new fertile engagements to understand the diffusion of certain values and norms in international politics.

Moreover, as Turner (2003) maintained, Foucault`s technologies of the self has interesting convergences with Elias` studies on long-term social formations. In this sense, historically focusing on select social and political practices can instigate new studies towards understanding and explaining the emergence of different modes of subjectivities. For instance, how do geopolitical modes of subjectivities emerge in different historical conditions of possibilities and in different political contexts? By showing how everyday practices put individuals into various liminal spaces initiating them to different ways of recognising themselves as subjects, we can trace the ways in which how modes of power and subjectivity differentiates. This certainly allows us to see not only how certain political structures persist, but also how can they be resisted in everyday lives.

8.7. Concluding Observations

As the GWoT spilt over into many regions and cultures all around the world, our geopolitical imaginations increasingly filled up with images and stories about the ongoing war to respond the vital questions of the liberal world regarding who kills whom, when and where, how and why. Visual culture, in this sense, has been significantly deployed and devised to inform the society about the whys and wherefores of the GWoT (Campbell, 2003; 2011; Taylor, 2003; Roger, 2013). Not only the official deployment of combat photographers and embedded journalists to frontlines enabled the US to frame the GWoT as much legit and just as possible, and monopolised the perspective on war (Campbell, 2011). The mainstream visual culture as a whole delivered certain patterns on geopolitical conduct through transmedia storytelling.

I argued that the mainstream US visual culture is conducive to the making of the GWoT. It functions as the affective stimulant simulating a shared intersubjectivity for the population by enabling people to vicariously embody warrior subjectivities. This does not mean that the population is crudely involved in and embodied a certain geopolitical subjecthood. Instead, visual culture has the potential to cultivate certain self-image projections to the society to promote the geopolitical experiences of possible-selves. In that sense, while playing an FPS game or watching a film, people do not only entertain themselves. They also experience certain patterns leading them to embody a soldier, embody

“the intended goals” of the state and geopolitics. As a result, rather than being a passive audience, spectating from the 3rd person view, they affectively participate in and embody the war effort from an active 1st person standpoint, thereby turn themselves into geopolitical subjects, while observing the international from the lent eye/I of another subject, mostly unwittingly.

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