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Star Wars: The Clone Wars and Popular Culture in America

Ubaldo Zermeno
Chapman University, uzermeno@verizon.net

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Star Wars: The Clone Wars and Popular Culture in America

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Ubaldo Zermeno

Chapman University

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Committee in charge:

Stephanie Takaragawa, PhD, Chair

Alexander Bay, PhD

Patrick Fuery, PhD

The thesis of Ubaldo Zermeno is approved.

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Stephanie Takaragawa, Chair

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Alexander Bay

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Patrick Fuery

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honor to study under all of them. I take more than memories, but their style of teaching and professionalism with me.

This examination of war is based on George Lucas' personal experiences of living in wartime America to uncover what *The Clone Wars* says about American society. The views are a direct representation of me and not any of my professors. Furthermore, this project is based on a lifelong love of the *Star Wars* franchise. Being given the opportunity to work on this project is a dream come true, an honor, and a blessing. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

Star Wars: The Clone Wars and Popular Culture in America

by Ubaldo Zermeno

The Clone Wars animated series is part of the *Star Wars* storyline taking place before the original *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*. The central premise of *The Clone Wars* is that of war, one being waged by a biologically manufactured clone army. George Lucas' intent for the original *Star Wars* was to create a social dialogue reflecting the ideological reasons for, and effects of, the Vietnam War. *The Clone Wars* continues Lucas's examination of American wartime policies and their effects on society.

The themes in *The Clone Wars* are diverse; however, this analysis will cover the use of WWII "good war" ideology as a continual source of American values; gender representations stemming from women's historical roles in wartime; and a cross-examination of the clone army that represents the marginalized groups of people used to wage war. These themes, followed by an analysis of *The Clone Wars* as mirroring post-9/11 imperialist policies aimed at containment of terror, will be used to evaluate the use of technology and its effects on populations and soldiers' experiences.

This analysis will show that *The Clone Wars* represents a cultural production of war. By examining the various influences involved in the series' development, this study will explore inherent themes to extrapolate what *The Clone Wars* says about American culture and its effects on war as an agent for conflict resolution.

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Introduction

The year 1975 marked the capitulation of American forces in Vietnam, resulting in the withdrawal of military occupation in South Vietnam. The War in Southeast Asia resulted in a tearing apart of the American social fabric. For the generation of youth growing up in a post-WWII America, the Vietnam War initiated an era of self-reflection and subjective critical thought. Beginning with the soldier's personal experience, followed by families grieving for the loss of loved ones, the effects of the Vietnam War were documented in various forms. Many people assume that war is central only to history books or personal experiences. However, as the evidence will demonstrate, war is also documented via artistic avenues, such as interpretations in music and visual media. For instance, Neil Young's song lyrics for "Ohio" tell the story of the deaths of four Kent State students protesting the Vietnam War:

> Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming
> We're finally on our own
> This Summer I hear the drummin'
> Four dead in Ohio
> Gotta get down to it
> Soldiers are gunning us down
> Should have been done long ago
> What if you knew her and
> Found her dead on the ground?
> How can you run when you know?[1]

The Vietnam War is documented via a diverse collage of media, augmenting the centrality of the war experience as written in any history book.

The effects of the Vietnam War eventually materialized in film. However, unlike music's ability to critique the war, film of the 1970s remained elusive about initiating critical dialogue. To better understand the Vietnams War's social consequences, George Lucas set out to

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[1] Young, *Ohio*.

document how the war transformed America by documenting the war's effects on American

youth. In 1973, Lucas filmed *American Graffiti*, a film based on a group of friends from small

town America experiencing their last night together before being sent off to war in Vietnam.

American Graffiti documented the transition from innocent, pre-war America to an American

social landscape transformed by the Vietnam War, resulting in a generational divide and loss of

youth. As Taylor expresses, "Kids today are growing up at a time when people are saying there

is no tomorrow and that it can be just as challenging and exciting as the past. It said that we

shouldn't interfere in the lives of other people. Maybe the kids saw something about Vietnam in

that."[2] Lucas' experience growing up in a conservative post-WWII environment, coupled with

his having lived through the Vietnam War, influenced his ability to recognize the dichotomy

created by the social and cultural effects of war. On the one hand, there was Lucas' early

childhood introduction to WWII films that centered good versus evil; this was followed,

however, by the experience of 1960s and '70s anti-war dissent, which influenced his questioning

of wartime policies.

The release of *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* in 1977, following the end of the war

in Vietnam, marked Lucas' venture into American warfare. Unable to work on *Apocalypse Now*

as an avenue toward dissecting the Vietnam War, Lucas ventured into outer space as a medium

for documenting the war. Realizing the war's consequences for society, Lucas translated the war

via a popular culture lens by adopting the "space fantasy" in film as a creative avenue.

Growing up among the Second World War generation, Lucas was raised within the "good

war" ideology. In his early childhood, Lucas experienced one of the greatest social influences,

the television. The family TV exposed Lucas to early forms of popular culture such as Buck

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[2] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 87.

Rogers as well as the war in Southeast Asia and its effects on American society. As the evidence will demonstrate, every facet of Lucas' upbringing foreshadowed his experience of living in a wartime environment, and every segment of the *Star Wars* narrative represents a form of cultural documentation of war and its effects on society.

The good war ideology remains a vital part of the American psyche and media landscape. It continues to feed American ideals of warfare based on a higher calling toward eradicating ideologies that are opposed to personal agency and self-determination. Good war ideology is central to films and media showcasing WWII, such as *Captain America*, *Captain Marvel*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "This year of 1945 can be the greatest year of achievement in human history… Most important of all—1945 can and must see the substantial beginning of the organization of world peace. This organization must be the fulfillment of the promise for which men have fought and died in this war. It must be the justification of all the sacrifices that have been made of all the dreadful misery that this world had endured."[3] *The Clone Wars*' use of good war ideology introduces new generations to the American values of upholding democratic ideals, therefore transmitting WWII ideologies to newer generations. Daddis' study of military magazines' use of good war ideology exemplifies this point:

> For veterans to wax nostalgic over their wartime experiences and for young boys to remain hopeful war would make them into men, the pulps had to accentuate the positive aspects of American GIs in battle. Myths had to be constructed and framed in such a way that the needs of Cold War society could be fulfilled by "good war" narrative. In this way, as pulp writer Mario Puzzo maintained, World War II was a "gold mine." Properly fabricated, the memory of the Second World War might guide new recruits as they deployed to Southeast Asia in search of martial glory.[4]

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[3] Lacey, *The Washington War*, 467.
[4] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 68.

The Vietnamization of *The Clone Wars* conveys the ordinary foot soldier's challenges with personal agency. Lucas' connection to the Vietnam War and its effects on society, but more so to his generation, remains central to the development of *The Clone Wars*. For Lucas, his main aim was to uncover how democracies succumb to dictatorships. One of the key features in Lucas' narrative involved the use of the ordinary soldier, who represented the lower-class stratification of society. The use of clones as a form of commodification to wage war places social commentary on the draft and the experience of the ordinary soldier. Hence, clones demonstrate the complexities involved with the field of battle, where wartime directives overwhelm personal agency and soldiers are left to make sense of combat and to fill the voids of war.

The Republic's imperialist policies for maintaining a sphere of influence and safety represent America's War on Terror. The act of imperialism by industrialized and technologically advanced countries over nations who lack industry and technology represents a consistent narrative in the development of war. After all., the War on Terror continues to rage after nearly two decades. Current recruitment of soldiers includes those born during or after September of 2001. For current generations of soldiers, none have experienced a life without war.

One of the key themes in *The Clone Wars* is the representation of women as the primary vocal agents in advocating for wartime dissent. While women sound the warning about the consequences of following wartime mandates, the Jedi blindly follow these mandates, leading to their inevitable demise. Also depicted is societies' adherence to wartime policies dictating war, such as the home planets pertaining to the Separatists and the Republic. The commentary is thus placed on American society remaining aloof about wartime policies. One main reason for social apathy is the use of clones as marginalized soldiers in a prolonged war.

Another major facet of the social commentary is the use of technology and media as contributing factors toward feelings of apathy in wartime. As articulated by Silvestri, "The bottom line is that the narrative for war is changing. War looks and feels a lot different than it used to. Social media contributes to a feeling of routine in an already perpetual war."[5] After twenty years of continuous warfare, Americans remain aloof about the effects of war on personal agency and society.

Female representation in *The Clone Wars* remains consistent within the *Star Wars* universe, beginning with Princess Leia's plan to sabotage the Death Star. *The Clone Wars*' representation of women is that they are central to wartime dissent, which enables their social and cultural agency. Although women's agency remains attached to social constructs pertaining to men as the primary decision makers, female characters are outliers in expressing narratives that rearticulate war's effects on society, as opposed to men's willingness to follow policies aimed at initiating war. Thus, *The Clone Wars*' representation of gender pays tribute to women being at the forefront of dissent against the continuation of war.

Lucas' vision for *The Clone Wars* acts as an extension of his treatment of war as a source of moral education for American youth. As expressed in the beginning narrative of every *The Clone Wars* episode, "The cost of war can never be truly accounted for." Every episode opens with a proverb that challenges viewers about the complexities of war. Lucas aimed to regenerate optimism to depart from the depressive effects of the Vietnam War on American populations. As Lucas expressed to Jay Jones about the original *Star Wars*, "We've got to generate more optimism" than previous films, such as *THX*.[6]

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[5] Lisa Ellen Silvestri, *Friended at the Front*, 17.
[6] Jones, *George Lucas*, 130.

The Clone Wars completely abandons optimism in favor of returning to *THX*, Lucas' first feature film based on a dystopian future. In Lucas' own words, "I realized after THX that people don't care how the country's being ruined. All that movie did was to make people more pessimistic, more depressed, and less willing to get involved in trying to make the world better."[7] Lucas' treatment of *The Clone Wars* recognizes the continuation of war and its effects on society while addressing its evolution as an outlier stemming from societies' lack of dissent or social agitation. By examining *The Clone Wars* through the lens of Lucas' upbringing and wartime influences, this study views *The Clone Wars* as an act of cultural documentation of war that describes American ideologies toward waging war while addressing a lack of dissent in the social discourse. This examination will thus provide insight into the diverse themes that articulate *The Clone Wars* as a cultural production of war.

My Solo Journey

"It is a period of civil war," read the lines streaming across my TV screen the very first time I viewed *Star Wars*, my introduction into futuristic warfare, and possibly the first time the idea of war become concrete to me. Years later and throughout my education, the same theme of warfare resonated with my selective readings of the Great War, WWII, and Vietnam. With each passing year, my understanding of war expanded, as I came to view it as an inherited conflict and byproduct of American ideology. Hence, my interest in history and love for all things *Star Wars* intersected in this analysis of the animated television series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, a social commentary about American ideals told through futuristic war but grounded in the history of warfare.

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[7] Jones, 130.

The Clone Wars as understood in the *Star Wars* universe is mentioned in the first film *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* and is developed in *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of The Clones*, where Obi-Wan discovers the biological development of a clone army. The premise of *Attack of The Clones* is based on Obi-Wan's investigating the purpose of the clone army and concludes with Chancellor Palpatine's consolidation of power. As *The Clone Wars* is about inter-galactic warfare, and he use of a marginalized humanoid clone army as an agent of control via colonization and imperialism of outer planets. *The Clone Wars* saga represents six generations of American military interventions, including WWII, Vietnam, and post-9/11 operations in the Middle East. As exemplified by Taylor,

> Luke's allusion to Ben Kenobi's "diary of *The Clone Wars*" in the third draft is the first mention of a conflict that would become a major part of *Star Wars* lore… *The Clone Wars* were a World War II to this current Vietnam-like guerrilla action against the Empire (which, in the third draft, Luke called the "Counter Wars"). Lucas would guard *The Clone Wars'* details more jealously… and they would be off-limits even to Lucasfilm's licensed writers. We would not find who find out who the clones were, or on whose side they had fought for nearly three decades-during which time a million imaginary versions of the conflict would play out.[8]

Lucas' environmental and generational experiences with war are present in *The Clone Wars*, which also represents factions of American cultural and ideological values toward war. *The Clone Wars* can thus be seen as a cultural production of war.

The premise of the research project is to understand America's social relationship with war via a popular culture medium. By focusing on *The Clone Wars* as an avenue toward understanding war's influence on American society, this study views *The Clone Wars* animated series as contributing to public discourse by establishing a conceptual map,[9] or a cultural representation of war and its effects on society. The central contributing element of *The Clone*

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[8] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 124.
[9] Hall, *Representation*. 1997.

Wars rests with analyzing the animated series' content as a form of social literacy toward understanding wartime policies in an era that has not experienced a global war.

Popular Culture

> *OBI-WAN*: I have to admit that without the clones this would not have been a victory.
> *MASTER YODA*: Victory, victory, you say. Master Obi-Wan, not victory. The shroud of the dark side has fallen. Begun the Clone Wars has.[10]

For every generation in the U.S., there is a shared understanding of war, where young men and women are introduced to war through various socializing elements. The socialization process begins with an interpretation of war by writers, illustrators, filmmakers, and family war storytellers. Stuart Hall refers to the ways in which we learn to link, share, and understand signs, symbols, and representations as occurring through the creation of conceptual maps.[11] The semiotic representation of the masculine hero of these stories begins to fester in the minds of young men. *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, a series about good versus evil and freedom versus suppression, is much about American culture's relationship with war.

Every generation's affinity with war begins with a form of pop culture relative to their time and place. As described by Sheftall's account of the inception of the Great War, young men shared enthusiasm for the opportunity to live out their heroic war fantasies. Sheftall emphasized, "Young gentlemen were never allowed to forget a pantheon of noble heroes, some real, some fictional, with a lineage stretching unbroken from ancient Troy, who fought bravely, lived chivalrously, and died gloriously."[12] Much like family histories, literature, and media, *The Clone Wars* contributes to social dialogue through its focus on complex themes of warfare such as torture, good war theory, and foot soldier representation.

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[10] Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode II.*
[11] Hall, *Representation.*
[12] Sheftall, *Altered Memories of the Great War*, 31.

This analysis of *The Clone* Wars will be based on Sweet's use of Bakhtinian theory as a form of sociocultural dialogue that produces meaning making. Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975) was a Russian literary theorist and philosopher of language who influenced Western thought and theory. Bakhtin developed *The Dialogic Imagination*,[13] where he argues that language is not static, but evolves dynamically, effecting and being affected by the culture that produces it. Sweet argues that *The Clone Wars*' depiction war and its effects on society represents a form of cultural dialogue that evolves with viewers of the *Star Wars* franchise. As explained by Sweet, "In a general sense, focusing a critical lens on the presence of popular culture in people's lives reveals how dominant societal discourses, cultural myths, individual identities, and institutional ideologies are reified and subverted. For someone constantly engaging these questions, popular culture is never 'just entertainment.'"[14] Sweet's approach foregrounds pop culture as a focus for meaning making. The consensus is based on exposing a specific genre as a contributing medium for the learning and sharing of relative ideas. *The Clone Wars*, as a popular cultural document, creates shared dialogue among various groups and platforms, producing a shared conceptual map for a generation of people. The use of pop culture as an educational platform, coupled with the rise of social media, continues to gain significance in academic fields.

Background and Focus

Lucas set out to understand man's propensity toward war. He created *Star Wars* as a critique of imperial colonial overreach and indigenous fight for self-determination. As explained by Taylor, "Lucas was fascinated by the notion of how a tiny nation could overcome the largest military power on Earth, and this was baked into *The Star Wars* right from its earliest notes in

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[13] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*.
[14] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 3.

1973: 'A large technological empire going after a small group of freedom fighters'"[15] The 1977 release of *Star Wars* mirrored previous generations' martial ventures into distant planets to fulfill a war journey. Corresponding to previous conflicts, *Star Wars* depicts an ordinary farm boy and many others who, eager for the glories of war, leave outer rim outposts and marginalized communities in search of their *Iliad* journey. Lucas contends that most of the inspiration for *Star Wars* developed out of the need to rework elements of the Vietnam conflict into *Star Wars*. Many of the draconian characters such as Darth Vader and Chancellor Palpatine were appropriated out of his early film career coinciding with the Vietnam War. As supported by McDowell, "Lucas himself has candidly suggested that the Emperor is a Richard Nixon-type character, and Darth Vader is representative of a Henry Kissinger-type. There may be something in this, and it's certainly true that *Star Wars*, as with any human artifact, reflects a deep cultural resonance."[16]

Imposing President Nixon and the Vietnam War onto a story of teenage rebellion to save democracy, Lucas had Luke Skywalker believe he fought in the war to end all wars. Instead, Luke embraced the idea of fulfilling his destiny by experiencing his father's heroic journey. Humanity's fascination with war is best described by Campbell, who states, "If the deeds of an actual historical figure proclaim him to have been a hero, the builders of his legend will invent for him appropriate adventures in depth. These will be pictured as journeys into miraculous realms, and are to be interpreted as symbolic, on the one hand, of descents into the night-sea of the psyche, and on the other, of the realms or aspects of man's destiny that are made manifest in respective lives."[17] Americans' experience with war is developed through various contributing

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[15] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 88.
[16] McDowell, *The Politics of Big Fantasy*, 79.
[17] Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 276.

elements, such as the war's effects on men's notions of masculinity. As represented through pop culture mediums, masculinity is the social currency placed on every generation's use of war as a rite of passage.

This study will examine *The Clone Wars* animated series as a cultural component in the socialization process of war by analyzing the animation, language content, and themes related to masculinity, patriotism, gender, propaganda, and class. This analysis will highlight the development of themes that articulate hyper-realistic messages of war. Lucas' use of American cultural and historical appropriations will be examined for how they work as mechanisms of cross-generational forms of social capital and engagement. To support the main premise of my argument, themes related to good war theory, Vietnam, and post-9/11 warfare will underscore the complex historical narratives involved in understanding storytelling and animation as avenues for interpreting war through a popular culture medium.

This cultural study of *The Clone Wars* analyzes how an animated series based on war uncovers American social constructs and ideologies of war as means of conflict resolution. To achieve this analysis, a cross-historical and social examination of wartime influences and effects on society were examined using an interdisciplinary approach. Aspects of sociology, race and gender theory, and history constituted the multi-disciplinary lens used as a means of examining war as a cultural production.

The first chapter evaluates George Lucas' experiences with growing up in post-WWII America, which exposed him to popular culture representations of WWII via films. These films featuring John Wayne, coupled with reinterpretations of key battles, were central to the development of social constructs pertaining to masculinity, defining the "bad guys," and exposing younger generations to American exceptionalism.

After analyzing good war theory, the second chapter will examine the representation of women, not only in *The Clone Wars*, but in the broader *Star Wars* universe. By analyzing women's roles during wartime, this study will find its central footing in women who not only serve as combatants in war, but fight the ideology and rationale for waging war. This examination will reveal women to be the focal element in anti-war dissent.

After evaluating war from a gender lens, the third chapter will examine the effects of the Vietnam War on society. The dichotomy between good war theory and the effects of Vietnam anti-war dissent represents a central feature in *The Clone Wars*. This chapter will uncover Lucas' use of good war elements as featured in opening narrations and battle scenes. The Vietnam War and dissent are examined through Lucas' interpretation of the marginalized soldier, and his experience in combat signifies the use of foot soldiers as marginalized, disposable commodities in war.

Afterwards, this analysis will conclude with a brief overview of *The Clone Wars*' use of imperialism and capitalist agendas to expose the post-9/11 War on Terror as a foreign policy initiative aimed at prolonged war and the pacification of social dissent. This examination will contribute to the understanding of the impact of technology on soldier experiences and the representation of war. By examining the social constructs of war and their effects on society, and masculinity specifically, one is given a lens to unlocking war's propagation through various cultural means: propaganda, patriotism, media, and popular culture reinterpretation.

By analyzing George Lucas' upbringing and exposure to American war culture, this study examines *The Clone Wars* as a facet of war and its effects on society. The concept of war and its propagation is a central element in the animated series. Viewing the series through a war and society lens enables an interpretation of *The Clone Wars* not only as an animated series, but

as an agent in the introduction of war to younger audiences that also sustains American cultural values of war to older audiences. This study argues that war is a common feature in the social development of American society, where its purpose as a generational introduction is found not only in history books and family stories, but more importantly, in popular culture.

1. War through a Popular Culture Lens

> I have focused on places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect, and in doing so I have tried to understand something of the simultaneous and reciprocal process by which life feeds materials to literature while literature returns the favor by conferring forms upon life.
> —Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*[18]

In the tradition of understanding humans' propensity for war, one must look through various avenues of literature, media, song, and pop culture to find war's depth and meaning. This analysis of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* will provide one of those avenues for understanding an American cultural production of war. Technology today, more than any other time in history, has enabled humans to communicate through various forms of interpretation and understanding. Every generation has left its thumbprint on pop culture that transcends society's relationship with war. To better understand *The Clone Wars*, this study will examine how a children's animated series based on war translates into an interpretation of American cultural values via the series' characterization of war and geopolitical policies aimed at containing terror.

To showcase *The Clone Wars*' political relevance, Scott Thill explains, "*The Clone Wars* has become increasingly philosophical and powerful. It is the scariest cartoon on television for any age. It's also perhaps our most relevant animated series, especially for a nation so shocked and awed by perpetual war that it's willing to hand off constitutional rights like due process."[19] Beginning from a historical and social literary to a multimedia generational war format, *The Clone Wars* places narratives, character developments, and social semiotic messages in line with WWII, Vietnam, and post-9/11 mandates of imperialism and just war theory.

The Clone Wars animated series showcases a semiotic rendering of galactic battles reminiscent of WWII naval warfare, aerial dog fights, and Vietnam troop deployments via

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[18] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, xv.
[19] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 11.

helicopter gunships. George Lucas' influence from war, coupled by his mentoring of Dave Filoni as executive art director, allows for the series to indulge the viewer with war action and speed. Political democracy underscores the diversity of animation and storytelling throughout the series. Historical semblances of past wars combine with contemporary geopolitical policies pertaining to the War on Terror to provide an interpretation that connects with a multi-generational audience.

The storyline focuses on exposing apathy during wartime, highlighting the diverse effects of war such as social displacement, killings, torture, colonization, imperialism, and environmental degradation. Race and class are represented by the alien populations' lack of industrialization and inability to wage war. *The Clone Wars* provides a medium into understanding how and why Americans wage war and come to terms with its effects. As described by Sweet, about Lisbeth van Zoonen, "The intersection of politics and entertainment provides a unique public space wherein popular culture artifacts, such as a television series, function as sources for discussing, criticizing, and imagining politics for the performance of citizenship."[20] Pop culture in the form of animated media is often overlooked for its insignificance in public discourse. Hence, *The Clone Wars* series contributes to the world of *Star Wars* by introducing younger audiences to the connections of war through its franchise.

Wartime Contribution

The Clone Wars' development is based on three American wars, though the series' narration primarily uses WWII good war ideology as a democratic call to arms. War action is central to the Vietnam foot soldier experience, while the Republic's imperialist occupation of

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[20] Sweet, 179.

distant planets is reflective of the post-9/11 War on Terror. Though Lucas refers to *The Clone Wars* in the original *Star Wars* film, he waits multiple decades to unpack the clones' relevance.

The theme of the three wars is based on Lucas' life experiences with American wars. One of Lucas' main reasons for making *Star Wars* was his fascination with happenstance leading to the demise of democracies. *The Clone Wars* is central to a war being fought by clones under ideological assumptions of peace and democracy. However, clones are kept ignorant of the war's geopolitical mandates. *The Clone Wars* includes social commentary by depicting military action used to colonize or imperialize outer planets to establish larger spheres of control. Such military action represents the practices of imperialist nations in need of an expanding army, such as that of the British, French, and American forces. The clones fight under the pretense of good faith, or good war ideology, and are central to maintaining control over dissent. Much like foot soldiers in Vietnam fighting for liberation, some soldiers inevitably realize the possibility that their action against enemy combatants places them as the aggressive and draconian force.

The narration for the opening scenes of episodes, which describes the details pertaining to the battle's consequences and the sacrifices needed for the war's outcome, is a throwback to WWII movie reels that highlight soldier and social sacrifices needed for victory. The rendering of the dystopian circumstances pertaining to war leaves the viewer with a feeling of anxiety. As narrated in the opening scene of the "Clone Cadet" episode, "Clone Troopers unite! As war rages on in the galaxy, the Clone Army strives for victory against the evil army of the Separatists. Bravery! Valor! Unity! The life blood of victory! On the battlefield and in space! It all begins on the planet Kamino. Bred to be perfect soldiers, these cadets must first be subjected to intense physical and mental training before going off to war!"[21] Along with this narration, the viewer is

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[21] Filoni, "Clone Cadet."

exposed to visuals of the clones' physical sacrifices: gunship explosions, mortar attacks, and field charges that end with the clones being decimated by machine gunfire, reminiscent of the opening battle scene in *Saving Private Ryan*. The scene's narration acts as a semiotic mechanism that promotes masculinity and sacrifice of country, supported by intense animation displaying the heroics of war.

War as a Popular Culture Influencer

Much like in Vietnam, in *The Clone Wars*, the wars take place on unfamiliar terrain. Most of the collateral damage is inflicted on the planets' inhabitants, displacing large populations and devastating the environment. The episode reflects a semiotic message of total war theory, where war is waged through all necessary avenues to capitulate the enemy at any cost. However, much like in contemporary wars, the war between the Republic and Separatist forces does not occur on the industrialized planets where decisions are made by senators, arms manufacturers, and banking clans resembling that of the military-industrial complex. Instead, most personal sacrifices are made by the clones, who are treated as marginalized byproducts of war. This marginalization reflects contemporary military personnel, who are traditionally recruited from marginalized, poor, and underrepresented classes of society. The clones' experience fighting wars in remote alien planets is exacerbated by their concurrent exposure to environmental damage and loss of life. Hence, the clones' experiences with combat in distant lands is indicative of young American foot soldiers fighting an enemy combatant they know nothing about; both must wrestle with the psychological aftermath of having caused havoc, environmental damage, and social displacement.

Much like real war, *The Clone Wars* represents billions of dollars' worth of property

damage and millions of lives lost and displaced. To better understand this, one must compare it

to the devastation of the Vietnam War. As Boggs and Pollard describe,

> The torturous legacy of U.S. military involvement in Indochina produced the following: at least 3 million killed, nine thousand of fifteen thousand hamlets destroyed, virtually all urban areas devastated, 25 million acres of forest destroyed, nearly a million orphans left, vast ecological ruin caused by the most lethal bombing campaign in history, and 20 million gallons of deadly herbicides sprayed. Aerial terrorism, barbaric search-and-destroy missions, totalitarian "pacification" programs, and ecological warfare added up to an unparalleled war of attrition waged relentlessly by the U.S. war machine under three presidents.[22]

The 1977 release of *Star Wars* came at the heels of America's first major military defeat during

the Cold War. The capitulation of American forces in Vietnam brought with it social and

political discontent and distrust of government rule. As explained by George Lucas, "It was

really about the Vietnam War, and that was the period where Nixon was trying to run for a

[second] term, which got me thinking historically about how do democracies get turned into

dictatorships? Because the democracies are not overthrown; they're given away."[23] For Lucas,

the Vietnam War represented a key aspect of American social life. As the first generation to be

exposed to the influence of war in popular media, Lucas' generation experienced a pop culture

renaissance, including the mass proliferation of comic books.

George Lucas was part of the post-WWII generation whose central media themes

featured war. As explained by Taylor, "Lucas later remembered growing up in a world where the

war was 'on all the coffee tables' – in *Time*, in *Life*, in the *Saturday Evening Post*, in *Living

Technicolor*."[24] For Lucas, the TV represented a gateway into the realm of war theory via the

socializing mechanism of new media. This socializing influence of war resonated with

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[22] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 64.
[23] Beckwith, "Star Wars in Our World."
[24] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 16.

Americans' anxieties during the Cold War, including social constructs pertaining to school curricula, propaganda films, and fears of global annihilation. As supported by Taylor, "His year of schoolchildren were the first to be shown the civil defense training film *Duck and Cover* (1951). Imagine seeing this at age five: not just a cartoon about a clever turtle who hides in his shell when the atom bomb drops, about also two schoolchildren who, 'no matter where they go or what they do, are *always* trying to remember what to do if the atom bomb explodes right then.'"[25] Hence, Lucas is a product of his environment, intaking the American social values pertaining to war. However, these social values had a differing effect on Lucas.

For the teenager from Modesto, California, war included an alchemy of genres, involving comic books, war films, firefights, explosions, masculine heroics, and speed. In the 1950s, Modesto was a true piece of Americana. Lucas' fascination with war films, hot rods, and car culture encouraged artistic expression with masculine overtones. Though war films were filled with semiotics pertaining to American ideals of democracy, heroics, and masculinity, for Lucas, they also fueled his intrinsic creativity by favoring his graphic style of learning and narration.

War films, much like comics, use action in lieu of dialogue. According to Jay Jones, Lucas' challenges with spelling and writing were alleviated by his visual style of learning. Jones concluded that "comics were 'storytelling through pictures,' he said, and pointing out that it was in comic books where he first learned 'strange facts' and exotic vocabulary… words and images working together to propel the action forward, with little time for speeches or soliloquies."[26] Lucas understood the significance of being able to tell a story based on action sequences and images, much like his favorite painter Norman Rockwell. As examined by Taylor,

> The 1950s and 1960s centered around the communist threat, and the next war, featured war movies, each one a repolish of legendary heroics on the ground and – increasingly –

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[25] Taylor, 16.

[26] Jones, *George Lucas*, 21.

in the air. *The Damn Busters* (1955), *633 Squadron* (1963), *Tora, Tora, Tora* (1970) – These were the movies Lucas would record and splice to create the ultimate dogfight, a 25-hour reference reel that would form the basis for all the special effects of *Star Wars*.[27]

In a different manner, Cold War society influenced Lucas by materializing his creative genius through his recontextualization of war. Instead of fear, apprehension, and anxiety, Lucas saw artistic potential as an avenue for self-reflection and social commentary. Lucas began his journey within the confines of a society marred by war as articulated through popular culture, factors which would inspire *Star Wars*, and later, *The Clone Wars*.

For Lucas, pop culture in the form of comic books, TV series, and historical literature became the mediums through which he nurtured his fascination. As explained by Jay Jones, "He also amassed an enormous collection of Landmark books, a series of histories and biographies written for younger readers. 'I was addicted to them.'… 'I used to love to read those books. It started me on a lifelong love of history… As a kid I spent a lot of time trying to relate the past to the present.'"[28] Within this statement lies the foundation of Lucas' use of history, mythology, and war to critique American cultural values and ideological beliefs about war as an agent for conflict resolution. It also supports this analysis of *The Clone Wars* as a critique of post-9/11 imperial mandates for the War on Terror, including how appropriations of previous conflicts translated into American social values toward war.

The double irony of *The Clone Wars* is how Lucas used his characters to influence political history and meaning. The original *Star Wars* movie celebrated the independent rogue character who defies authoritarian rule through the Rebel Alliance to bring about personal freedom. In contrast to President Reagan's combative response toward the USSR as the epitome of an "evil empire," as well as the second Bush administration's "Coalition of the Willing," *The*

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[27] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 16.
[28] Jones, *George Lucas*, 21.

Clone Wars underlines the conservative ideological exchange for a future war bent on conformity through terror containment.

In this study, *The Clone Wars* is contextualized through background understanding of the American relationship with war. The premise of this thesis is to examine how an animated show acts as an agent in providing a dialogical platform for shared political, social, and cultural commentary on the production of war and its relationship to post-9/11 policies of imperialism. Emphasis is placed on war as an agent of conflict and change; more specifically, it is a byproduct of American cultural exceptionalism, reflecting a socially accepted medium for global conflict resolution. As expressed by Sweet, "Such widely understood myths as the American Dream, the Wild West, American exceptionalism, myths deeply ingrained in the collective imagination of U.S. American society, shape the way people think about national identity, party affiliation, individual opportunity, and justice."[29] American cultural values pertaining to war are shaped by semiotic renderings in media and pop culture that demonstrate the necessary attributes required of a soldier-citizen.

Media Influence and Pop Culture

For many Americans, their cultural belief systems are reinforced through media pertaining to war. Now more than ever, due to technology and multimedia platforms, cultural beliefs about war are being processed earlier and more repetitively. In an age when children's literature content is diminishing, pop culture and media platforms are, for many, a primary medium of historical knowledge and cultural relativism. As an animated series with historical and contemporary social commentary, *The Clone Wars* places young audiences into a multi-generational dialogue. As explained by Sweet, "Popular Culture depictions of war are an

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[29] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 6.

important voice in ongoing cultural discourses regarding foreign policy and international relations, providing an opportunity to probe the dialogic interactions at the heart of responsive understanding and cultural meaning-making."[30]

The Clone Wars, as a dialogical agent in the cultural production of war, expanded its media relevancy to American war policies and their effects on society. This relationship establishes *The Clone Wars*' relevance to social constructs pertaining to war. Hence, *The Clone Wars* gives an alternate lens of war via a pop culture media interpretation reflecting American beliefs toward war. As expressed by Geertz, "But whatever the level at which one operates, and however intricately, the guiding principle is the same: societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations. One has only to learn how to gain access to them."[31] As a cultural production of war viewed through an entertainment lens, *The Clone Wars* animated series allows for understanding of American belief systems, ideals, goals, hopes, and fears.

One must often look outside to understand the inside of their own society, as shown in the anthropological study by Clifford Geertz focusing on Balinese cock fighting. Geertz's study revealed sociocultural dynamics related to Balinese masculinity, class, family structure, and village power structure. Drawing on his ethnographic work, this study analyzes *The Clone Wars* and its central theme of war to reveal American social, cultural, ideological, and political constructs, exposing key patterns of American beliefs and ways of life. This is best described by Geertz, who writes, "But the idea remains theoretically undeveloped; a more profound corollary, so far as anthropology is concerned, that cultural forms can be treated as texts, as imaginative works built out of social materials, has yet to be systematically exploited."[32]

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[30] Sweet, 126.
[31] Geertz, *Myth, Symbol, and Culture*, 29.
[32] Geertz, 27.

One of the paramount features of media's influence is directly correlated to American capitalist and military cultural values. As explained by Boggs and Pollard, "TV networks, for most Americans the main sources of 'news' and commentary, typically follow a uniform, formulaic (pro-military) line, with alternative voices confined to the wilderness. Media culture is both a conduit and enabler of military power, which seems to give Americans a special pride and sense of identity."[33] Hence, media's propaganda narratives are consumed as forms of entertainment, solidifying *The Clone Wars* as an exchange of social dialogue.

The question remains, however—who makes the "sacrifices" when it comes to war? As *The Clone Wars* will demonstrate, the sacrifices are personal, social, and global. The importance of war's effects on society is best analyzed by MacMillan, who argues, "As a historian I firmly believe that we have to include war in our study of human history if we are to make any sense of the past. War's effects have been so profound that to leave it out is to ignore one of the great forces, along with geography, resources, economics, ideas, and social and political changes, which have shaped human development."[34] *The Clone Wars* provides an arterial vein to understanding war's consequences in society. By viewing the series with a critical lens, one can extract the series' images, dialogue, and commentary as representations of American society.

WWII and The "Good War" Ideology

At the concluding scene of *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of The Clones*, Master Yoda is seen looking out of a military gunship to view the accumulating clone troopers embarking on a soldier's journey into the galactic outer rim. The clone troopers' mission is to provide support to Jedi warriors whose identity has been altered by war. The Jedi have had their role changed from independent peacekeepers to military generals bent on conforming to geopolitical mandates of

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[33] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, vii.
[34] MacMillan, *War*, xi.

contested trade routes. This changing characterization is viewed by some *Star Wars* fans as a loss

of agency and the beginning of the Jedi's downfall. As explained by Silvo and Vinci, this is "a

narrative that encourages a disparaging apprehension regarding individualism and argues that

only when one 'follows the rules' and becomes a representative of the institution can individual

action have social and political value."[35] Yoda's last scene in *Attack of the Clones* conveys the

transition of society from peace to wartime. It also introduces the militarization of *Star Wars*,

shifting from its 1977 inception as a fight for self-determination to a depiction bent on

conservative social mandates, lack of dissent, and conformity.

This changing dichotomy of perceived peace to war and the resulting sociocultural shifts

are best illustrated by Dudziak, who states, "Built into the very essence of our idea of war-time is

the assumption that war is temporary. The beginning of war is the opening of an era that will, by

definition, come to an end."[36] Hence, the idea of war being framed with an end and a beginning

is tied to post-WWII good war ideology reinforcing American cultural beliefs of personal and

social sacrifices that produce the desired results of democracy and freedom.

Much like *The Clone Wars*, America's socialization of war is tethered to representations

of WWII good war ideology: good versus evil, social sacrifice, and the relinquishing of civil

liberties to bring about democratic peace and prosperity. The clones are the glue that

accommodates policy mandates and militarized actions. They also represent the Vietnam

syndrome where soldiers make up the largest casualty rates; in the process, they begin to

question their purpose of being trapped in a war of attrition. The war between the Republic and

Separatists reflects geopolitical mandates pertaining to imperialism, the safeguarding of trade

routes, and terror containment. Lucas' diverse use of previous wars in *The Clone Wars* and how

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[35] Silvo and Vinci, *Culture, Identities, and Technology in the Star Wars Films*, 4.
[36] Dudziak, *War-Time*, 5.

they relate to sociohistorical discourse intertwines with his upbringing living in a war

environment marred by a tension between WWII patriotism and Vietnam social dissent.

2. "Good War" Theory: Masculinity and Semiotic Propaganda

No war is celebrated more than World War II. It represented a time in America when society openly embraced the challenges necessary to mobilize its population. To this day, WWII ideologies are promoted through film, videogames, and animation. Most of these depictions of the Second World War are made through masculine images of foot combat, naval explosions, and aerial dogfights, all combined with a sense of nationalism. *The Clone Wars*' appropriation of WWII through animation provides one of the central elements that enables it to be a multi-generational platform. More importantly, the redistribution of WWII ideologies reflects cultural values about how Americans promote war through propaganda based on just war theory. This is best examined by Boggs and Pollard, who argue, "The war, of course, was one of the epic moments of U.S. and World history, its consequences still deeply felt. But its meaning for American culture far transcends such historical specificity and is used today to justify contemporary wars and the institutionalized military."[37] Thus, the semiotic use of WWII ideology in *The Clone Wars* acts as an introductory element for younger audiences while reinforcing cultural values in older audiences.

This is best represented in the opening scene of the "Ambush" episode: "A galaxy divided by war! Peaceful worlds must choose sides or face the threat of invasion! Republic and Separatist armies vie for the allegiance of neutral planets! Desperate to build supply bases in the system of Devaria, Jedi Master Yoda travels to secret negotiations on a remote neutral moon."[38] This episode's opening line, "A galaxy divided by war! Peaceful worlds must choose sides or

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[37] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 94.
[38] Bullock, "Ambush."

face the threat of invasion!", exemplifies the WWII narrative of the call to arms justifying the military invasion on the pretense of establishing peace and planetary agency.

Much like Vietnam, American intervention consisted of political and economic positioning. The differing cultural ideologies between the U.S. and the Soviet Union led to war where the U.S. sought to suppress the spread of communist infiltration to underdeveloped regions.

> Despite the unconditional surrender of their enemies in World War II, Americans could not shake a deep sense of insecurity as they entered the postwar years. They worryingly faced new villains. Indeed, they helped to create them. Communist devils conveniently replaced sadistic Nazis and savage Japanese as the new foe. The 1950 McCarren Act, for example, declared that the world communist movement posed a "clear and present danger to the security of the United States and to the existence of free American institutions."[39]

The following line in the narrative, "Republic and Separatist armies vie for the allegiance of neutral planets," is indicative of a rescue response bent on protecting democratic ideals. Good war ideology is represented by the Republic's call to support Imperial policies aimed at protecting Republic trade routes and the expansion of Separatist influence. The last sentence pertaining to Yoda as the lead negotiator solidifies the transition of the Jedi from mindful peacekeepers to military policy negotiators.

For Americans growing up in the 1960s, WWII became a staple of war, heroism, and masculine behavior. The ideologies associated with WWII solidified Americans' willingness to accept governmental mandates pertaining to war.

> The good-war discourse has been central to the culture of militarism since just Pearl Harbor, keeping alive public memories of those dramatic history-altering victories over the Nazis and fascists while going even further, glorifying the entire legacy of patriotism and warfare, which remains firmly embedded within the American national psyche. Indeed, the studios have come to cherish war movies for their endless action sequences, their focus on male heroism, their riveting patriotic emotion, and their consistent profitability.[40]

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[39] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 29-30.
[40] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 47.

The repurposing through media of WWII good war ideology, more than for any other American war, is crucial in establishing the democracy justification for waging war and in communicating these nationalist ideologies to a multi-generational audience. As supported by both Daddis and Longley, Lucas' use of WWII combat illustrations in *The Clone Wars* references his generation's influences from WWII popular culture themes and narratives.

World War II ushered in the epitome of American warfare. The Baby Boomer Generation cemented its legacy through media, pop culture, and literature that unconsciously portrayed cultural values. U.S. House Representative Jeanette Rankin explained, "The war habit comes to us through long traditions and history and teaching. We are unconscious of how many war habits we have and our method of perpetuating them. All our history and our music and our art and literature and family traditions and loyalties are tied up in war."[41] Conveyed in *The Clone Wars* through dialogue, propaganda, Separatist fears, and political rationalizations for waging war, the good war narrative is used in media platforms to reaffirm historical and generational war ideology. Lucas's placement of good war ideology therefore acts as a generational connective tissue, introducing, on the one hand, good war themes and narratives and, on the other, solidifying American wartime ideology.

Good War as Method

Good war ideology is used to communicate not only why Americans wage war, but how. Justifications for waging war—peace, democracy, and freedom—place a higher standard on the way Americans fight war. In *The Clones Wars*, America is represented as the Republic, the sole military complex responsible and strong enough to face the evil Separatists. The characterization

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[41] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 133.

of war between the Separatists and the Republic is one of the primary differences represented in

The Clone Wars and is reflective of both Cold War and current policies aimed at containing

terror. The war to defeat the Separatist forces is characterized by a national, global, and galactic

call to arms. However, the way the war is fought is indicative of a post-9/11 prolonged war

ideology that relies on marginalized soldiers and non-citizens. American ideologies representing

self-sacrifice and democratic values have historically been contrasted with the enemy's sinister

tendencies.

Good war ideology characterizes American values by the way American soldiers conduct

themselves in battle. This is demonstrated in dialogue and action sequences. The key feature in

America's manner of waging war is the focus on liberation, adherence to collateral damage, and

regard for life. This is exemplified in the "Shadow of Malevolence" episode, as dialogue

between Anakin Skywalker and a Clone pilot named Match-Stick shows how they prepare to

embark on an offensive attack:

> MASTER JEDI: This is an aggressive plan. Are you sure your squadron can complete this
> mission?
> SKYWALKER: Let's ask them. Match-Stick! You think our boys can pull it off?
> MATCHSTICK: Yes sir! There hasn't been a mission shadow squadron couldn't complete!
> CLONE PILOT 2: That's right! Minimal casualties-Maximum effectiveness! That's us!
> MASTER JEDI: I admire your confidence pilots. Even so minimal casualties may not be
> enough to prevent you from breaking things.[42]

This exchange articulates the moral rules of engagement that dictate American values of a fair

fight even when going into hostile territory. The action sequences create a sympathizing

mechanism connecting the viewer with challenges clone soldiers endure. In the process, the

viewer is distracted from collateral damage to the environment and population, and from the fact

that the invasion constitutes an act of imperialism. The above dialogue reaffirms American ideals

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[42] O'Connell, "Shadow of Malevolence."

of fight for the security and safety of others, where the war is fought for the benefit of others and

not the Republic.

The ideology of waging a safe war is further supported in the "Innocents of Ryloth"

episode as Anakin and Obi-Wan develop an offensive plan of counterinsurgency:

> *OBI-WAN*: We need to remember why we're here. We came to aid the Twi'leks, not destroy their home. Cody?
> *COMMANDER CODY*: That means we'll be taking it back the hard way. Minimal destruction with blasters and droid poppers only. Not rockets or detonators. Check your aim. Keep an eye on the locals. Am I understood!?
> *CLONES*: Sir, yes, Sir!
> *CLONE*: If we're here to free the tail-heads, the least they can do is get out of our way.[43]

This dialogue contains semiotic messages supporting good war ideology and masculinity. Much

like in contemporary warfare, the war is fought by a marginalized group, in this case the clones.

The statement of "taking it back the hard way" exemplifies American ideals of heroism, where

taking on an enemy by handgun and blaster to save civilians demonstrates personal sacrifice in

the name of freedom.

In this last example, from the "A War on Two Fronts" episode, Obi-Wan, Master Yoda,

Mace Windu, and Anakin discuss the morality of training insurgents to overthrow the existing,

pro-Separatist government:

> *OBI-WAN*: Indeed. What you're suggesting would open up dangerous possibilities. And we must not train terrorists.
> *ANAKIN*: Eh, rebels!
> *OBI-WAN*: How we conduct war is what distinguishes us from others. Funding rebels to overthrow a legitimate government puts innocent lives at risk.
> *ANAKIN*: We can minimize collateral damage by using arms that mainly affect droids.
> *MACE WINDU*: The least we can do is help them defend themselves, test the tactic while we're at it.
> *ANAKIN*: This could be a great new weapon for us.
> *MASTER YODA*: Train and observe. Send advisors we will.[44]

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[43] Ridge, "Innocents of Ryloth."
[44] Filoni, "A War on Two Fronts."

Obi-Wan's dialogue reflects American social and cultural ideals through the way the Republic represents itself in war. As it takes place between the most decorated Jedi in the *Star Wars* galaxy, the discussion solidifies the Jedi's changing characterization from altruistic peacekeepers to military tacticians conformed to policies of imperialism and moral bartering. This changing dynamic caused by wartime mandates foreshadows the inevitable demise of the Jedi Order. The Jedi's plot to train the rebels acts as a commentary on America's involvement in counterinsurgencies in Cuba, South America, Afghanistan, and Vietnam. For viewers of *The Clone Wars*, the semiotic renderings create an image that places America's ideals front and center by establishing rules of engagement and policies of convenience. Thus, *The Clone Wars'* depiction of cultural ideals in war-making reinforces social constructs that articulate policies of war as altruistic and democratic.

> I would propose that vision pervade our cultural forms of life in skilled ways that depend both on the way sight is physically trained and on social positioning. Skilled vision is certainly 'sensuous knowledge' or 'corporeal', but it is also positional, political, and relational in important ways. Because skilled vision combines aspects of embodiment (as an educated capacity for selective perception) and apprenticeship, they are both ecological and ideological, in the sense that they inform worldviews and practice.[45]

The Clone Wars' practice of war-making with a conscience reinforces good war ideology by centering American values for how war is waged. In the tradition of Bakhtinian theory, *The Clone Wars* dialogue and action sequences articulate social and cultural discourse. As explained by Sweet's articulation of Barry Brummett, "Discourse – whether in the form of literature, television, films, or popular music – encourages individuals to 'confront their lived situations, celebrate their triumph and encompass their tragedies.' Discourse, then, equips people to live

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[45] Banks and Ruby, *Made to be Seen*, 29.

their lives in that it often 'articulates, explicitly or formally, the concerns, fears, and hopes of people' and offers a kind of solution to problematic situations or experiences.'"[46]

One of the main characteristics of *The Clone Wars* that contributes to the cultural production of war is its placement of the viewer in the theater of the war. This is done in the opening scene of every episode, which begins with an explosion of action sequences starting with aerial dogfights followed by clone trooper deployments in hostile terrain. The narration that follows the action sequences completes the circle by explaining the sacrifices at hand, the perilous situation, and the reason for war. For instance, the "Jedi Crash" episode opens with: "The Republic fleet is on the defensive! And pushed to the brink! As war rages on in the much-contested outer-rim territories! Chaos! And fear mount as the Separatist army rages on an epic battle against heavily out-numbered Republic ships! In the far reaches of the quell system! Anakin Skywalker and his Padawan, Ahsoka, race across the galaxy to aid the Jedi Knight, Aayla Secura, who is in the midst of a fight for her life!"[47] Hence, the narration in the opening scenes of *The Clone Wars* is indicative of WWII semiotic renderings, placing the outnumbered Republic as the saving agent against the evil Separatist forces.

Based on the WWII genre, the narrator's voice in these opening scenes is sharp and quick, supported by action shots of previous battles. Semiotically, the films in these narrations promote masculinity, sacrifice, and social ideology. Nothing exemplifies the Second World War more than the ideology behind it, which reflects the American social and cultural values of freedom and democracy—the idea that one is sacrificing themselves for the good of others. *The Clone Wars*' representation of the good war is illustrated in its action and dialogue sequences,

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[46] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 22.
[47] Coleman, "Jedi Crash."

with the former demonstrating the physical representation of American social values and the

latter embodying the reasons why and how Americans decide to wage war.

Lucas' Anti-war Dissent

The action in *The Clone Wars* is a byproduct of Lucas' social and environmental

influence. There is a dichotomy between comics' critique of social constructs pertaining to race,

sex, and class and the conservative conformist ideology of good war theory. Lucas understood

these social constructs:

> Mad (magazine) took on all the big targets – parents, schools, sex, politics, big business, advertising, and popular culture, using humor to show the emperor had no clothes. This helped me recognize that just because something is presented to you as the way it is, does not mean it really is. I couldn't rely on the world to do it for me. The impact this had on my world view was enormous. I spent much of my career telling stories about characters who fight to change the dominant paradigm.[48]

Hence, Lucas' experience with pop culture demonstrated its primacy as political dialogue and

social commentary. This gave Lucas a future lens into story development, social analysis, and

critique.

Lucas' influences from post-WWII America—animation, comics, and film—are keenly

represented in diverse formats and dialogues. The moral compass of *The Clone Wars* is formed

by Lucas' early childhood questions to his mother about religion as well as reflections about the

connections between life and history. As explained by Jay Jones (2016), "Lucas found himself

wondering 'What is God? What are we? What am I? Do I function in this, and what's going on

here?' They were questions Lucas would struggle with, explore and, with the creation of the

Force in *Star Wars*, attempt to answer in his films."[49] Thus, Lucas' paramount element in *The*

Clone Wars is the characterization that diagnoses the social consequences of war. This duality of

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[48] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 21-22.
[49] Jones, *George Lucas*, 19.

war's effects is semiotically represented in the opening dialogue signifying the reasons for war, while the consequences of war and its tactics remain in the background of the dialogue.

A semiotic analysis reveals the planetary invasion as a representation of American democratic ideals of freedom. However, the action also conveys American cultural ideals linked to good war ideology. The opening narrative of the "Innocents of Ryloth" episode validates the ideological reason for the invasion while semiotically linking it to past conflicts. This dialogue actuates WWII ideals of war leading to liberation, freedom, and the justification for invasion. The last part of the narrative depicts segments of total war theory, whereby starvation is used to bring about civilian capitulation and surrender. The implementation of starvation as a technique in war demonstrates a viable alternative to defeating and demoralizing the enemy. Its effectiveness was demonstrated by the American government during Native American uprisings as well as by the British naval blockade of Germany during WWII. Therefore, the dialogue conveys actions taken by the Jedi representing American ideals of self-preservation and agency. Through dialogue, Lucas' recognition of war as an agent of oppression toward sentient beings calls attention toward war via public discourse. Most animated shows deny viewers the capacity to critique war's effects on populations. By creating a dialogue about war's effects, Lucas is dissenting against representing good war ideology as pro-American. The focus of war's effects on populations is one area that sets *The Clone Wars* apart from other animated shows utilizing war action as a pacifying medium.

The continued dialogue in the "Innocents of Ryloth" episode contains racial and class undertones. As demonstrated in the dialogue, the saviors of the planet are Jedi Knights of the Republic, who represent white American males with masculine and democratic ideals. This rescue is due to the planet's inability to save itself. Hence, the cause for invasion continues to

validate American ideals as altruistic and selfless. However, the real reasons for the invasion of the planet—the safeguarding of Republic trade routes and establishment of military bases—are negated, hidden behind the dramatic action of liberation. As such, the rescue serves as a direct correlation to good war theory and the current War on Terror. The development of media narrating Americans as heroic saviors is supported by Sweet, who writes, "Interpreted as cultural myth, the *Star Wars* films reinforce the familiar U.S. American cultural tropes of rugged individualism, good versus evil, and the potential for redemption."[50] Hence, American good war ideology stems from narrating actions for the benefit of others, in this case indigenous populations being held for ransom against imperialist forces. In addition, the use of the Jedi places commentary on America's use of special forces against a greater number of enemy forces. The Republic sending its best Jedi contributes to a critical lens stemming from Lucas' moral, religious, and historical compass.

Good War Ideology: Masculinity and the Socialization of the American Soldier

The Second World War ushered in a wave of creative propaganda. Post-WWII propaganda then aimed to contain Communist infiltration and influence. Beginning with the introduction of television, America's youth, particularly boys, represented the target audience for the diverse media articulating WWII heroics, masculinity, and war. As supported by Longley, "Multiple levels of the masculine conception appealed to young men…, even those who had reservations about the war. These included… the effect of media such as movies, television, books, and music. All these reinforced virile beliefs regarding service, especially in the face of the Communist threat, and helped push many young people into the military."[51] Like the Clone Trooper, American youth experienced life through a Cold War lens articulating ideology that

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[50] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 5.
[51] Longley, *The Morenci Marines*, 53.

mandated certain social behaviors pertaining to war. The use of popular culture media as an avenue for advertisement is also supported by Daddis, who writes, "The Pulps extolled the benefits of military service, and how it could promote social advancement, yet openly venerated working-class ideals and their value to proving one's manhood."[52]

The end of the Second World War brought the capitulation of the evil Nazi empire and the beginning of the Cold War threat, which initiated social mandates articulating war preparedness. The central commodity in waging war, and one taken for granted, is that of citizen soldiers. However, American policy targeted women as the best means of containing Communist infiltration. Aside from manufacturers producing consumer goods aimed at women's housekeeping, government officials encouraged procreation as a primary defense against Communist infiltration. Government officials believed that women represented the weakest point for infiltration, so these policies aimed to keep women content with house cleaning and child rearing. This policy ushered in the Baby Boomer Generation. As explained by May, "The focus on population planning emerged during World War II. At first, planning was geared to domestic needs, particularly the ideal of the postwar family. A 1943 pamphlet stated that 'victory cannot be won without *planning*… Planned Parenthood … can be made to mean that more healthy children will be born to maintain the kind of peace for which we fight.'"[53] During the Baby Boom era (1946–1964), Americans gave birth to 78.3 million children, a generation with primary accounts of WWII narratives that influenced the largest cohort of Americans ever born to good war ideology. This cohort, as will be discussed later, inherited the Cold War battle in the rice fields of Indochina.

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[52] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 33.
[53] May, *Homeward Bound*, 142.

One can argue that the Baby Boomer Generation was socially bred as an agent of suppression and as a deterrent for future Communist infiltration. This generation of Baby Boomers, especially those brought up by military families, represented the core of good war ideology that stipulated adherence to government mandates and distrust of dissent. Longley's account of small town America's experience with the Vietnam conflict sheds further light: "The people in Morenci, however, never publicly challenged the policies of the US government, rarely publicly challenged the capitalist system as the root cause of US involvement in Vietnam or government collaboration…. In part, their silence related to the dominant political culture of the country and region, but… despised the antiwar movement as un-American."[54] Hence, the Baby Boomer Generation is cemented as representing the dichotomy of nationalism versus self-determination. *The Clone Wars'* semiotic use of WWII battles scenes, coupled with Vietnam-era clones fighting in alien environments as foot soldiers, stimulates a multi-generational connection.

The Clone Wars' semiotic renderings of WWII fight scenes play into a generational redistribution of masculinity, ideology, and exceptionalism. The Baby Boomer Generation's indoctrination into good war ideology developed through a central social artery targeting young men's patriotism and masculinity. As Longley describes, "Throughout the country, the political culture, strongly influenced by the Cold War, bombarded young men on a daily basis with messages about their duty to their country, especially in the face of the Communist menace that threatened to destroy their way of life and enslave their families."[55] For younger generations, *The Clone Wars* acts as a socializing agent to understand good war narratives and masculinity.

For Americans whose parents fought or lived during the Second World War, media such as films, comics, and literature worked to doubly reinforce good war ideology. For the

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[54] Longley, *The Morenci Marines*, 160.
[55] Longley, 56.

generation of Americans growing up in a post-WWII society, Baby Boomers represented the target audience for main street media's proliferation of WWII narratives. As reinforced by Boggs and Pollard, "The good-war discourse has been central to the culture of militarism since just after Pearl Harbor, keeping alive public memories of those dramatic history-altering victories over the Nazis and fascists while going even further, glorifying the entire legacy of patriotism and warfare, which remains firmly embedded within the American national psyche… The studios have come to cherish war movies for their endless action sequences, their focus on male heroism, their riveting patriotic emotion, and their consistent profitability."[56] Lucas' appropriation of WWII opening narratives thus functions as the primary generational connection and introduction to *The Clone Wars*.

The Clone Wars hides behind a Cold War façade of good versus evil and public consent, while the animation and character dialogue act as mechanisms of critique. However, the political mandate inherent in the series articulates a new "wartime" that is based on historical nostalgia and social apathy toward the War on Terror. As expressed by Dudziak, "If we abandon the idea that war is confined in time, we can see more clearly that our law and politics are not suspended by an exception to the regular order of things. Instead, wartime has become normal time in America."[57] Americans' understanding of war hinges on past WWII ideologies that reinforce good war social constructs.

Younger audiences come to learn who the bad guys are and what they do, thus producing a cultural value system based on good war ideology as to why we fight wars. For adults, these images and dialogical renderings conform to American cultural value systems based on past historical timelines. As Hall writes about cultural identity, "The first position defines 'cultural

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[56] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 47.
[57] Dudziak, *War-Time*, 8.

identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self' hiding inside the many

other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and

ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the

common historical experiences and shared cultural codes."[58] In this instance, WWII is central to

Americans' psychological and cultural understanding of self-identification, providing a

conscientious rendering of the beliefs for which Americans choose to wage war. As Boggs and

Pollard explain, "In Cinema as in politics World War II hovers over the landscape more than a

half-century after the final surrender... This is part nostalgia, part historical remembrance, part

continued search for a 'good war' to gratify the national psyche."[59] In recent American history,

this ideology was supported by President George W. Bush's comparison of the 9/11 terrorist

attacks to Pearl Harbor and the nation's defense to that against Nazism and Fascism. In *The

Clone Wars*, a good war premise is employed to save the Republic from the evil Separatist

forces.

 The Clone Wars' storyline enforces cultural values representing how Americans see

themselves in a global conflict. Sweet describes further: "'How we conduct war is what

distinguishes us from others.' A clear parallel to Just War Theory… Obi-Wan gives voice to the

Jedi Order's moral commitment to fight war in as humane as possible... The Separatist war

efforts seem to have no moral center. The Separatists research biological and biogenetic

weapons, torture with abandon, use civilian populations as shields, kidnap and attempt to

conduct experiments on Jedi infants."[60]

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[58] Hall, *Essential Essays*, 223.
[59] Boggs and Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine*, 94.
[60] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 110-111.

Dissent: Gender Politics in Wartime

> War is intolerable! We have been deceived into thinking that we must be a part of it. I say the
> moment we commit to fighting, we already lost.
> —Duchess Satine.[61]

Unlike the Jedi's adherence to wartime mandates and Democratic ideals, women

represent the epitome of wartime dissent. *The Clone Wars* demonstrates the shift in Jedi ideology

from independent peacekeepers to wartime generals, where the Jedi are poised to represent the

American ideals of truth, justice, and freedom. These ideals are manifested not by their dialogue

but through heroic physical actions. For instance, in the episode "Voyage of Temptation," Obi-

Wan Kenobi articulates his rationale to the Duchess of Mandalore for the use of military force as

a primary form of protection. The Duchess, however, refuses military imperialism of her planet:

> THE DUCHESS: We oppose the war on humanitarian grounds.
> OBI-WAN: The strongest defense is the swiftest and decisive offense.
> THE DUCHESS: I remember a time when Jedi were not generals but peacekeepers.
> OBI-WAN: We are protectors, we fight for peace.
> THE DUCHESS: What an amusing contradiction.[62]

The dialogue in this episode displays good war ideology as expressed through the Jedi's

fight for the greater good. It shows how the Jedi have been reappropriated to exemplify

conformist ideals that deny their original purpose of providing peace through self-reflection and

analysis. Gender dynamics are also evidenced by Obi-Wan's masculinity and his inability to see

the Duchess' point of view. Their discussion of war and peace reveals a dichotomy where the

Duchess' use of reasoned dialogue in favor of non-violent peace represents the feminist point of

view, while Obi-Wan's response is indicative of American masculine cultural beliefs pertaining

to wartime mandates. The power dynamics are represented by American patriarchal constructs

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[61] O'Connell, "Voyage of Temptation."
[62] O'Connell.

pertaining to war, where its decisions and outcomes are relegated to men. In this instance, the Duchess represents antiwar dissent while Obi-Wan conforms to good war ideology.

The Clone Wars pays tribute to the tradition of American women providing the primary voice toward wartime dissent. As expressed by Hoganson, "The apparent reverberations from one time period to another point to the need to study not only the way in which gender beliefs have been brought to bear in specific policy debates, but also the process of transforming ideas about gender and war from one generation to the next."[63] One of the major obstacles with the good war concept is that it represents a pro-government and pro-military ideology, negating any form of dissent.

Women's representation in *The Clone Wars* is aligned with historical references to the women's peace movement, anti-war dissent, and personal agency. The historical record demonstrates women being the central dissenting voice, going against pro-war masculinity. As explained by Sweet, "Women's antiwar protest has a long and storied tradition in the United States. From the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to the National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War, to Women Strike for Peace, to Code Pink the presence of the feminist antiwar movement provided a counterpoint to aggressive foreign policy."[64] Women featured in *The Clone Wars*—Padmé, Duchess Satine, and Ahsoka Tano, among several others—are relegated to providing most of the dissent. However, it is their unwillingness to fall in line with masculine social constructs pertaining to war that gives the women their agency.

Gender roles in *The Clone Wars* provide a continuum for women leading the charge against masculine consensus. This began with Princess Leia Organa, whose first appearance in

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[63] Hoganson. *Fighting for American Manhood*, 209.
[64] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 122.

Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope shows her recording herself saying, "Help me Obi-Wan-

Kenobi, you're my only hope," then discharging the plans to the Death Star into an R2-D2

navigational computer as an act of defiance against the Galactic Empire. Princess Leia's agency

is represented by her bold actions against a draconian system of oppression led by Darth Vader,

as illustrated by this dialogue between the two:

> PRINCESS LEIA: Darth Vader, only you could be so bold. The Imperial Senate will not
> stand for this…. when they hear.
> DARTH VADER: Don't act so surprised your highness! You weren't on any mission ship
> this time. Several transmissions beamed this ship by Rebel spies. I want to know what
> happened to the plans they gave you.
> PRINCESS LEIA: I don't know what you're talking about! I'm a member of the Imperial
> Senate on a diplomatic mission to Alderon.
> DARTH VADER: You are part of the Rebel Alliance and a traitor—take her away![65]

The major objective for women's agency lies not only in their pursuit of peace through

diplomatic means, but in going against male directives that dictate their time and place in

society. For women, Darth Vader represents the epitome of patriarchal constructs aimed at

denying them personal agency and self-determination.

The depiction of women being the focus of vocal anti-war dissent is a nod to women's

contributions both historically and in the platform of the *Star Wars* universe. Sweet's analysis of

The Clone Wars as political dialogue traces women's antiwar dissent to Jeannette Rankin, the

first female senator and sole antiwar voice representing Montana. Rankin's senate vote opposing

entry into the Great War and WWII resulted in social animosity and death threats. Rankin

continued her antiwar dissent during the Vietnam War and is known as being the navigating light

toward wartime opposition. Sweet's use of Rankin as a foundational figure clarifies the

progressive stance for women in the *Star Wars* galaxy. Unlike Princes Leia's attempt to stop the

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[65] Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV*.

war process by destroying the Death Star, Rankin's argument is closer to that of Padmé, whose

basis for antiwar advocacy lies in withdrawing from war. As expressed by Rankin in Sweet,

"The last 'war to end all wars' should have taught us that we can't end war that way. Wars pave

the way for more war."[66] The representation of women in *The Clone Wars* derives from a long

tradition of bold women whose personal and social agency lies in the audacity to run against

masculine constructs dictating war.

Clone War Politics: A Woman's Business

The difference between men and women's social standing toward war lies in women's

use of politics to create a discourse against war. As previously explained, women's roles during

wartime are contrasted against adherence to pro-war masculinity. As Hoganson explains, "It may

seem unplausible that such seemingly personal phenomena as gender convictions would have

far-reaching political implications, but by stipulating social roles for men and women, gender

beliefs have significantly affected political affairs."[67] Thus, conservatism places women in

supportive roles that deny them a social point of view. When women decide to partake in the

manly arena of war affairs, they use politics as a platform for dissenting discourse.

The use of political platforms is best illustrated by Senator Amidala's message to the

Galactic Senate: "The creation of more warriors will not end this war. The financial costs alone

will bankrupt and cripple the Republic. By adding more clones to the conflict, we are only

escalating destruction, not winning the war, which is why we must vote for this resolution, to

promote more diplomacy and to bring an end to this killing and hatred."[68] Senator Amidala's

speech to the Galactic Senate showcases women's cross-generational legacy of antiwar dissent,

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[66] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 133.
[67] Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 3.
[68] O'Connell, "Senate Murders."

especially as Amidala's rancor against war is carried over to her daughter, Princess Leia. Amidala's call to end the production of clones provides social commentary not only against the use of war to settle disputes, but the drafting of large numbers of men to continue the pace of the Vietnam War.

The debate over the need for more troops to end the war resonates with 1960s antiwar dissent against the draft, the escalation of the war, and the effects of war on soldiers and the population. Hence, Senator Amidala's stance against the Senate's refusal to relent on clone development reflects American gender norms of the military industrial complex. Lastly, Amidala's advocacy for diplomacy runs against traditionally masculine constructs of war making. American ideals toward war memory are aligned with a win-or-lose ideology, with the latter being unacceptable. Instead, Amidala's attempt at antiwar diplomacy demonstrates a frustration with war being a mechanism for resolution. This is best exemplified by Sweet, who writes, "The war habit comes to us through long traditions of history and teaching. We are unconscious of how many war habits we have and our method of perpetuating them. All our history and our music and our art and literature and family traditions and loyalties are tied up in war."[69]

Senator Amidala's message calls attention to the notion of women, as the true voices of Americana, being the primary advocates against the use of war as the dominant means of conflict resolution. Women continue to be the central figures in producing social discourse that fights for a world of peace. As Sweet argues, "Amidala's call for diplomacy and cautious approach to increased militarism may be the most insightful into what is transpiring politically, but also perhaps the wisest."[70] In sum, women's representation in *The Clone Wars* universe is tied to a

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[69] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 133.
[70] Sweet, 139.

long and neglected history of women dissenting from wartime mandates. One could even argue

that the *Star Wars* rebellion started out of women's dissent toward war.

The Dichotomy of Gender Representation through Dialogue

Gender power dynamics in *The Clone Wars*' dialogue are central to understanding

women's agency and social advocacy. Even though women such as Padmé remain vocal toward

ending the war, women's agency remains tied to patriarchal sanctions. This is exemplified in a

dialogue between Duchess Satine and Obi-Wan-Kenobi.

> SENATOR PALPATINE: Let us commit our military might to defending the Mandalorian people.
> DUCHESS SATINE: Defending? You mean to occupy our home. You would trample our right to self-determination.
> SENATOR: We mean to save your people.
> DUCHESS: You will turn our planet into a military target, which will bring the war to us. Mandalore must remain neutral.
> OBI-WAN: Satine, as your friend, I don't think you should make any decisions in this state of mind.
> DUCHESS: This state of mind? And what state of mind would that be, precisely?
> OBI-WAN: What I'm saying is, any person would be hysterical by now, but…
> DUCHESS: Hysterical!? The Republic is attempting to force its will upon innocent people.
> OBI-WAN: I only meant that – frankly.
> DUCHESS: I'm surprised you're not hysterical. Perhaps if more citizens got hysterical, they'd be more inclined to speak up when the Republic tramples on their rights.
> OBI-WAN: Rushing in like this is foolhardy.
> DUCHESS: Ironic words from a man who spends his days running hither a yon, wielding his lightsaber with deadly force as if on a crusade. Why should I listen to someone who so frequently relies on violence? In my opinion, you're the one who's foolhardy.[71]

The Duchess' refusal of her planets' occupation by Republic forces shows her unwillingness to

compromise her status as an antiwar agent. Meanwhile, Obi-Wan's attitude toward the

occupation of the Duchess' planet exemplifies his willingness to adhere to wartime mandates.

The irony of the dialogue is that it exposes Obi-Wan's loss of agency. Though Obi-Wan's status

as a Jedi Knight is based on his ability to adhere to a higher moral agency and exercise critical

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[71] O'Connell, "Duchess of Mandalore."

judgment, his adherence to wartime mandates suppresses his moral authority. As explained by Sweet, "For every representation of the Jedi Knights as wagers of peace striving to adhere to a higher moral calling, another reminds viewers the Jedi are mired in the midst of a prolonged war. No matter how hard they fight to maintain their moral center, the physical, psychological, and spiritual costs threaten to undermine their ethical responsibility."[72] On the other hand, the Duchess' animosity over the loss of planetary self-determination shows her as possessing higher morality, critical thought, and self-determination.

Secondly, the dialogue between Satine and Obi-Wan exposes gendered power dynamics. The Duchess' animosity over the decision to occupy her planet is exacerbated by Obi-Wan's inability to recognize the occupation as a steppingstone to war, and by his patriarchal assertion of her "hysteria" being caused by her having the unstable mind of a woman. Unlike men's tantrums, which are seen to be charged with masculinity, women's dissent is historically translated as an act of mental instability or disorder. The Duchess' final remark that "war is allowed by not enough people being hysterical" echoes post-9/11 issues of prolonged war causing social apathy about war. In this dialogue and throughout the series, gendered power structures are revealed, where women's agency lies in rebutting men's masculinity and the Jedi's social privilege stems from their rank and male gender. It seems ironic that the Jedi are represented as using the Force to understand all living things and bring balance, but remain aloof when it comes to understanding masculinity's impact on women's self-determination.

Gendered power dynamics as represented through dialogue are also evident in the "Senate Spy" episode, which depicts Anakin's refusal to allow Padmé to partake in an undercover mission:

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[72] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 111.

PADMÉ: Someone has to find out the truth.
ANAKIN: Someone does, just not you.
PADMÉ: Why not me?
ANAKIN: Because it's going to be dangerous. Whoever takes this mission will be putting their life at risk.
PADMÉ: I've been in many tough situations before. It never seemed to bother you. I never stopped you from facing danger. You're constantly getting shot at!
ANAKIN: I've been trained for that. It's very different from spying on a traitor.
PADMÉ: You mean I can't handle the mission?
ANAKIN: I mean I'm not going to let you do it.
PADMÉ: You're not going to let me!? It's not your choice to make. It's mine.
ANAKIN: Lucky for us you've already decided to refuse.
PADMÉ: Actually, I've just changed my mind. You've convinced me that it's vital to learn what Clovis is doing. I accept the mission.
ANAKIN: Even though I'm telling you not to.
PADMÉ: Don't take it personally, Anakin. Duty comes first, especially in wartime.[73]

Anakin denying Padmé's personal agency shows his adherence to patriarchal social constructs. The significance of this dialogue is best understood when considering its effect on younger audiences, particularly young women. One can argue that the *Star Wars* franchise, written through a male lens, is inevitably marked by traditional gender constructs. McDowell writes, "The point is that the cinematic product of Lucas' imagination, whether intentionally or not, reflects deep hegemonic currents in modern American culture by defining the women in the narratives from the male perspective."[74] However, I must slightly disagree with McDowell; I see Princess Leia's characterization, of ridiculing men and raising her voice when she either did not agree or needed to be heard, as echoing Padmé's vocal disagreement with Anakin. The dialogue between Anakin and Padmé demonstrates to young women that they will have to stand up against masculine social constructs if they want to live a life outside men's power structure.

Anakin's attempt at controlling Padmé's actions is a precursor of Anakin's anger toward what he cannot control, foreshadowing his fall from grace and rise as a Sith Lord. For young

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[73] Lee, "Senate Spy."
[74] McDowell, *Identity Politics*, 79.

women viewing *The Clone Wars*, Padmé's dialogue with Anakin provides social discourse by representing women going against traditional male social constructs. As Mayer writes, "In her essay 'How to build a man,' Ann Fausto-Sterling tells us that 'men are made not born' and that we 'construct masculinity through social discourse.' Male behavior depends on existing social relations and on the social code that predetermines these relations. Therefore, the expression of masculinity will depend on the image that men have of themselves, relative to women, community, society, and the nation"[75]

Ahsoka Tano and Female Combat Agency in *The Clone Wars* Universe

Much like Princess Leia in the original *Star Wars* movie, *The Clone Wars*' use of a female protagonist provides greater female representation. Still, women's representation remains small in comparison to men. In the original *Star Wars* movie, Princess Leia held double duty as both a combatant and a diplomat, risking her life by acting against Darth Vader. As Leia escapes from Imperial forces with the help of Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, she is seen blasting her way alongside Luke and Han. Throughout their escape, Leia ridicules Luke and Han for their poor escape plan:

> LEIA: Aren't you small for a storm trooper?
> LUKE: Oh, the uniform. My name is Luke Skywalker and I'm here to rescue you.
> LEIA: You're who?
> HAN: Can't get out that way!
> LEIA: Looks like you managed to cut off our only escape route!
> HAN: Maybe you'd like it better in your cell your highness!
> LUKE: Is there any other way out!?
> HAN: We can't hold them off forever!
> LEIA: Some rescue! Did you have a plan for getting out? (*Leia then reaches and takes Luke's blaster and starts firing away at the storm troopers.*)
> HAN: What are you doing!?
> LEIA: Someone has to save our skins! Into the garbage fly-boy!
> HAN: I'm either going to kill her or begin to like her![76]

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[75] Mayer. *Gender Ironies of Nationalism*, 29.
[76] Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode IV*.

Princess Leia's dissent toward the Galactic Empire is central to women being represented in combat roles by taking up arms. Unlike Padmé, Leia is not concerned with stopping a war or advocating for peace. Rather, Leia is attached to her terrorist plot to end Imperial colonial rule by destroying the Death Star as an agent of tyranny. Princess Leia is not only rebelling against conservative Imperial forces, but against draconian social constructs aimed at suppressing women's self-determination. Though Princess Leia was the first female combatant to be depicted in the *Star Wars* universe in 1977, in the chronology of the *Star Wars* universe, Leia picks up the torch from Ahsoka Tano.

Ahsoka Tano's combat training took place under Anakin Skywalker, who later becomes Darth Vader. In *The Clone Wars*, she is a Padawan-learner, or Jedi in training, though she also holds the rank of general and partakes in all frontline battles. Ahsoka is seen leading clones into battle, where she quickly learns that her combat decisions have life-or-death consequences. As a Jedi-learner, Ahsoka is taught to know her place, especially when it comes to asking questions pertaining to the reasons for war. Until *The Clone Wars*, the Jedi possessed agency in determining all matters, whether political or not, and held sway to go against unfair policy mandates. Ahsoka senses, however, that the war and its militarization of the Jedi could lead to the demise of the Jedi Order.

The lack of transparency about the war and its side effects of death and destruction cause Ahsoka to begin asking questions. She remarks, in a dialogue with Anakin Skywalker, "Truthfully, I don't understand any of it. I know the Separatists are evil, but all anyone argued about was banking deregulation, interest rates, and, well, almost nothing about why we're fighting the war in the first place."[77] Ahsoka questions why she is not being taught anything

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[77] Dunlevy, "Heroes on Both Sides."

about the production of war or the reasons for it. This questioning stems from her realization that being a Jedi rests with possessing a higher moral character. In a later episode, after she helps imperialize a planet, Ahsoka looks around at the devastation and begins to ask questions about the conduct and purpose for the war.

> *CAPTAIN REX*: Something wrong?
> *AHSOKA*: As a Jedi, we were trained to be keepers of the peace, not soldiers. But all I've been since I was a Padawan is a soldier.
> *REX*: Well, I've known no other way. Gives us clones all mixed feelings about the war. But without it, we clones wouldn't exist.[78]

Ahsoka's agency stems from her resentment toward the Jedi Order for failing to teach her about the causes for war. Her questioning provides social commentary about gender and war politics, since as a general, she is one of the primary female combat leaders. The fact that Rex did not know anything about the causes or reasons for war places her in the same realm as a foot soldier, running central to conservative military mandates of following orders without delay or question. As a woman in frontline battles, her contribution does not materialize into military mobility, thus providing commentary on gender constructs pertaining to the military. As explained by Nagel's study on masculinity and nationalism, "Despite their bravery, sometimes taking on traditional male military roles, and despite the centrality of their contribution to many nationalist struggles, it is often the case that feminist nationalists find themselves once again under the thumb of institutionalized patriarchy once national independence is won."[79] In the end, Ahsoka's realization of the Jedi's adherence to military mandates causes her to leave the Jedi Order.

Ahsoka's return to the Republic following her leave is crucial to the development of women's agency in the *Star Wars* universe. Because of her lack of faith in the Republic's politics, Ahsoka takes up arms with Lady Bo-katan of Mandalore, a female bounty hunter. Much

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[78] Filoni and Ruiz, "Shattered."
[79] Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism," 253.

like Princess Leia, Ahsoka realizes that unchecked politics and lack of dissent would lead to the demise of the Republic and the Jedi Order:

> AHSOKA: So that's it? You're going to abandon Bo-Katan and her people?
> OBI-WAN: Ahsoka, surely you understand this is a pivotal moment in the Clone War. The heart of the Republic is under attack.
> AHSOKA: I understand that, as usual, you're playing politics. This is why the people have lost faith in the Jedi. I had too, until I was reminded of what the order means to people who truly need us.
> OBI-WAN: Right now, people on Coruscant need us.
> AHSOKA: No, the Chancellor needs you.
> OBI-WAN: That's not fair.
> AHSOKA: I'm not trying to be.[80]

This dialogue between Ahsoka and Obi-Wan demonstrates Ahsoka's independence from gender confines that would dictate her agency based on her being a female Padawan. As a tribute to other *Star Wars* women, Ahsoka is the first to realize the effects of war on the Jedi Order. Much like Jeannette Rankin and Princess Leia, Ahsoka sets out to take matters into her own hands while alienating herself from her former colleagues. The process of seeking agency inside a patriarchal social structure during wartime is captured by Hoganson, who writes, "Politics is modified war. In politics there is struggle, strife, contention, bitterness, heartburning, excitement, agitation, everything which is averse to the true character of women. In circular fashion, women's exclusion from partisan politics made that activity seem all the more manly, and the manly character of politics made it even harder to push for inclusion."[81] Thus, Ahsoka's independent action outside the Jedi Order's political mandates validates women seeking resolve outside social constructs of gender.

The attack on Coruscant by Separatist forces and the Jedi's urgency to defend it—added to the fact that Coruscant had never been attacked—places social commentary on America's

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[80] Filoni and Ruiz, "Old Friends Not Forgotten."
[81] Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 23.

reaction to 9/11. Though Coruscant is the Republic's home planet, where all decisions of war are made, the population of Coruscant lives in absence of war and its side effects of death, destruction, population displacement, and imperialism. Coruscant is illustrated not as a planet at war, but a planet that delegates war. The use of a marginalized clone army without any social or family ties exacerbates the disparity between the war's effects on other planets' populations and those of Coruscant.

Obi-Wan has an urgency to uphold wartime mandates and defend Coruscant while Ahsoka challenges him in favor of defending the planet of Mandalore from the brink of military occupation and social unrest. Ahsoka asserts her agency and fights against the Jedi Order by calling out Obi-Wan's adherence to following singular political mandates rather than viewing the war through its side effects of social suffering stemming from the Republic's footprint of imperialistic control. Hence, women's agency is conveyed when they create discourse against the status quo of masculinity and war:

> PADMÉ: A peaceful solution is the only way out of this morass of war.
> ANAKIN: That's not my role, Padmé.
> PADMÉ: Why not!? Why isn't it your role? Aren't you a Jedi? Isn't it our duty to speak our minds to advise the chancellor?[82]

The tug of war between good war ideology and women's antiwar dissent is represented by Padmé. Despite being front and center in the war, Anakin lacks knowledge about the internal reasons for fighting the war. For the good war ideology to run a successful course, one must ensure the public remains oblivious to its geopolitical aims and does not ask the right questions. Hence, Anakin's agency resonates from following orders. Padmé's knowledge is followed by Ahsoka's questioning of the war, which places her as an outsider:

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[82] Dunlevy, "Heroes on Both Sides."

> *SENATOR AMIDALA*: Members of the senate. Do you hear yourselves? More money, more clones, more war. Say nothing for fiscal responsibility, what about moral responsibility? Hasn't this war gone on long enough?
> *FELLOW SENATOR*: Senator Amidala, are you suggesting we surrender to the Separatists.
> *SENATOR:* You did your part, Representative. Senator Amidala is the problem.
> *FELLOW SENATOR*: I thought age might temper her idealism.[83]

Thus, dissent—questions pertaining to policies, reasons for waging war, or war's effects—runs counter to good war ideology by creating interference and masculine backlash in wartime.

The tradition of female leadership opposing wartime mandates and masculine social constructs remains firm in the *Star Wars* universe. Perhaps no other pop culture media is as in tune with female agency via dissent than *Star Wars*. One can argue that women represent the foundation of the Rebellion, beginning with Ahsoka's fortitude against the Jedi's failure to view war as a destabilizing agent leading to their inevitable demise, followed by Princes Leia's leadership in terrorizing the Death Star. Also notable is Gen Erso's advocacy in gaining access to the Death Star plans by invading an Imperial base, as illustrated in *Rogue One*:

> What chance do we have? The question is "what choice?" Run, hide… plead for mercy, scatter your forces. You give way to an enemy this evil with this much power… and you condemn the galaxy to an eternity of submission. The time to fight is now! Every moment you waste is another step closer to the ashes of Jedha. Send your best troops to Scarif. Send the Rebel fleet if you have to. You need to capture the Death Star plans if there is any hope of destroying it… Saw Gerrera used to say… one fighter with a sharp stick and nothing left to lose can take the day. They've no idea we're coming. They've no reason to expect us. If we can make it to the ground, we'll take the next chance. And the next. On and on until we win…or the chances are spent.[84]

The trajectory of female dissent and leadership follows a tradition of rebellion against masculine social constructs pertaining to war. Women's willingness to take up arms, such as Ahsoka, provides social commentary on women's agency being tied to not only war, but dissent against

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[83] Dunlevy.
[84] Edwards, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

social constructs limiting women. This idea of women being historically tied to conflict and change is supported by Hoganson:

> To better understand international relations, wrote Iriye, historians must examine domestic cultural arrangements, including the customs that help maintain social order. Because gender has been of great importance in allocating social roles and shaping ideas about power in more countries than just the United States. It stands to reason that gender should be recognized as a cultural arrangement with significant implications for the conduct of international relations in a range of different context.[85]

The importance of understanding women's contributions, both historically and in social settings, is to gain access to an untapped resource of female contributions with the potential for consequential world change. *The Clone Wars*' contribution to female representation in pop culture media allows social dialogue where people, in particular young women, are enabled to view the semiotic representations as a resonating element for critical thought and analysis. McDowell explains, "As Margaret Miles and Brent Plate argue, 'how we see the other effects the way we treat the other. Film, as a medium of mass reception, promotes, negates, and generally alters our perception of identities, especially with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.'"[86] Hence, female representation in *The Clone Wars* universe contributes to the social discourse by placing women in battles against masculinity, patriarchy, tyranny, imperialism, war, and social constructs that limit their personal agency and self-determination.

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[85] Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 205.
[86] McDowell, *Identity Politics,* 78.

3. Grunts and Clones: An Expendable Commodity

Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die. No nation that maintains fighting
services can afford to revoke that rule of experience. Where soldiers begin to question the
rightness of the cause for, they are fighting, armies soon collapse.
—Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*.[87]

The Clone Wars is about a war of ideologies fueled by human clones. One of the

principle social commentaries of *The Clone Wars*, the Republic's use of clones is their primary

means of waging war against the Separatists. Unlike the Separatist's use of a droid army, where

loss of life is not equivalent to human life, the Republic's response is to use human clones for

their ability to think critically. However, the biological manufacturing of clones for the exclusive

use of war denies clones agency, making their use similar to droids. The social commentary

attached to the use of clones places heavy questions on American values pertaining to who fights

the war and where soldiers fit inside the morality of war.

One of the central human connections to war is the loss of loved ones as soldiers. The

symbolic loss of soldiers in war is the cultural signifying glue that places soldiers' sacrifice as

indicative of the nation's sacred ideals, myths, and ideologies. Hence, the socialization of the

soldier's death in war is one of the primary avenues where war's past and present create

ideological meaning for warfare.

However, the connection between loved ones, society, and war is denied to clones. A

good majority will never see the Republic's grand cities where the fates of their lives are

discussed. Clone troopers' role in combat, stemming from the Republic's need of soldiers,

signifies the Vietnam War's use of class structures to wage war. The commonalities are based on

the draft, the representation of marginalized communities, soldier anxieties pertaining to

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[87] Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 13.

questions of morality and agency in war, and the battles taking place in foreign territories.

Lastly, clones, in lieu of having an actual family, establish family bonds through their shared

sacrifice, purpose, and life and death experiences in war. Like in contemporary wartime, soldiers

rely on shared experience as a coping mechanism.

Clone Trooper Marginalization

The social commentary on the use of clones to wage war is based on a loss-count

metaphor, where clone deaths signify the means for fulfilling the Republic's wartime mandates.

Clones represent the most marginalized segment of society but make up the highest combat

mortality rate. Their biological development renders them as a social byproduct, or a form of

commodification for waging war, which places clones on an equal platform to the Separatists'

droids. The Republic casts clones outside of the main society, denying them any familial

connection or validation in combat. The clones' social development thus represents American

democratic ideologies, where clones are bred to fight under the ideological pretense of waging

war as a liberating and pacifying medium. Clones' social development is laced with American

values pertaining to good war theory: democracy, freedom, and masculinity, as illustrated in a

dialogue between Captain Rex and clone trooper Cut Lawquane,

> CAPTAIN REX: What if I'm choosing the life I want? What if I'm staying in the army
> because it's meaningful to me?
> CUT LAWQUANE: And how is it meaningful?
> CAPTAIN REX: Because I'm part of the most pivotal moments in the history of the
> Republic. If we fail, then our children and their children could be forced to live under an
> evil I can't well imagine.[88]

The emphasis here is on the war being one of the most meaningful moments in the Republic's

history, akin to WWII, where American society raced to partake in one of the greatest challenges

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[88] Dalva, "The Deserter."

in history. The war also presented an opportunity to test men's masculinity. Captain Rex's

argument of a Republic loss having draconian consequences represents a threat to democratic

ideals, much like American ideals of fighting an evil empire in favor of a future supported by

freedom. The dialogue between Cut Lawquane and Rex demonstrates the dichotomy of war in

society: Rex represents the masculine call to arms, while Cut chooses personal agency by asking

whether one should have a choice not to fight in war. The dialogue between Cut and Rex also

adds social commentary to the 1960s' social fight to refuse a war that no longer made sense to

many soldiers fighting the war. The dialogue thus produces an unconscious account of American

ideals toward war, self-agency, and citizens' responsibility to the Republic.

Patriotic Dissent: Should I Stay, or Should I Go?

Clone agency is a theme throughout the series. The epitome of a good soldier is Captain

Rex, who follows orders first and asks questions later. He is the primary advocate of clones; his

advocacy, however, usually comes after a mission goes bad or when he must account for the loss

of clones. Much like foot soldiers in Vietnam, clone agency is represented by clones asking

questions about what the war means after realizing that their life has no other purpose but to die

on the battlefield. The clones realize that no one in the Republic will know of their contribution

or that they ever existed. This dichotomy between a patriotic clone who follows orders and a

clone searching for war's meaning is represented in the following dialogue between Clone Fives

and Captain Rex regarding clones following negligent combat orders:

> FIVES: This is about more than just following orders.
> Captain Rex: It is. It is about honor.
> FIVES: Where is the honor in marching blindly to our deaths? It is not our call. We are part of something larger. We're not independent of one another. I'm sorry. I can't just follow orders when I know they're wrong, especially when lives are at stake.
> CAPTAIN REX: You will if you support the system we fight for.[89]

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[89] Dunlevy, "Plan of Dissent."

This dialogue showcases Captain Rex as the soldier's soldier, willing to follow wartime orders even when they are not favorable to their chances of survival. The narrative gives insight to American ideals by illustrating the clone soldier's apprehensions with adhering to masculine norms by supporting the Republic's policies of enemy engagement. The focal theme is that of a true patriot following the Republic's mandates first and foremost, even at the expense of his agency, life, and moral objections. Fives, meanwhile, represents the complexities combat soldiers encounter when faced with challenging wartime directives.

Jedi Agency and the Fall of the Republic

Despite being trained in self-reflection, the Jedi are also affected by the dictates of war. One of the main arguments from *Star Wars* fans pertaining to character development in the prequel film trilogy is the Jedi's loss of agency. As explained by Silvo and Vinci, "What is significant is that the Empire is representational of a general cultural paradigm that assimilates and oppresses the expressive autonomy of the individual and that it is the dominant force that the highly-individualized protagonists of the original trilogy risk their lives to destroy, hence valorizing individualism and expressing a deep anxiety regarding the institution."[90] This is crucial to understanding *The Clone Wars* as the militarization of *Star Wars*. Like the clones, the Jedi adhere to policy mandates about safeguarding Republic trade routes and fuel reserves to prevent the Separatists from damaging the Republic's ability to wage war, including the production of clones.

The Jedi's agency is exchanged for a sense of liberty at the cost of total war, planetary invasion, and violent resolution. This loss of the Jedi's agency is best explained by Dave Filoni:

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[90] Silvo and Vinci, *Culture, Identities, and Technology in the Star Wars Films*, 14.

"He knows, frankly, that the Jedi of the time have lost their way and that it's going to be a path that very few of them are going to be able to walk out of *The Clone Wars* and into whatever the future may hold. Basically, they're all going to have to pay a price for their own role in the violence and the destruction and the things that have happened in the galaxy, which turns out to be true."[91] The Jedi's dilemma occurs within the broader public dialogue of whether it is worth the consequences to follow the response of war instead of using one's agency to ask questions against the war.

War requires a mechanism to nurture cultural and ideological support. *The Clone Wars*' dialogue and action sequences provide social commentary by juxtaposing questions related to past and current wars. As explained by Hall, "Culture, it is argued, is not so much a set of *things* – novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics – as a process, a set of *practices*. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between the members of a society or group."[92] Thus, the Jedi's personal agency is set aside in times of war in favor of policy mandates that favor adherence to war. The question being asked by Ahsoka, of not understanding the true reasons for war, provides social commentary on the lack of questioning about past and current war policies and their effects on society, and whether war should be supported.

Clone Fatalities: A Byproduct of War and Social Conditioning

The sacrifice of a soldier is the epitome of a masculine death, lending gravitas to nationalist ideologies. But what happens when a war is fought by a clone army, or a droid one? Is the connection to the soldier severed, disintegrating the personal relationship with war? Does waging war with the use of clones, as marginalized soldiers, create apathy toward the war? These

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[91] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 98.
[92] Hall, *Representation*, 2.

are some of the questions *The Clone Wars* asks of their viewers. How is the loss of life, so central to the fabric of society, changed when wars are fought by a marginalized class of people?

The clones' importance in waging war is illustrated in the opening narration of every episode. For instance, the "Rookies" episode begins, "Clone forces rally! As the war escalated on the Outer Rim, Jedi Knights are spread thinly across the galaxy! Many new clones are rushed into service to support their Jedi generals! Unfortunately, because of the relentless demands of battle, many new clones must join the struggle before their intensive training has been completed! These clones, manning a vital network of tracking stations, are all that stand between the Republic and invasion."[93]

In *The Clone Wars*, clones are manufactured on the planet of Kamino from DNA extracted from a warrior, the bounty hunter Jango Fett. The Kaminos live in laboratories, where clones begin life in tubes. From their initial stages of life, clone socialization is central to war. Every stage of clone upbringing is focused on creating a super-soldier. Clones are negated any individuality—names, personal items, and agency—to create a less empathetic and more efficient soldier.

Part of this socialization process consists of dehumanizing enemy combatants by constructing alien beings as the "other," signifying their image as a threat. This perspective is best expressed by Wetmore, who writes, "Edward Said commented that 'The great modern empires have never been held together only by military power.' What is necessary over and above force is 'imperial perspective' defined as 'that way of looking at a distant foreign reality by subordinating it in one's gaze, constructing its history from one's own point of view."[94] The purposeful socialization denying attachment runs through a history of humans waging war. The

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[93] Ridge, "Rookies."
[94] Wetmore, *The Empire Triumphant*, 19.

"othering" produces a psychological message where soldiers are disconnected from empathy and critical thinking, a message which is a byproduct of human engineering that evolved over millennia due to its effectiveness at waging wars. As described by Taliaferro and Beck, "The stoic philosopher Epictetus (c. 50–120 CE) is especially clear when he admonishes his followers to realize that the people they love are human beings who will die, and to see that inevitably as part of their relationships… They wanted us to avoid these emotions not through repressing or disguising our feelings, but through avoiding what they saw as unwise or compulsive attachment."[95] Thus, soldiers' conditioning is tied to teaching soldiers to lack empathy or emotion so that they may follow through on combat objectives.

The central agent in producing apathy is the loss of life in war films. In *The Clone Wars*, loss of life is represented by clone troopers receiving the brunt of casualties, which occur in quick action sequences, often in the background, where clones are killed in direct enemy fire, mortar explosions, or gunship explosions. Much like contemporary soldiers, clones are able to wage war because of social constructs that promote racial differences as key features in the ability to construct the enemy combatant.

In these action scenes, the clone's combat conveys American masculine ideals of sacrifice and duty. Although *The Clone Wars* does discuss the death of soldiers, most action sequences are filled with clones taking the brunt of casualties while the protagonist, usually a Jedi, remains without injury. This psychological disconnect is what the stoic philosopher Epictetus meant. However, the disconnection centered on soldiers is mutated via pop culture mediums into social apathy and emotional detachment from death and war, giving the viewer a false representation of war's consequence. More importantly, viewers' understanding is

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[95] Taliaferro and Beck, "'Like My Father before Me,'" 119.

constructed unconsciously, with the rationale that clones, being made for war, are expected to die

with the acceptance that they represent a marginalized byproduct of war.

Combat Deaths and Clone Wars' Dialogue

Although a neglected element in mediums pertaining to war, death is central to discourse

in *The Clone Wars*. Lucas' use of death as a rite of passage is a central feature in the *Star Wars*

franchise, beginning with the symbolic death of Obi-Wan followed by that of Darth Vader.

Unlike many other animated shows dealing with war, *The Clone Wars* makes a conscientious

attempt at understanding war and death via its character dialogue. This is best supported in "The

Deserter" episode, which includes dialogue between a clone deserter, Cut Lawquane, and

Captain Rex.

> CAPTAIN REX: So, what was it? What made you decide to leave the Corps?
> CUT LAWQUANE: Shortly after the battle of Geonosis, our troop transport got caught
> between two Separatist gunships. They fired at us with everything they had. We crashed.
> Most of us were dead or severely injured. So, when they (the Separatists) started working
> their way through the wounded, killing us off, I knew there was no hope. I ran. It still
> haunts me.
> REX: I'm sorry.
> CUT: It's the day I felt my life didn't have any meaning. Everyone I cared about, my
> team, was gone. I was just another expendable clone waiting for my turn to be
> slaughtered in a war that made no sense to me. Can you understand that, Rex?
> REX: I've been in countless battles and lost many brothers. They were my family. My
> home.[96]

The above dialogue showcases a soldier's experience with combat, death, family, and PTSD.

Cut's experience with the loss of his fellow clones gives new meaning to the war. Rarely

mentioned in pop culture media, much less an animated series, the psychological effects of war

on soldiers provides commentary on values pertaining to masculinity, the effects of combat,

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[96] Dalva, "The Deserter."

soldier animosities about the costs of war, and whether the loss was worth it. Death dialogue lends empathy to clone experiences, contributing to a complex understanding of war.

Clone Trooper Ideology and Socialization

Cut Lawquane's dialogue with Captain Rex resembles a therapy session, where Cut shares a personal experience that runs contrary to masculine portrayals of war. Instead, Cut questions the war and the loss of his fellow clone soldiers. This very act of questioning is key to realizing one's self-determination. In their development, the clones' overriding feature is their ability to be adaptable even while following strict protocol. As explained by a Kamino to Obi-Wan, "Clones can think creatively. You will find that they are immensely superior to droids. We take great pride in our combat education and training programs… You will find they are totally obedient, taking any order without question. We modified their genetic structure to make them less independent than the original host."[97]

Clones are humanoids whose support of war is central to their adolescent development, having been primed with a military socialization as future soldiers. The clones' purpose is based on the Republic's ideologies of freedom, democracy, and personal liberty. As such, the clones' upbringing mirrors American adolescents' upbringing. For Americans, the socialization of war is tied to a life of media filled with war and an education system reliant on concepts of nationalism. In this light, the American concept of masculinity is linked to the reasons for waging war.

The Clone Wars acts as an instructional medium reproducing behavior that is deemed socially admirable. This dynamic is best explained by Hall, who writes, "Meanings also regulate and organize our conduct and practices – they help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed. They are also, therefore, what those who wish to

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[97] Lucas, *Star Wars: Episode II*.

govern and regulate the conduct and ideas of others seek to structure and shape."[98] In this manner, the social development of a clone trooper shadows American investments in media and educational platforms geared toward socializing a generational cohort for war through images of sacrifice, order, and ideology. As supported by Tiffin and Lawson, "The curriculum must analyze and deconstruct popular knowledges produced through television and culture industries, and be organized around texts and images that relate directly to the communities, cultures, and traditions that give students a historical sense of identity and place."[99] *The Clone Wars'* main themes and character relationships produce meaning bent on supporting American ideals, underscoring how wars are fought and supported via a class structure.

Class distinctions are supported by using clones to wage war. The Kaminos' biological advances that make clones more obedient reveal their developmental fault line. As humanoids, clones represent a marginalized class of soldiers reflecting the class representation of foot soldiers in Vietnam. Instead of droids, the Republic's use of clones is based on their ability to adapt to various environments and follow strict protocols. The semiotic link between clones and Vietnam-era foot soldiers thus carries social commentary about clones' experiences with combat mirroring that of foot soldiers in hostile alien environments. Both the clones and soldiers were raised in sterile environments steeped in ideologies defined by social constructs of war. Once outside of their socially constructed environment, clones, much like American teenage soldiers, are shipped out to various parts of the galaxy to fight an ideological war against an alien combatant.

Clones' social development of war begins from birth. Being born into a Republic whose ideologies are centered on war creates a point of entry into understanding American pop culture

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[98] Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays*, 4.
[99] Tiffin and Lawson, "Introduction: The Textuality of Empire," 3.

mediums that act as socialization mediums toward war. As Lucas explained in an interview with Alijean Harmetz, "Film and [other] visual entertainment are a pervasively important part of our culture, an extremely significant influence on the way our society operates… People in the film industry don't want to accept the responsibility that they had a hand in the way the world is loused up. But, for better or worse, the influence of the church, which used to be all-powerful, has been usurped by film."[100] The representation of war in American culture follows gender norms of masculinity for why and how Americans view their relationship with war. The Republics' use of clones is dependent on the idea that they are sentient beings capable of critical thinking and adaptability to war scenarios.

Clones constantly compare themselves to their droid advisories used by the Separatists, claiming that they are not "clanking and mindless droids." The irony is that clones' biological manufacturing and social development renders them, just like droids, as a commodified means for waging war. As Sweet argues, "This depiction of individuals who think and act of their own accord, who recognize they are not unthinking automations like the enemies they often face and yet ultimately possess little or no self-determination is one of the most tragic points brought to light by *The Clone Wars*."[101] Thus, the clones' sole purpose is to wage war for a Republic that denies them citizenship to the society for which they are fighting. This places social commentary on America's use of immigrants, non-citizen soldiers, and soldiers from marginalized communities to fight wars. The clone thus represents the marginalized soldier, who, despite being absent from society and therefore expendable, still fights to uphold its cultural ideologies. On the eve of the 2007 Tournament of Roses parade, George Lucas addressed the 501st troops that would serve as the stormtroopers accompanying his parade float. "'The big invasion is in a

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[100] Wetmore, *The Empire Triumphant*, 9.
[101] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 55.

few days,' he said, deadpan. 'I don't expect all of you to make it back. But that's ok because

Stormtroopers are expendable.' The legion roared in its approval."[102] Thus, the clone's sole

purpose is to fight, follow orders, and die in the field of battle. For that, they need to be an

expendable commodity.

Project One Hundred Thousand

> An appeal to patriotism can befog the clearest issue, and those who are most imbued with the sense of duty to country are, and are bound to be, the easiest to deceive and to silence. Soldiers are not trained to explore the truth behind international disputes, and if they try to wrestle with the resulting questions, they are likely to become incapable of performing their task. There is a place, and a need, for the military philosopher in the study and guidance of war, but a profoundly reflective mind does not fit easily into the service itself.
> —Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*.[103]

Nationalism is a key feature in the social fabric of the Republic, where ideologies of

peace, democracy, and freedom are the focal means of waging war. The connection to

contemporary American wars occurs through the development of clones as a marginalized

commodity for waging war who must practice self-denial and social detachment. The greatest

obstacles to waging war are social buy-in followed by soldiers' death, the latter of which is the

primary connective tissue for national ideologies transmitted to future generations. The focal

point for citizens and soldiers becoming invested in war is connection to their loved ones, which

gives the war meaning. That is why, during times of war, communities rally together to write

correspondence to soldiers.

The manufacturing of clones to wage war denies them any form of familial connection,

contributing to their marginalization. This marginalization is indicative of contemporary

American recruitment practices where soldiers are found in economically challenged areas.

Marginalized communities are targeted for their working-class structure and minimal education

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[102] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 31.
[103] Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 13.

attainment, qualities that make them ideal targets for recruitment. This is exemplified in a scene

in *Apocalypse Now* where the character Willard (played by Martin Sheen) begins assessing his

crew:

> *WILLARD*: The crew were mostly kids. Rock 'n' rollers with one foot in their graves. (*Willard looks around and askes the tall African American soldier his age*.) How old are you?
> *CLEAN*: Seventeen.
> *WILLARD*: The machinist, the one they called Chef, was from New Orleans. He was wrapped too tight for Vietnam. Probably too tight for New Orleans. (*Willard continues to look around and spots another soldier.)*
> *WILLARD*: Lance, from the forward 50s. Was a famous surfer from the beaches south of L.A. To look at him, you wouldn't believe he's ever fired a weapon in his life. (*Willard looks back to the African American youth named Clean*.)
> *WILLARD*: Mr. Clean was from some South Bronx shit-hole, and I think the light and the space of Vietnam really put the zip on his head.[104]

The paramount question in *The Clone Wars* is what happens when wars are no longer

dependent on drafts, where citizen-soldiers are replaced by a marginalized group of people—

non-citizen clones—who are bred to fight wars? Is the social buy-in the same? To better

understand this, compare *The Clone Wars* with the Vietnam War in the former's representation

of clones as the sub-class of people used to wage war. American ideals are tied to clones'

attrition rates, masculinity, experiences in foreign environments, and ideological adherence to

waging war. Clones that fail to subscribe to the ideologies of the Republic are seen as defective.

The use of clones is best explained by Sweet, who writes, "In fact, the entire clone breeding and

education process functions with assembly line precision: the clones are grown, born,

educated/trained, and certified for deployment… For all intents and purposes, the clones are

nothing more than interchangeable products being assembled and shipped off to a customer."[105]

Thus, outside of clones' development as it relates to battle preparation, nothing is known of their

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[104] Coppola, *Apocalypse Now.*
[105] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 55-56.

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educational attainment, or if any emphasis is given to their understanding of the histories, sciences, or laws that govern their social environment. Lack of education and its relevance to self-agency is a primary theme of the Vietnam War and American values pertaining to class.

The opening scene to every episode in *The Clone Wars* includes battle scenes depicting galactic space fights and planetary invasions, followed by narrative that spells out the causes and effects of war on the population. Despite the narrative conveying the main themes in the episode, the constant feature is that of clones taking on heavy attrition rates. Clone casualties function as an aside, where the clones' sacrifices are secondary to the action, whether in battles in space with clone pilots being blown to pieces, during invasions via gunships depicting whole teams of clones being shot down by anti-enemy weapons, or via heavy bombings and relentless machine gun fire. As explained by Littmann, "Though it's a story of conflict and warfare, grand political concerns about the fate of the galaxy are kept in the background, as the story focuses more on the action and the relationship among the main characters."[106] Even though clones make up the highest number of casualties, clone attrition rates are used as action fillers, especially behind opening episode narration. The key difference in *The Clone Wars* is that the clones' contribution to the series centers on the meaning of their losses. The duality of clone interpretation falls between using them as casualties and reframing their losses to assess American values pertaining to the cost benefits of war.

The Clone Wars' lens into soldiers' experiences, combat losses, and challenges with agency is a throwback to Vietnam, a time when young 17 to 19-year-old men were drafted to fight a war in a foreign environment amid social dissent over the continued escalation of war. These soldiers were raised on democratic ideals but fell short of being able to vote or live

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[106] Littmann, "The Friends of a Jedi," 127.

independently. Thus, the continued use of soldiers serves as a fueling agent toward war, as exemplified by Chancellor Palpatine's advocacy for the escalation of war. As Palpatine remarks, "Actually, given the recent events, perhaps [the passing of a Senate vote for more clones] is for the best. How can we justify fortifying our security here in the Senate if we don't also provide reinforcements on the frontlines? You see the victory of the Clone army, for now, is the only thing that can lead us to peace."[107] Chancellor Palpatine's pro-war stance via the continual development of clones lends social commentary to debates about the escalation of the Vietnam War and the increased drafting of high school and college-aged kids to become soldiers for wartime mandates.

The clones' importance to the war is raised in several episodes and opening narratives. For instance, the "Heroes on Both Sides" episode opens with, "Conflict with no end in sight! Across the galaxy, the quagmire of war continues. While clone troopers suffer casualties at alarming rates, the Galactic Senate convenes an emergency session to debate the true cost of war."[108] Judging on this narrative alone, one would think that clone attrition rates are the focal concern for the Senate. However, the issue being debated is the financial cost of clone development, not the loss of life, the prevention of which may be used as an argument for war de-scalation. The development of clones despite big losses acts as a cultural signifier, where loss of life by a marginalized sub-group of clones, rather than citizen-soldiers, makes the clones expendable commodities. This is supported by Sweet, who argues, "Clone trooper deaths become so commonplace, so routine, that characters in the program rarely acknowledge the loss.... Clones are anonymous and disposable. Viewers rarely get to know the clone who gets

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[107] O'Connell, "Senate Murders."
[108] Dunlevy, "Heroes on Both Sides."

caught in an explosion or falls victim to a super battle droid's blaster fire."[109] Much like in contemporary American wars, the clone soldiers remain underrepresented in society even though they are the primary means to wage war. For viewers of *The Clone Wars,* the message being sent conveys forms of masculinity that signify death and glory. For viewers, clone deaths reinforce American ideals pertaining to the costs of freedom.

The complexity of *The Clone Wars* owes to its social commentary about the attrition rates in Vietnam, which signified the cost-benefit analysis of war. President Lyndon B. Johnson's Project 100,000 exemplifies the use of marginalized sections of society to wage war. As a policy aimed at drafting African Americans with the premise of giving them an opportunity at contributing to the war effort, Project 100,000 was intended to enable greater social mobility. As explained by Appy, "Enlisted ranks in Vietnam were comprised of about 25 percent poor, 55 percent working class, and 20 percent middle class, with a statistically negligible number of wealthy. Most Americans in Vietnam were nineteen-year-old high school graduates."[110] With attrition rates in Vietnam soaring and deferments targeting wealthier white college kids, African American, poor white, and Latino kids became primary targets for enlistment. Much like the clones, this section of society came from neglected communities. This is further supported by Daddis, who writes, "Veteran Michael Clodfelter noted that the men 'with whom I shared the Vietnam War were overwhelmingly the sons of steelworkers, truck drivers, mechanics, small farmers and sharecroppers, men from small towns and rural routes in the South and Midwest or from big city ghettos.'"[111] These soldiers' understanding of war and the world were shaped by pop culture media, early school curriculum, and family military legacies. In essence, this is why

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[109] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 56.
[110] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 27.
[111] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 16.

marginalized segments of society produce a more compliant soldier who is willing to follow the orders and ideologies of war.

The Second World War's effect on the Vietnam generation's indoctrination into patriotism, as well as the recruitment of marginalized communities, is illustrated in the film *Platoon* by Charlie Sheen's character Chris:

> I guess I have always been sheltered and special, I just want to be anonymous… Live up to what Grandpa did in the First World War and Dad in the Second. I know this is going to be the war of my generation. Well, here I am: anonymous all right, with guys nobody really cares about. They come from the end of the line, most of 'em, small towns you never heard of—Pulaski, Tennessee; Brandon, Mississippi; Pork Bend, Utah; Wampum, Pennsylvania. Two years' high school's about it, maybe if they're lucky a job waiting for 'em back in a factory, but most of 'em got nothing.[112]

This scene shows the willingness of some clones, such as Captain Rex, to follow orders, and others who question the war, their marginalization, and their lack of agency.

The concept of soldier adherence to combat initiatives in wartime is paramount. As Appy writes, "Critical thought can also lead to various forms of dissent: desertion, rebellion, outright mutiny. Soldiers who question the meaning or purpose of the war they are ordered to fight might avoid combat, shirk their duties, or join with others to resist orders."[113] The production of clones being tied to their ability to follow commands without question is conveyed in the "Carnage of Krell" episode during dialogue between General Krell, Captain Rex, and a clone trooper, Dogma.

> CAPTAIN REX: Why General? Why kill your own men?
> GENERAL KRELL: Because I can. Because you fell for it. Because you're inferior.
> REX: But you're a Jedi. How could you?
> KRELL: I am no longer naïve enough to be a Jedi. A new power is rising. I've foreseen it. The Jedi are going to lose this war, and the Republic will be ripped apart from the inside. In its place is going be a new order, and I will rule as part of it.
> DOGMA: How could you do this? You had my trust, my loyalty. I followed all of our orders, and you made me kill my brothers!

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[112] Stone, *Platoon*, 14.
[113] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 206.

KRELL: That's because you were the biggest fool of them all, Dogma. I counted. on blind loyalty like yours to make my plan succeed.[114]

The focus here is on betrayal. Dogma's upbringing to defend the Republic and fight for its ideals channels the moral dilemma many Vietnam-era soldiers faced when challenged to either defend good war ideologies of democracy or to follow their personal morality. For Dogma, the dilemma rests on whether to use his personal agency and go against his socialized upbringing, like Captain Rex, or to follow suit because of unflinching support for what he believes to be true. This dichotomy is best represented by Appy's use of Tim Obrien's experience with serving in the Vietnam War: "These doubts were fueled by a feeling of indebtedness to his family, town, and country. It had been a happy and comfortable childhood, and Tim felt that he 'owed something' in return. 'I'd lived under its laws, accepted its education, eaten its food… and wallowed in its luxuries.' Though he resented the form of service demanded of him… he feared the consequences of resistance."[115] Thus, Dogma's socialization, which centered on serving the Republic's ideals, hindered any form of critical thought or dissent. In the process of indoctrination, the Republic had given Dogma life, shelter, and education, but denied him personal agency in exchange for a censored consciousness.

The dialogue between General Krell and the clones highlights the dichotomy between one clone's agency in questioning orders and other clones following their socialized faith in the Republic's ideology. In this episode, Captain Rex finds Krell's abusive leadership and suicidal tactics difficult to follow. After losing a good majority of his squad when following Krell's plans, Rex plans a coup to relieve the general of his command. In the process of apprehending Krell, clone-soldier Dogma warns Krell of Rex's plan, only to find out that General Krell is

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[114] Dunlevy, "Carnage of Krell."
[115] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 52.

fighting for the Separatists. Krell's reputation for accomplishing missions had come at the expense of heavy clone casualties. The use of clones as exposable commodities is represented by the above dialogue between Krell and Dogma, which mirrors commentary on the Vietnam War where frontline soldiers realize their predicament and begin questioning objectives. The moral challenge lies in going against the expectations of the dominant society. For many clones, the cause of protest was whether the unreasonable tactics that resulted in loss of life were justified.

Fratricide: "One that Murders or Kills his or her own Countryman"

In many instances in *The Clone Wars*, fatigue combines with feelings of betrayal and lack of agency, resulting in fratricide of fellow clones and high-ranking officials. The above-mentioned "Carnage of Krell" episode ends with the arrest and death sentence of General Krell.

> GENERAL KRELL: You're in a position of power now. How does it feel?
> CAPTAIN REX: I said, "On your knees."
> KRELL: It feels good, doesn't it? But I can sense your fear. You're shaking. Aren't you? What are you waiting for?
> REX: I have to do this.
> KRELL: You can't do it, can you? Eventually, you'll have to do the right thing. (*General Krell is suddenly shot in the back, and abruptly falls to the ground dead*.)
> CLONE DOGMA: I... I had to. He betrayed us.[116]

The act of fratricide illustrates the complexity of war. On the one hand, Dogma's reason for killing General Krell exposes the vulnerability, marginalization, and innocence of the clones. Dogma represents the betrayal in war, where clones' actions in support of war are contradicted by wartime policies and personal ambitions. Krell did not see the clones as capable of having individual agency or being able to formulate a plan of dissent, using these things to exploit the clones. Clones fall prey based on their youth, inexperience, and innocence in not knowing the focal causes of war. Rex's inability to shoot Krell shows his loyalty to the Republic, but also

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[116] Dunlevy, "Carnage of Krell."

exposes his patriotic duty as a form of weakness. The action of fratricide places social commentary on the Vietnam War's dependence on ideological indoctrination holding firm. The consequences of realizing the truth are exacerbated by soldiers' experiences with losing fellow soldiers and placing themselves in the line of fire based on these ideals. As explained by Appy, "The intentional murder or 'fragging' of U.S. troops by other American soldiers may have accounted for 5 to 10 percent of friendly fire deaths. The frequency of friendly fire casualties added to the grunts' sense of vulnerability."[117]

For younger audiences, *The Clone Wars*' dialogue on fratricide offers an analysis of war's effects on soldiers' personal, moral, and ideological injuries. The theme of fratricide in Vietnam is also supported in media, such as the film *Platoon*, which is based on writer and director Oliver Stone's personal experiences in Vietnam. At the end of the film, the protagonist Chris Taylor shoots his commanding officer, offering retribution for previous acts of violence on soldiers and the Vietnamese population. The scene is explained in the *Platoon* script: "Barnes orders the rest of the platoon to retreat and goes back into the jungle to find Elias's group. Barnes finds Elias alone and shoots him, then returns and tells Chris that Elias was killed by enemy fire."[118] Here, Captain Barnes resembles General Krell, both of whose draconian leadership placed many soldiers' lives at stake. Much like clones, soldiers in Vietnam were placed in a moral dilemma to either follow orders or exercise their agency and be branded a traitor.

The theme of fratricide, as one of the greatest moral challenges to comprehend, conveys to younger audiences of *The Clone Wars* a message about the complexities of war. Dogma's action is laced with a sense of empathy, as he had truly believed in the prescribed reasons for why he fought the war. The series displays clones wrestling with inner questions of why they are

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[117] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 185.
[118] Stone, *Platoon*, 2.

fighting the war, one that fails to resemble the social constructs of democracy. Such contradictory ideologies are exemplified by Reagin and Liedl's assessment of the Vietnam War: "An undeniable lesson emerged (that many Americans still seek to deny): The U.S. military did not lose the war because the American people lost patience on the home front or because antiwar protestors stabbed the military in the back... Thus, the U.S. military lost the Vietnam War not because it was betrayed by the people but because its leaders betrayed the ideals of the people."[119] Though fratricide materialized from a diverse set of circumstances, the feeling of betrayal over wartime directives proved to be a major cause. Dogma's circumstance speaks volumes toward unwrapping the complexities represented in *The Clone Wars*.

Order 66: War's Effect on Soldier Agency

In 1942, President Roosevelt authorized Executive Order 9066, initiating the forced removal of Japanese Americans from their homes, properties, and communities. Japanese Americans found themselves in internment camps located in deserted, hostile, and aggressive terrain. President Roosevelt's solution to possible dissent toward wartime policies resulted in the elimination of Japanese Americans from the social sphere, thereby extricating a potential threat. With Order 66, Chancellor Palpatine finds his wartime policy via the elimination of the Jedi as possible sources of opposition. Therefore, Order 66 provides social commentary on the effects of wartime ideologies that emphasize the elimination of all "other" viable threats of dissent. This elimination of dissent, along with strict adherence to policy, results in actions taken with strict prejudice, not only against enemy combatants, but those resembling the enemy. Order 66 establishes fascist control over the galaxy via its treatment of perceived enemy combatants,

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[119] Reagin and Liedl, *Star Wars and History*, 30.

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mirroring war policies aimed at eliminating social fears by racially targeting perceived enemy combatants suspected of potential dissent or antiwar discourse.

Order 66 represents the tragic and ironic end to the Republic, the demise of which is sealed by the Jedi's inability to question wartime mandates and the clones' complete loss of agency. Up until this point, as generals leading the clone army, the Jedi had upheld military mandates. The irony lies in the Jedi's use of clones under a patriotic and democratic social structure to fight a war based on socialized ideologies of peace and freedom, only to realize that the Republic's use of force was aimed at serving its own special interests, not the deliverance of self-determination. This irony is represented in a dialogue between Ahsoka, Darth Maul, and the clone trooper Jesse:

> JESSE: You're wasting your time. I won't tell you anything.
> DARTH MAUL: How charming that you actually believe that statement to be true. Clones, bred for combat. All part of the plan.
> JESSE: What plan? What are you talking about?
> MAUL: The plan: The only plan that matters. Not even I was made aware of its grand design, but I played my part. (*Darth Maul looks outside a window and observes clones going after Jedi, fighting, and dying in battle*.)
> MAUL: Look at them so blissfully ignorant.
> AHSOKA: Care to tell me what this is all about?
> MAUL: Oh, no, no. You are the one that I wish to speak with. Were you not cast out of your order?
> AHSOKA: I left voluntarily.
> MAUL: Yes, but you were motivated to leave by the hypocrisy of the Jedi Council. We were both tools for greater powers.
> AHSOKA: I'm here to bring you to justice.
> MAUL: Justice is merely the construct of the current power base. A base, which, according to my calculations, is about to change.[120]

In leaving the Jedi Council due to the Jedi's loss of agency in favor of wartime mandates, Ahsoka kept her intuition, much like Jeannette Rankin and her warnings of war. She remained closed off by the Jedi's deferral to wartime policies. Darth Maul's critique of the clone army,

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[120] Filoni and Villanueva, "The Phantom Apprentice."

meanwhile, shows the fragility of the individual foot soldier's willingness to follow orders, even when reversed against their commanding Jedi generals. Clones are trained to favor wartime directives, not to question authority, and it is this lack of agency that gives *The Clone Wars* its heaviest social commentary. Order 66 results in the mass genocide of the Jedi Order, where only a select few manage to escape, such as Obi-Wan, who ends up on the planet of Tatooine.

Order 66 therefore provides social commentary by conveying the clone's inability to garner individuality and psychological agency due to the policies and effects of war. As explained by Sweet, "On the other hand, the clone troopers find themselves trapped in a form of slavery; forced to further a political agenda that is not of their own choosing, they fight and die for the Republic cause."[121] By exemplifying the effects of war on the clone soldiers, including the exacerbation of policies that condition soldiers to negative, racist stereotypes that dehumanize enemy combatants, Order 66 begins to resembles the My Lai Massacre. American foot soldiers, whose training regarding enemy combatants consisted of racial othering, found themselves desensitized by the enemy's use of social hiding within all aspects of the population. As illustrated by Longley, "Expecting heavy resistance from a Viet Cong battalion reported in the area and having been told that all friendlies would be gone, the unit landed. Already incensed by the loss of several of its men to snipers and booby traps, a platoon, led by Lieutenant William Calley, began slaughtering the locals just beginning their daily routines. For four hours, soldiers murdered, pillaged, and burned the hamlets, ultimately killing more than 500 civilians."[122]

The clones' lack of agency in Order 66 acts as a corollary to the My Lai incident, where the use of marginalized soldiers following strict military mandates of "search and destroy" overlooked the psychological consequence of war. One can argue, in the space of political

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[121] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 65.
[122] Longley, *The Morenci Marines*, 151.

discourse, that the fall of the Republic rested with adherence to wartime mandates and the resulting lack of personal agency. The Galactic Empire, meanwhile, rose out of strict obedience to wartime policies and lack of dissent. The clone army led by the Jedi, therefore, illustrate the complexities behind the fall of democracy. The Republic's use of a clone army, or marginalized soldier group, coupled with a lack of agency and dissent, exacerbates the chances that soldiers would fall prey to the harsh conditions or wartime policies.

The effects of war on soldiers' ability to question wartime mandates is also represented in the film *Apocalypse Now*. Willard is reading a letter by Captain Kurtz, played by Marlon Brando, to his son describing his actions toward killing innocent Cambodians:

> I have been officially accused of murder by the army. The alleged victims were four Vietnamese double agents. When absolute proof was completed, we acted. We acted like soldiers. The charges were unjustified. They are, in fact, and under the circumstances of this conflict, quite completely insane. In a war there are many moments for compassion and tender action. There are many moments for ruthless action. What is often called ruthless, but may, in many circumstances, be only clarity. Seeing clearly what there is to be done, and doing it directly, quickly, awake.[123]

For clone troopers under ideological indoctrination, the effects of combat, including reduced decision-making ability, are exacerbated by following strict mandates pertaining to enemy combatants. As Sweet describes, "The ambivalent frame as a form of narrative that invites the audiences to explore the boundaries between conflicting positions—entreating the viewer to grapple with how to bring clarity to a morally murky position."[124]

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[123] Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*.
[124] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 63.

Search and Destroy Clones: Experience with Hostile "Others"

> War does not come with a guarantee! No soldier gets the promise of safety, survival, or victory! But men, I guarantee you this. Every member of this clone youth brigade will have its moment. And it is that moment when you are no longer a cadet. You are a soldier. You have the best training in the galaxy, but no one can train you for the moment you look death in the eyes. What you do then, and the soldier you become.... that is up to you.
> —Crasher.[125]

Their actions based on indoctrination into ideology, the clones are sent to remote planets to lay waste to alien populations and environments, inflicting social displacement and psychological injury. The animated action in *The Clone Wars* depicts invasions in a Blitzkrieg fashion, where narration and semiotics erase critical thought by placing the viewer in a mental state of numbness. Another central component to *The Clone Wars* is the social commentary on clones' feelings about their actions and the war. For instance, the "Carnage of Krell" episode contains this dialogue between Captain Rex and a clone trooper:

> *Clone*: We did it! We took Umbara.
> *Captain Rex*: What's the point of all this? I mean why?
> *Clone*: I don't know sir. I don't think anybody knows. But I do know that someday this war is gonna end.
> *Rex*: Then what? We're soldiers. What happens to us then?[126]

In this episode, the clones had forcefully taken the planet of Umbara, displaced its populations, and placed them under Imperial rule. This action of forceful takeover inflicts clone troopers with questions of whether they are fighting a war of liberation or subjugation, similar to Vietnam-era contradictions. As Appy writes, "Told they were in Vietnam to help the people, soldiers found widespread antagonism to their presence. Told they were there to protect villagers from aggression, they carried out military orders that destroyed villages and brought terror to civilians."[127] In depicting troopers destroying villages and towns and displacing populations of

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[125] Lee, "The Death Trap."
[126] Dunlevy, "Carnage of Krell."
[127] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 7.

alien beings while fighting enemy combatants they knew nothing about, *The Clone Wars*

provides social commentary about the Vietnam War. One of the central commonalities in

fighting foreign enemy combatants is that clones, much like Vietnam soldiers, fail to empathize

with their enemies' right to self-determine, instead fighting a war based on ideology.

Considering social dissent over severe casualty rates, General Krell's tactics mirror those

of American General Westmoreland's policy of search and destroy. Search-and-destroy missions

consist of sending out platoons of soldiers to flush out enemy combatants by invading foreign

landscapes and villages. As explained by Appy,

> An American soldier, nearly overcome by heat, fatigue, and anxiety, slogs through rice paddies, elephant grass, and jungle ravines. Or he edges his way through Vietnam hamlets, on constant alert for signs of trouble. He has been sent out to find the enemy, but the enemy is not to be seen. The grunt knows the enemy is most likely to appear when he – the American – is most vulnerable, most exposed, the choicest bait: moving down an open trail into an ambush or across an open field toward a wood line full of well-entrenched guerrillas. He begins to feel that the whole war is a booby trap waiting to explode at his feet.[128]

Search-and-destroy missions resemble combat policies for clones aimed at flushing out alien

enemy combatants. Under the direction of General Krell, clones followed orders that placed

them in unfavorable situations, much like American soldiers in Vietnam. For young American

soldiers, searching in foreign environments to destroy the enemy exposed soldiers to increased

ambushes, mines, and booby traps. In this tactical approach, clones become disposable

commodities positioned in hazardous situations, an approach based on policy objectives and not

life objectives. This is further supported in "The General" episode in a dialogue between Captain

Rex, clone troopers, and Fives about General Krell's tactics. In this scene, clones are protesting

to Fives about being placed in a hazardous situation:

CLONES: We have to look at other options. It's going to be a meat grinder down there.

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[128] Appy, 190-191.

CAPTAIN REX: Fives... It would help if you'd ease their minds.
FIVES: Oh, you mean coax them into following another one of Krell's suicide missions?
We lost a lot of men last time.
REX: Krell may do things differently, but he is effective in getting them done. He's a
recognized war hero.
FIVES: He may have had some victories, but have you seen his casualty numbers? More
troopers have been killed under his command than anyone else.
REX: That's the price of war, Fives. We're soldiers. We have a duty to follow orders, and,
if we must, lay down our lives for victory.
FIVES: Do you believe that? Or is that what you were engineered to think?
REX: I honor my code. That's what I believe.[129]

This difference of opinions between Captain Rex and Fives shows the distinction between

following orders and using personal agency to question what is morally wrong and unsafe. Fives

argues for his fellow grunt clones, whose sole purpose is to follow orders without questioning.

Like many grunt soldiers in Vietnam initiating search-and-destroy missions, clones' defective

fibers stems from their moral compass that comes from being human. Unlike Fives, Rex is the

epitome of a soldier's soldier. The main outlier with Rex is that, unlike many clones who are

secondary characters, Rex is a main character and is given more agency in his thought process

and dialogue. This allows a connection to viewers and places his pro-Republic discourse as more

fundamental rather than representing a rogue clone unwilling to do his patriotic duty. This

dichotomy between obeying orders and following one's moral imperative requires viewers to

think critically and choose sides.

The complexity of *The Clone Wars* lies in conveying these dichotomies to a younger

audience that will wrestle with these moral imperatives and cultivate meaning out of combat

narrative. The soldier's upbringing and combat directives are best explained by Sweet, who

writes, "At the same time, the life of a clone trooper is one that lacks any significant autonomy

and self-determination; a clone is born and raised to serve as combat soldier. The tension

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[129] Murch, "The General."

between self-identity and self-determination, explored through several recurring troopers possessing a strong sense of autonomy, mirrors one of the significant problematics of the human reproductive cloning controversy. To what degree is a clone her or his own person?"[130] In depicting the clones' agency, *The Clone Wars* places social commentary on soldiers' socially developed ideologies, asking whether or not self-agency is needed in the field of battle. The challenge for viewers will be to overlook Captain Rex, who represents an authoritative voice as a main character, and think critically to follow a dissenting clone soldier.

Clone troopers are sent out to various planets to defend contested trade routes and to uphold the Republic's ideologies of democracy and freedom. The clones' upbringing is isolated and sheltered; no clones leave their planet of Kamino until their training and indoctrination are complete. Although the average age of clones is not known, one can guess that it is between 17 and 19 years. For clones, the only reality of the galaxy, is what they have been socialized to think. They know they are fighting an evil enemy in the Separatists, and they know that they are fighting for the Republic, even though a good majority will never live long enough to set eyes on the planet that has paid for their existence. In this way, there is similarity to the Vietnam War's use of 19-year-old foot soldiers, who like clones have never seen anything outside their respected communities and are socialized by American ideologies of democracy and freedom. Once basic training is completed, soldiers are sent to a foreign and hostile environment to fight an alien race for a country that barely knows of their existence. Like clones, soldiers will be denied the opportunity to set eyes on their capital city. Thus, search-and-destroy missions will place clone troopers in situations that test their agency, moral aptitude, and humanity.

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[130] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 63.

The clones' purpose contains the heaviest use of action, which is based on clones being

dropped into foreign and hostile environments while taking heavy losses in the process. Aside

from Luke Skywalker and other Jedi, the clones' display of masculinity is a paramount feature in

Star Wars' representation of American ideals and concepts of war. In the "Darkness of Umbara"

episode, clones are seen disembarking on the planet of Umbara. This dialogue is between

multiple clones who do not have names. Due to the overwhelming use of clones, many dialogues

are between random clones.

> CLONES: Time to lock and load!
> FELLOW CLONE: After 'em boys! All right let's go! (*Clones are thrown out of the gun ships and begin yelling in the background,* "Wipe 'em out! Get them!")
> CLONES: Out of the way!
> (*Clones begin taking on heavy artillery fire, while in the background several gunships are blown out of sky, killing whole platoons of clones in the process. Clones move forward and begin taking casualty hits as soon as they step off the gunships. Because of heavy action, clones are left behind and continue moving.*)
> ANAKIN: Don't stray too far—the enemy could have the whole place rigged with traps.
> CLONE: I can't even see the enemy! Go! Go! Go!
> CLONE: That's why they are called the Shadow People, Tup!
> (*Suddenly a clone steps on a mine and disappears within the explosion, the clone never materializes again.*)
> CLONE: Everybody take cover! Go! Go! Go![131]

The action above places clones in the center of battle as they display unflinching drive amid

combat, take heavy casualties, and move forward despite up-tempo casualties. This adds to the

aura by placing social commentary on American values of masculinity and heroism.

In general, *The Clone Wars* is a representative medium for articulating social and cultural

codes of conduct via images, dialogue, and action sequences. As explained by Hall,

> Codes fix the relationships between concepts and signs. They stabilize meaning within different languages and cultures… This is what children learn, and how they become, not simply biological individuals but cultural subjects. They learn the system and conventions of representation, the codes of their language and culture, which equip them with cultural "know how" enabling them to function as culturally competent subjects.[132]

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[131] Filoni, "Darkness of Umbara."
[132] Hall, *Representation*, 21-22.

The message received by younger audiences is a form of indoctrination that shapes their perceptions of war behavior. Clones do not just die in blaze of glory; they die heroic deaths. As represented in a scene depicting clones' graduation from basic training, **"Today is your graduation. From here, you ship out to fight against the Separatists and restore peace to the Republic. Congratulations! You are no longer cadets. You are troopers. May the Force be with you!"**[133]

Popular Culture and imaginative geography.

The experience of representation has historically been articulated by groups with greater military power. The meaning that transpires during war—and more importantly, after war—is articulated through a one-sided cultural lens. This is best explained by Wetmore:

> Science fiction or speculative fiction as some call it, is also about "realms of possibility" and "far-flung and sometimes unknown spaces." What are aliens other than "eccentric or unacceptable human beings?" In his seminal book *Orientalism*, Said also discusses the idea of "imaginative geography and history," in which the West rewrites the geography and history of the East: "Imaginative geography and history help the mind intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away."[134]

The Clone Wars is an animated series about war depicted through the lens of America's emphasis on action and dialogue and in favor of American cultural values. These values are central to waging war and shaping Western perceptions that articulate the relationship with alien beings, or the "other."

The concept of alien environment provides commentary on the experiences of foot soldiers in Vietnam. Many grunts or foot soldiers mirror clones leaving their sheltered environment and finding themselves challenged, whether entering alien planets or the jungles of

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[133] Lee, "Clone Cadets."
[134] Wetmore, *The Empire Triumphant*, 23.

Vietnam. A clone's concept of alien beings, much like with Vietnam foot soldiers, rests on racist indoctrinations. As explained by Appy, "No one knew what to expect, but what they found was more bizarre and unnerving than anything they had ever imagined. From the first moments in-country, American soldiers were confronted with the war's most troubling questions: Where are we?"[135] Combat training rarely made up for having to acclimate to a new, different, and hostile environment where communication was exacerbated by soldiers' racist indoctrination and ignorance of the enemy combatant's language and culture.

Such racist indoctrination is illustrated in various episodes of *The Clone Wars*. Clones refer to alien beings as "tail heads" and "clankers," or otherwise refer to aliens in condescending manners. For American soldiers in Vietnam, names included "gooks," "dinks," and "Charlie." Therefore, clone indoctrination includes constructed racial narratives that promote clone superiority and represent alien beings as the hostile "other." One of the key features of *The Clone Wars* is its portrayal of clone development as adhering to strict codes and policies as well as its depiction of how the effects of war exacerbate clones' moral dilemma of choosing between policy mandates and personal intuition.

Lucas' experience as an average American youth during wartime exemplifies the relationship with war in American culture. Lucas' time and place exposed him to the changing nature of wartime society, stemming from his childhood influences of WWII victory, followed by his early youth exposure to the quagmire of Vietnam War, and into the future dystopian reality of continuous war. Lucas' attention to detail is displayed in multiple facets, but more so in his treatment of the effects of war on society through the lens of the clone army. The

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[135] Appy, *Working-Class War*, 117.

Vietnamization of clones, although never directly expressed by Lucas, may be supported by

analysis of his initial work as a filmmaker.

> Lucas was determined to make movies about war in three modes: past, present, and future; absence, reality, and allegory. *American Graffiti* would take people back in time before Vietnam ripped America apart. *Apocalypse Now* would show in the present tense and would be the film that would have him run out of the country. Lucas was fascinated by the notion of how a tiny nation could overcome the largest military power on Earth, and this was baked into Star Wars right from the earliest notes in 1973: "A large technological empire going after a small group of freedom fighters."[136]

Lucas' influence from the Vietnam War and its effects on society offer a direct correlation with

war's relationship within American society. The Vietnam War represented the first televised

conflict that offered a direct exposure to war's side effects on soldiers and foreign communities.

The Clone Wars features a war fought by a marginalized clone army, raised and indoctrinated

into a war culture, with an expectation to fight without personal or psychological agency.

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[136] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 88.

4. Epilogue: Post-9/11 and Imperialism

> The shroud of the dark side has fallen; begun the Clone Wars it has.
> —Yoda.[137]

One of the focal outliers in connection to *The Clone Wars* is the televised coverage of the Vietnam War. Young American boys grew up watching the drama of war unfold in their living rooms, much like the generation of kids growing up watching *The Clone Wars*. Both generations' initial media representation of war came via the TV. Television's influence on perceptions of war is tied to imperialism: why the war is being fought, who the enemy is, and what the enemy represents. Whether clones leaving the planet of Kamino or American boys leaving small and marginalized communities, both share the experience of leaving home and facing the "other" as a viable threat. As explained by Wetmore, "Imperialism and colonialism also offer a good deal of potential for conflict, much necessary for narrative: between colonizer and colonized, between colony and homeworld, between human and universe or natural world, and between human and Alien Other. It is this last that is so particularly potent and popular in early science fiction, partly, as noted above, because of its potential to define the identity of the culture that produced it."[138] Thus, clone troopers' experiences in war are marked by the audience's indoctrination into war against sentient beings that do not resemble them or their culture. Constructing an "other" as a viable threat remains consistent with establishing wartime support. Wartime policies attached to imperialism represent the relationship with fighting an unknown enemy in hostile terrain with little or no knowledge of their culture or customs.

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[137] "40 Greatest Moments," 88.
[138] Wetmore, *The Empire Triumphant*, 25.

The Clone Wars is about a war to safeguard Republic ideology and trade routes in outer rim planets. The essence of this war reflects American imperial policies to safeguard American interests from terrorist attacks and the disruption of access to natural resources. *The Clone Wars* details a manufactured war propelled through imperialist mandates via superior technology against technologically inferior, though still advanced, civilizations. Lucas' influence in making *Star Wars* stems from his experience with the effects of the Vietnam War on American society. His curiosity was aimed to analyze the effects of technology on human behavior and on waging war. The use of technology is represented via the use of space fighters, clone gunships, and artillery, thus mirroring America's use of superior technology in achieving imperialist goals. As Wetmore remarks, "As in real history, the Empire represents the assertion of absolute power by a small number of cultures through a combination of technology, capitalism, and imperial perspective. We see in the *Star Wars* films the use of technology: transportation, communication and martial technology—up to the ability to destroy a planet."[139]

Much like *the Separatist* use of technology in lieu of marginalized human foot soldiers adds to social discourse of waging war through detached means. The use of technology in the current War on Terror demonstrates lesser need for soldiers to encounter frontline combat roles. As explained by former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld: "They agree that threats to America have become less predictable, that the next war is likely to be very different from Vietnam or the Gulf was and that the proper response entails incorporating new technology, vivid information-gathering sensors, fast computers, precision guidance, robotics, and new fighting dogma to make our forces more aware and agile."[140] Technology also contributes to altering combat roles, allowing for a more detached experience.

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[139] Wetmore, 20.
[140] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 157.

For Lucas, the concept of man versus machine would have been central in the making of *Apocalypse Now*. Lucas foresaw technology as the future of warfare and capitalized on it in *Star Wars*. As expressed by Taylor, "The George Lucas version of *Apocalypse Now* would be 'more man against machine than anything else,' he said in 1977; 'Technology against humanity, and then how humanity won.'"[141] Lucas' use of technology as a representation of societies' propensity to wage war places social commentary on American dependence of technology and superior firepower to spread its sphere of influence and adherence to imperialist policies.

The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center marked the beginning of a war based on the notion of just war theory, which was centered on American Christian values to justify the eradication of a viable threat. As expressed by McDowell, "Most familiar and palatable to many people in the West as 'just war' growing as it does largely out of medieval Christian traditions of moral reasoning. This has its most common appeal in the justification of war when performed in self-defense against an aggressor."[142]

The central connection to *The Clone Wars* is the Republic's justification to use war as a means for conflict resolution. The first episode of *The Clone Wars* illustrates Yoda as a General sent to confirm the use of Republic forces to safeguard the planet, marking the Republic's aim of encouraging planets to fight against the Separatist forces. Yoda's appeal to outer rim planets resembles President Bush's "Coalition of the Willing" as well as the Vietnam era's "Free World Forces," where the U.S. encouraged the involvement of military forces from third world countries such as South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines. In *The Clone Wars*, post-9/11 mandates of imperialism are articulated as a form of social discourse toward understanding American ideals of waging war via technology.

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[141] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 125.
[142] McDowell, *Identity Politics,* 48.

The use of technology to wage war is represented in *The Clone Wars* episode "Liberty on Ryloth," which features Republic forces invading a planet resembling the Middle East. The planets' occupants are represented as living in tribal subgroups. The planet of Ryloth is under forced occupation by Separatist forces, and Jedi Mace Windu is sent to organize a counter strike. Here, the Republic forces represent American counter insurgencies. Using technology against a less-developed planet and population, the Separatists target civilian towns as military targets:

> *MACE WINDU*: We saw the graves of many of your people in that battlefield as well. Together, we can prevent that from happening again.
> *REBEL FIGHTER*: Do you know why we were massacred, Master Jedi? When the droids swept over Ryloth, the Republic was unable to help us. We were forced to surrender. And we came here unarmed. The Separatists brought tanks to exterminate us.[143]

The dialogue comments on the use of technology against unarmed populations to subjugate native populations with imperialist rule. In the following scene, the use of bombing raids via drones alludes to the escalated use of drone technology in lieu of foot soldiers to initiate combat.

> *CLONE CAPTAIN*: Our scouts reported in from the village up ahead.
> *CLONE FOOT SOLDIER*: The enemies already pulled out, sir. Friendlies are all that's left, mostly women and children.
> *CAPTAIN*: See if we can spare some rations. They'll be hungry.
> *SOLDIER:* Sir. Enemy ships are entering our sector.
> *CAPTAIN*: Damage report!
> *SOLDIER:* There's no tactical damage, sir. It didn't hit us. They bombed the village.[144]

This scene articulates the use of civilians as military tactics to subdue the enemy while also creating discourse on the use of drones causing collateral damage to surrounding populations.

The forced reoccupation of Ryloth by the Republic creates commentary on the use of force between the Separatists and Republic without mentioning the desires of the populations. The people of Ryloth are forced to negotiate between two choices of imperialism, either of which

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[143] Coleman, "Liberty on Ryloth."
[144] Coleman.

may change depending on wartime mandates. At the same time, both Separatist and Republic forces neglect to incorporate policies of self-determination for the people of Ryloth.

> MACE WINDU: Why won't you help me free your people form this occupation?
> REBEL: I don't trust Senator Taa, his plans for our world after the war.
> WINDU: The Republic will help you rebuild. We won't abandon you.
> Rebel soldier: Your troops will stay for security?
> WINDU: For a while to keep the peace.
> REBEL SOLDIER: Another armed occupation is not a free Ryloth. How long before I am fighting you, Master Jedi?[145]

Here, social commentary is aimed at American imperialist policies for safeguarding populations from threats while denying them any real agency. Instead, they use military suppression against any members of the population that dissent against imperialist occupation. As expressed in the final sentence of the dialogue, the likelihood of occupying imperial forces having to resuppress countries in favor of wartime policies remains contemporarily consistent.

The use of technology via drones is a central form of commentary in *The Clone Wars*, continuing Lucas' semiotic references that place machine against man. Beginning with President Bush's use of drones as an added tool against the War on Terror, the Obama administration's commitment to deescalate the wars in Afghanistan resulted in the escalation of drone strikes from 52 during President Bush's tenure to 456. As Sweet argues, "Despite the obvious risks involved with making the drone program a central feature of counterterrorism efforts, both the Bush and Obama administrations turned to the new weapon with increasing regularity."[146] One of the reasons for the use of drones is the efficiency in providing immediate response against enemy combatants, with less probability of soldier deaths or injuries. The inherent problem with the use of drones, as expressed in "Liberty on Ryloth," is the inconsistency in accurate targets, resulting in collateral damage in civilian populations. The second problem is technology's

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[145] Coleman.
[146] Sweet, *Star Wars in the Public Square*, 157.

complete disconnect from the effects of war on the populations and environment, thereby robbing soldiers of any empathy toward suffering as a guiding mechanism in war zones.

Technologically advanced warfare also denies soldiers socially expected combat experiences. Media representations of heroic combat scenes as experienced through film, media, and comic books fail to materialize when enemy combatants are targeted from hundreds of miles away. As expressed by Silvestri, "A problem arises, however, for the troops when their experiences don't align with cultural expectations for war. And often, because of the style in which these recent wars are fought, they don't."[147]

The War on Terror marked a new chapter in American society and its relationship with war. Largely based on American Christian exceptionalism, American executive leadership aimed to create a sphere of influence to safeguard America from the threat of terror while securing foreign trade and interest. *The Clone Wars* comments on imperialist policies aimed toward defending the rights of planetary inhabitants while establishing its presence in favor of wartime mandates. The use of technology remains a key feature in Lucas' semiotic representations of warfare, beginning with Vietnam-era helicopters as a force against a peasant uprising, followed by the use of drones in the fight for terror containment.

Conclusion: *The Clone Wars* as a Cultural Documentation of War

In 1970s America, it was a time of conflict and change. The Vietnam War wreaked havoc on a generation of Americans whose youth remained plagued by wartime mandates. War is not only documented in history books, but in all facets of society, from the music it inspired, to the personal memories or psychological scars, to the forms of media that articulated war's idiosyncrasies. The 1970s also marked the death of John Ronald Tolkien, whose experiences in

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[147] Silvestri, *Friended at the Front*, 165.

the Great War inspired his literary classic, *The Lord of The Rings*. The year 1973 corresponded with Lucas' attempt at documenting war via a popular culture lens. As Taylor explains, "Tolkien died in 1973, just as Lucas was getting started on the first draft. There was a surprising amount of overlap between the third draft of *Star Wars* and Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*."[148] The central connection between Lucas and Tolkien is the use of popular culture as a lens in documenting war. For Lucas, the Vietnam War created a symbolic passing of the torch from Tolkien in documenting war as a cultural production.

Lucas' articulation of *The Clone Wars* represents the continued saga of the American cultural practice of utilizing war as a mechanism for conflict resolution. By documenting war through a popular culture medium, Lucas represents war, its effects on society, and its continued propagation as evidence that war is perpetrated through a cultural means. *The Clone Wars* introduces a new generation of Americans to social constructs involved with the sustainment of war as well as to the long-term effects of disconnection from war's consequences. As articulated by Lucas, "To not make a decision is to make a decision—by not accepting the responsibility, people eventually have to confront the issue in a more painful way."[149] He was extremely sensitive to the fact that the war had knocked the country off balance, which Lucas referred to as a poetic state. For Lucas, *The Clone Wars* places commentary on society's lack of dissent as a contributing mechanism toward understanding the effects of war.

The Clone Wars constitutes a form of cultural documentation about America's relationship with war, pronouncing the effects of a society at war for prolonged periods of time. The 2021 issue of *Time Magazine* featured the most influential images of all time. There were one hundred photographic images illustrating some of the most pivotal moments of human

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[148] Taylor, *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, 123.
[149] Taylor, 87

history. Of those hundred, fifty-four of them depicted war's side effects, either from a direct cause of war or from civil actions taken by governments against their own citizens. Like the images documenting war's side effects, *The Clone Wars* contributes as a medium articulating the mutating effects of war on society.

For a society to uncover war's contributing outliers, it needs to create a social awareness that contributes to the public discourse of war. As McDowell argues, "Policies to change behavior are unlikely to be effective unless the underlying patterns of thought are changed. Moreover, for this to happen it is necessary to bring those patterns, the cultural symbolic, to consciousness, and this, in therapy means probing its sources and history."[150] Thus, *The Clone Wars* conveys the social constructs pertaining to war, its propagation, and its effects on society.

The Clone Wars' deployment of the good war ideology relies on masculine action sequences featuring military figures. The Jedi not only represent American virtues of self-sacrifice and the fight for freedom, but patriotic attitudes that uplift the war efforts. For an audience of younger viewers, these semiotic messages of conformity are promoted through male protagonist characters, reinforcing gender roles through dialogue in support of conservative, masculine social constructs pertaining to war. As the main protagonists are male Jedi who are also central characters in the broader *Star Wars* universe, they represent normative attitudes pertaining to social acceptance of wartime. By portraying American ideals for waging war to younger audiences and placing them in a context where the Jedi are featured battling valiantly under the premise of good war ideology, the series enables socialization into war for these younger viewers.

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[150] McDowell, *Identity Politics*, 5.

The Clone Wars corner of the *Star Wars* universe represents a cultural production that documents war's diverse influences and effects through a popular culture lens. Lucas accomplished his vision of translating war, with all its idiosyncrasies and complexities, through an artistic medium capable of reaching a cross-generational range of people, thus continuing social discourse on war. Perhaps the best summation of the effects of popular culture and war on American youth is Daddis' articulation of the American ideals of manhood and the right of passage attached to war.

> Looking back, the prospect for adventure in the early spring of 1956 seems so palpable. A new war was about to offer young men a chance to follow in their fathers' footsteps, to grasp the mantle of manhood that had been won against the forces of evil in the Second World War. The pulps would inspire a new generation of Americans. Yet there are consequences when young men, encouraged by fantasy, assertively seek out opportunities to prove their dominance and come up short. Shattered illusions result in disappointment and frustration, which can lead to hostility and frustration. There are costs when we idolize war as the essential man-making experience.[151]

Popular culture, unlike traditional modes of academic learning, allows for a diverse topical discourse that filters themes and genres that are forgotten or excluded from mainstream academia. The representation of war in *The Clone Wars* acts as an active agent in the circulation, socialization, and integration of war as an American social construct.

The effects or influences of the Vietnam War on the *Star Wars* genre are well documented. Lucas set out to create a film about war, but not directly tied to the Vietnam War experience. This new war experience came to represent space fantasy, where war is no longer waged by American imperial forces against "a piss ant" third rate country, but instead a war waged by familiar democratic resistance fighters. This dichotomy of heroes versus villains is best describe by Daddis, "Yet less than a decade later, men's adventure magazines had faded into

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[151] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 236.

obscurity, the pulp fantasyland ruptured by a war that beget few heroes and far too many villains."[152] This summation by Daddis is aimed at the demise of the effects of the pulps following the capitulation of American forces in Vietnam. Interestingly enough, this is exactly where *Star Wars* commences its rise. If the Vietnam War failed to produce any real heroes, then it remained up to Lucas to fill the void and articulate a new war with new and relevant American heroes.

The original *Star* Wars: *A New Hope* materialized as a reinterpretation of American ideals of fighting against oppressive, fascist forces but remained amiss about the causes and reasons for war and its effects on society, community, family, and the average foot soldier. *The Clone Wars* is a piece of ideological Americana contributing to a semiotic representation and documentation of war through a popular culture medium where it contributes to the social construct and discourse of war as an agent for conflict resolution.

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[152] Daddis, *Pulp Vietnam*, 236.

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