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Endorsement of American Imperialism in Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Endorsement of American Imperialism in Ridley Scott’s *Black Hawk Down*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Kshitij Chaurel has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research paper examines Ridley Scott's movie Black Hawk Down to show its role in endorsing American imperialism. It further explores how the use of advanced movie making technologies serve for the filmmaker's own politics of legitimizing American intervention in the internal affair of Somalia. It also shows the way this movie carries the state- sponsored line of thought which puts it in the basket of propaganda tool to persuade people for approval of American brand of democracy. This paper combines both film theory and post-Marxist approach, especially of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Stuart Hall, and Shaobo Xie for the analysis of the movie. This research paper concludes that this movie misrepresents Somalis as well as the incident of Mogadishu for hidden politics of the moviemaker. Ridley Scott's attempt to show American soldiers' death as a form of martyrdom and that of Somalian citizens as futile job proves his position as an agent of America for endorsing its imperial mission. Such movie needs to be watched with critical perspective. In short, the finding of the research shows Scott's advocacy of American imperialism in Black Hawk Down.

Keywords: American imperialism; war on terror; stereotyping; propaganda; globalization; liberal democracy; neoliberalism; radical democracy

This research paper analyzes Ridley Scott's movie *Black Hawk Down* (2001) to show how American imperialism functions in the name of 'humanitarian act' and 'American war on terror'. It further explores different cinematic techniques that have been used in the movie in order to create and achieve the impact desired by the director. It is a high profile war movie released after infamous 9/11 attack in America. However, the movie shows the 'Battle of Mogadishu' that was fought on 3rd and 4th of October 1993 in the capital of Somalia. In that battle, nineteen American soldiers were killed and hundreds of Somalis died. The movie narrates the battle from the perspective of American soldiers. It is based on the non-fiction book entitled *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* by Mark Bowden. In the movie adaptation of this book, certain things are left out while some informations are added to meet the expectation of the director. This paper explores the motive behind the representation of American soldiers and Somalis in different ways: one becomes patriotic and brave, meanwhile other seems uncivilized, barbaric and terrorist. Similarly, it scrutinizes the movie in relation to American foreign policy and its role in the 'remaking of the world order' which means creating the world as it suits America.

Among different forms of art, movie has always been influential due to its audio-visual representation. With the development of modern information technology, movie plays even greater role in spreading certain ideologies, manipulating people and establishing the point. Movie can be used, in any way, either as a mere form of art and entertainment or as a propaganda tool. After the revolution in science and technology, movies are easily accessible to anyone as well as movie makers have different technological support in creating various experiments and effects. Regarding the technological advancement and its impact upon the movie, James Monaco in *How to Read a Film* claims that Hollywood has expanded and developed profoundly in

recent time, so it is necessary to understand Hollywood films from every angle. He argues, “It is no longer sufficient to know how to read a film. Now we must also understand, in a profound way, how to use a film” (561). It clearly suggests that a film needs to be analyzed not only from technical aspects but also from socio-economic, cultural and political impact it creates.

The movie becomes critically acclaimed as it has won two awards for Best Film Editing and Best Sound Mixing at the 74th Academy Awards. It takes massive help of available technical tools for more realistic output in the screens. From the point of view of commercial entertainment, the movie achieves the highest level. Meanwhile, there arise lots of questions regarding the true motive and hidden message of the movie. The way it differs from the original text, its presentation of Somalia, visual effects through cinematography, use of certain kind of music in different situations, choice of words in the characters’ dialogue, way of narration and other elements cast a great doubt in its deeper meaning and its ostensible anti-war theme. The careful observation demands deeper analysis for undisclosed agenda behind the making of this movie. Michael Parenti explains the connection of US military actions with movie representation of them. In the foreword of *Reel Power*, he claims, “In the world of cinema, US military engagements are always well intentioned undertakings that sometimes go wrong. Nothing is said about the transnational global interests behind such ventures, about who pays and who benefits from what is transpiring” (Matthew Alford xi). In this movie too, like most of the Hollywood war movies, US presence in Somalia has been shown as a necessary act.

Black Hawk Down starts with a brief introduction of famine and poverty caused by civil war in Somalia. Then the whole movie revolves around American soldiers’ base outside Mogadishu and the raid of those soldiers in a hotel of

Mogadishu to capture Omar Salad Elmi and Abdi Hassan Awale Qeybdiid, two top advisers of warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. However, the mission does not go according to the plan. American soldiers face counter attacks from Aidid's militia and Somali people. Initially, they think that the mission will be over within a couple of hours. Later, they get totally lost inside Mogadishu and fight until the rescuers find them next day. In that fight, nineteen American soldiers get killed, two helicopters are destroyed while hundreds of Somali die and many more become injured. Somalis show aggressive and violent behaviours such as resisting to American soldiers, and protesting against them. In the meantime, American soldiers shoot and kill everything that moves in the name of self-defense. Finally, in the end of the movie, American soldiers escape from Mogadishu while in the background Somali people are shown celebrating their victory.

The act of American soldiers is associated with US intervention in the internal affair of another sovereign country. In the civil war of Somalia, it acts as per their own self-interest. Ridley Scott in a sense legitimizes that intervention through his movie. So, here comes the question of American imperialism. It has been argued by many intellectuals and scholars that American imperialism is a new form of colonialism. This paper is mainly concerned with imperialism of the United States of America. In *The White Pacific*, Gerald Horne argues ". . . imperialism inherently involved interference in the internal affairs of various lands . . ." (58). Imperialistic character shows illegal intervention upon other countries or land for self-benefit. In the similar line, Edward Said, one of the prominent theorists, writes, "At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others" (5-6). Both of them point towards the same direction which ultimately means imperialism is attack

upon other's sovereignty and mere exercise of power for any kind of gain. It also means that any kind of military intervention comes under imperial motive. After the end of Cold war, military intervention of America along with other kind of interferences have occurred regularly throughout the world.

Black Hawk Down is the first major war movie released after 9/11. Similarly, the director Ridley Scott signifies a big name in Hollywood. These reasons make this movie one of the heavyweights and its global impact can be easily imagined. Such features clearly show its dominant position increasing a certain ideology and implementing it all over the globe. The way it establishes a perspective through cinematic features and elements concerns this research paper.

Numerous critics have examined *Black Hawk Down* as one of the finest Hollywood war movies. Most of them share different opinions but are quite divided about the meaning of the movie and its subject matter. However, only few critics have investigated this movie with critical approach to American war policy and its imperial attitude towards other nations (Somalia, in this case), especially after 9/11. The most prominent and relevant idea about hidden intention of America in the name of humanitarian mission is provided by Ashley Dawson. He critiques the representation of Africa in this movie and reveals American agendas. He argues, "In *Black Hawk Down*, Mogadishu and its citizens are made to stand in for the worst fears of the American military and the civilian policy making establishment: the city, and, by extension, urban Africa, is represented as a feral zone in which the U.S. military's unmatched firepower and technology are overwhelmed in densely populated slums" (177). He implies that what happened in Mogadishu is an outcome of policies implemented by the U.S. and other western power. He accuses that the movie

represents one side of the whole saga without space for other side just like many Hollywood war movies.

Meanwhile, Dennis Showalter appreciates U.S. actions in Mogadishu and its portrayal in the movie. He feels satisfied with depiction of the battle in the movie. He writes, “In contrast, *Black Hawk Down* treats the Somalis with respect. They are portrayed not as targets but as warriors better to fight beside than against” (651). The way he sees Somalis in the movie represents American perspective about ‘Third World’ countries in general. He further claims, “As the United States moves towards realizing hyperpower status by unilaterally initiating what it defines as antiterrorist operations on a global scale, *Black Hawk Down* may prove the first statement of a new American myth - for good and bad” (651). It seems he celebrates American way of establishing its superiority throughout the world by any means.

Holger Pötzsch studies *Black Hawk Down* in the context of cultural memory and media culture. He illustrates the blurring of fact and fiction in the representation of war movie. He examines it by highlighting one sided narrative and Western media. He argues, “It is shown how Scott’s film privileges one particular perspective on an actual event and how this point of view is objectified and installed in the memory of Western media” (269). The western and non-western spectacles differ, hence, the same incident constitutes different meanings. On the other hand, Thomas Doherty analyzes post- 9/11 war movies with primary focus on how they will be understood and interpreted in the future, mostly by American people after such traumatic terror attack in the country. He praises *Black Hawk Down* for its technical aspects like cinematography, editing, however, he points out the contrast between the American soldiers and Somalis seen in the movie. He critiques it through the lens of war and survival in the battlefield. Regarding the movie’s insufficient background information

about the story, he asserts, “. . . the film provides little explanation as to why a city should erupt in spontaneous rebellion against good-hearted Americans who want only to deliver food and medicine to a starving people” (6). He indicates the technique of misleading people by displaying selected information and hiding certain things. The story behind the events which led towards the conflict between Somalis and American soldiers has been hidden in the movie. It only shows the middle portion, not even succeeding events after the infamous Americans raid in Mogadishu.

Mark J. Lacy sees the movie in relation to America's role in global order. He argues that movie is the means of naturalizing ideas among people. In this sense, he reveals various aspects of *Black Hawk Down* through minute observation of the movie as well as the politics associated with it. He claims that though *Black Hawk Down* takes ‘anti-war stance’, it represents Somalia negatively with certain political motive. He writes, “The film makes no exploration of the often violent strategies that led to increased hostility toward the peacekeepers . . . Indeed, the film is a political technology . . . thus is an important component in the ongoing debate about our responsibilities to distant strangers” (624). The movie provides what the West wants to see. In this line, he claims that such Hollywood war movies cure moral anxiety of the westerners caused by their situations all over the world. Through the political and theoretical angle, Lacy puts forward his critical approach towards this movie.

Melani McAlister looks deep down in to the scenarios developed in America after September 11. In this process she reveals a fact about *Black Hawk Down*. She writes, “. . . Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* was moved up several months before its planned March 2002 release, appearing on December 28, 2001, just in time both to qualify it for the Oscars and to cash in on the more militaristic mood of a country that had just routed the Taliban from Afghanistan” (452-53). It suggests the commercial

mindset of the director, though it means playing with the sentiments of the people, at the same time, glorifying one nation's action over other. James I. Matray praises this movie as a kind of excitement while watching it but critiques the movie for its unbalanced representation. Like many critics, he questions the movie for not providing the buildup incidents up to that ruthless battle. He gets impressed by the movie in overall aspects, especially with its action sequences and visual.

He concludes, "*Black Hawk Down* entertains in presenting a stunning realistic portrayal of the gruesome carnage of modern warfare, but it falls short in educating viewers on how the United States should behave in modern world affairs" (1177). The role of the United States in the world order has come under question, especially after the end of the Second World War. Matray clearly hints at the increasing involvement of America in every incident that occurs in the world. In almost every world affairs, in one way or other, America's presence can be seen clearly.

Matthew Alford and Tom Secker analyze *Black Hawk Down* and its relation with American intelligence agency. They directly accuse this movie as a state sponsored one. They claim, "During the film adaptation, *Black Hawk Down*'s narrative was twisted in favour of US national security interests. It's one of the classic cases of DOD [Department of Defense, aka the Pentagon] influence" (36). Likewise, they explain about American mentality of winning war at any cost, which has been the main issue in the movie. Their interpretation clearly raises the debate about *Black Hawk Down*'s treatment of native people and representation of their characteristics.

All the abovementioned reviewers and critics have analyzed and explored *Black Hawk Down* from different angles. Some of them have critiqued the movie for its biased representation of Somalis and lack of background incidents and events. On

the other hand, some others have praised its cinematic techniques. Different from them, this research paper explores *Black Hawk Down* and shows how it acts as a propaganda after the post-September eleven situation. It analyzes some of the cinematic techniques, especially, camera work, music and dialogues. It focuses on the hidden agenda of the movie used to persuade people and to justify one country's intervention over other. It primarily concerns with the exploration of *Black Hawk Down*'s role in legitimizing and justifying American intervention and its contribution in persuasive discourse formation about America's war and foreign policy in the name of 'war on terror'.

Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* manufactures consent inside and outside America for the legitimization of American intervention and military as well as other actions throughout the world in the name of peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and mainly, ending terrorism from the world. Ridley Scott negatively uses the power of film and global reach of Hollywood so that a certain kind of state sponsored narrative can be established among people. This movie acts as an apparatus of American hegemony, which by any means tries to dominate the world. The manipulative and propagandist representation through medium of movie has been utilized through the *Black Hawk Down*. The various aspects of this movie clearly show that it has been used to hegemonize people, to glorify and legitimize America's act of terror in Somalia.

For the analysis of the movie, some of the theoretical concepts from post-Marxism are used in this research work. Classical Marxist version of Marxism promotes the concept of base and superstructure of the society. Its major concern deals with economy, production and modes of production along with emphasis on class struggle. Neo-Marxism is a school of thought which represents different 20th

century approaches that extends Classical Marxism by incorporating other school of thoughts like Psychoanalysis, Critical theory. Apart from them, there is another modified form of Marxism that is known as post-Marxism. It has been heavily influenced by the notions of both Marxism and post-structuralism. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are taken as pioneer post-Marxists. They argue, “To reread Marxist theory in the light of contemporary problems necessarily involves deconstructing the central categories of that theory. This is what has been called our post-Marxism” (ix). This opinion sheds light on requirement of rereading Marxism in the contemporary time. Post-Marxism moves beyond the notion of Marxism, however its roots can be traced back to basic tenets of Marxism. Post-Marxism critiques some core notions of Marxism, for example it casts doubt upon the communist utopia through struggles and revolution. It opposes clear cut demarcation of people on the basis of economy. It gives equal focus on other forms of marginalization in terms of race or ethnic, gender, sex / sexuality along with marginalization in terms of class. There are many thinkers whose works and ideas can be labeled as post-Marxism though they have not introduced themselves as post-Marxists.

This research paper uses few post-Marxists’ ideas. Stuart Hall’s concept of ‘representation’ is used for close analysis of visual images to explore the making of stereotypes in this movie. This concept comes as a useful tool to show the way this movie attempts to persuade the Americans people so that American authorities can gain consent of the people for foreign interventions and ‘war in the name of terrorism’. Likewise, Noam Chomsky’s theory of ‘Propaganda Model’ (which illustrates how propagandas are formed through media) has been applied in order to analyze *Black Hawk Down*’s impact upon people as a medium. Similarly, ideas of Shaobo Xie have been utilized for the analysis of the notion related with globalization

and what kind of ideas the movie puts forward in the name of global world order. Likewise, the ideas of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe regarding hegemony and radical democracy help to see the world politics including America's role in it, thus helping for the analysis of the depiction of viewpoint of the film. Also, Roland Barthes's notion of myth as the second order semiological system assists in analyzing the denotative meaning (surficial meaning) and connotative meaning (deeper meaning) of this movie.

On the other hand, technical aspects of the movie are to be analyzed for better comprehension of the issue of this research paper. James Monaco's concept of film's role in meaning formation as well role of particular shot selection by the moviemaker provides useful tool in this research. Likewise, Jon Lewis' ideas regarding analysis of films with modern perspectives has been used for close interpretation of this film.

This research paper introduces the issue, argument of the researcher, point of departure from other works and theoretical framework in the first section. In the textual analysis section, this paper particularly focuses on these four issues: Discourse on American war on terror, representation and politics of othering, relation of globalization and American imperialism and dialectic of liberal democracy. The research paper analyzes these issues in *Black Hawk Down* and shows the role of the movie in promoting certain ideas that reinforce American imperialism as that helps America dominate over other sovereign states. Finally, the last part consists the overall findings and conclusion of this research work.

The movie opens with devastating conditions of Somali people. It tries to establish the narrative that Somalia has undergone through massive violence, civil war and internal conflict that ultimately lead to chaos, destruction, death of people and

conversion of it into a failure nation. The opening scenes of the movie lay the foundation for the actions of American soldiers' intervention in Somalia on October 3-4, 1993. With heartbreaking images and gloomy music in the background, different information are displayed on the screen, highlighting the worst situation over there. It shows, "Years of warfare among rival clans causes famine on a biblical scale" (00:01:07). Then it talks about the deaths of Somalis by mentioning Mohamed Farrah Aidid, one of the warlords of Mogadishu. His crimes are mentioned simultaneously. After showing all those information, the real intention of the movie comes forward. It highlights the role of America's military power, "The world responds. Behind a force of 20,000 U.S. Marines, food is delivered and order is restored" (00:01:47). Now comes the major argument of the movie. It directly claims, as it is repeating the voice of American Government, "In late August, America's elite soldiers, Delta Force, Army Rangers and the 160th SOAR are sent to Mogadishu to remove Aidid and restore order" (00:02:27). These evidences of the opening scene from the movie cast serious doubt upon the mere artistic purpose of the filmmaker, thus, they attract deeper analysis from different spectacles.

The choice of words and phrases by the director while putting forward the information clearly suggests his intention of clarifying the large number of audiences inside and outside of America about the incident of Mogadishu. The 'war against terrorism' gets officially started after the infamous attack of 9/11. Before that, the interventions, especially military ones, occur in the name of humanitarian acts. About American aids, Noam Chomsky clearly points out the politics behind them and aftermath of such aids. He boldly claims, "There have been a lot of studies of it, including studies by people who write in the mainstream, and what they show is that there is in fact a very high correlation between the U.S. foreign aid and human rights

abuses” (144). This is the serious issue related with the movie’s depiction of America’s humanitarian aid in Somalia. It has been normally asserted that it is the duty of America to ‘restore order’ throughout the world.

David L. Robb studies about Hollywood movies and finds out “the longstanding relationship between the United States military and Hollywood—a symbiotic relationship in which each receives benefits from the others’ work” (13). He puts forward many factual evidences about Hollywood receiving aids from Pentagon that in return demands its propaganda to be presented the way it wants. Robb has also given proofs of American army’s collaboration with makers of *Black Hawk Down*. Here, James Monaco’s illustration becomes relevant. He writes, “. . . we all too naturally accept the vast amounts of information they [Film and electronic media] convey to us in massive doses without questioning how they tell us what they tell” (17). The influence of Hollywood helps movie like *Black Hawk Down* to promote particular narrative as people easily but their version of narration.

In order to justify the necessity of the intervention in the name of humanitarian act, *Black Hawk Down* shows Somalia as a doomed country, as in Fig.1:



Fig.1: Gathering of Somali people for food in a large number (00:03:13)

Fig.1 is a 'bird's eye view' shot which is a typical shot taken from the above, clearly indicating that something or someone powerful is watching. The above screenshot provides the idea to the viewers that Somalis suffer from starvation and hunger. Jon Lewis writes, "What is unique to cinema is that the camera positions us as viewers of the *mise-en-scène*, governing our perspective on a scene. This perspective, importantly, depends a lot on what we see and how the filmmaker has chosen to show it to us" (85). In this case, the powerful one is none other than America (in the form of American soldiers). And the filmmaker wants to show the audience that Somalia has turned into a failed so, America has every rights for anykind of intervention.

For any form of intervention, one requires at least a good reason or purpose. In this case, civil war and decaying of humanity are put forward as reasons of attack. *Black Hawk Down* constantly portrays Mogadishu as some kind of suitable place for terrorists. Through the symbolic meaning of the images it captures the market of Mogadishu where people are buying and selling guns and other weapons easily without any intervention from law enforcement agency.

Similarly, almost everyone is seen carrying weapons as if it is war zone (Fig.2). The movie sets a clear picture of Somalis being nothing more than terrorists and Mogadishu, a place where terrorism flourishes.



Fig.2: People carrying different kinds of weapons and fighting with American soldiers (00:54:57).

In the above screenshot from the movie, Fig.2, a long shot, symbolizes the act of terror. It is the discourse the movie creates for all the chaos created in the capital of Mogadishu. The long shot tries to establish the relation between subjects and the surrounding. In the screenshot, people are shown walking freely in the streets with modern weapons. It symbolizes as the presence of terrorism in Somalia. Likewise, it portrays negative image of Somalis. The country like Somalia becomes the victim of capitalism that creates turmoil in the society. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue, “American neo-conservatives denounce the 'excess of democracy' and the wave of 'egalitarianism'” (165). And America tries to impose the same system of capitalism in ‘third world countries’ which ultimately leads to situations like that of Mogadishu.

Noam Chomsky’s illustration on terrorism claims, “. . . all countries, as far as I know, call whatever horrendous acts they are carrying out, counter terrorism” (48). As Chomsky clarifies, every country produces its own kind of definition of terrorism and act of anti-terrorism. It creates serious misinterpretation of those terms. It makes easier for countries or any groups to justify their actions and condemn other’s actions. In the case of Somalia, it is America that attacks first by creating its own meaning of terrorism. Also, it intervenes in the internal affairs of Somalia in the name of humanitarian act and restoring world order. Similarly, Charles Townshend extends the definition of a terrorist as “not just someone with a gun or bomb, but also someone who spreads ideas that are contrary to Western and Christian civilization” (47) by borrowing the words of General Videla. America counters those countries who oppose its policies.

In the context of the movie, it fails to provide any background information on whatever has happened before American forces established the base over there in Somalia. It only focuses on showing Somalia as corrupt and terrified place. The great irony is the narrative the filmmaker wants to set in the world which has been put by Magnus Ranstorp and Graeme P. Herd as “. . . the global war on terror is a war to preserve ordinary people’s ability to live as they choose in free and open societies” (11). In the reaction to the death of people, and in the name of counter-terrorism, America thinks of straightening the things, in this process it kills even more civilians and tears apart Somalia. Meanwhile, the movie creates the discourse that America wants peace and stability in Somalia by creating this illusion that Americans are willing to sacrifice their life even for the sake of strangers if this means peace. It lures people for recognizing America’s steps in Somalia as an act of bravery for the mankind.

The consequences of the American military intervention receives massive screen time and major focus in the movie. The chief operation officer, Garrison’s dialogue gives symbolic meaning of American supremacy over other nations. It also hides the brutal truth of America’s role in destruction of many countries and death of thousands of people.

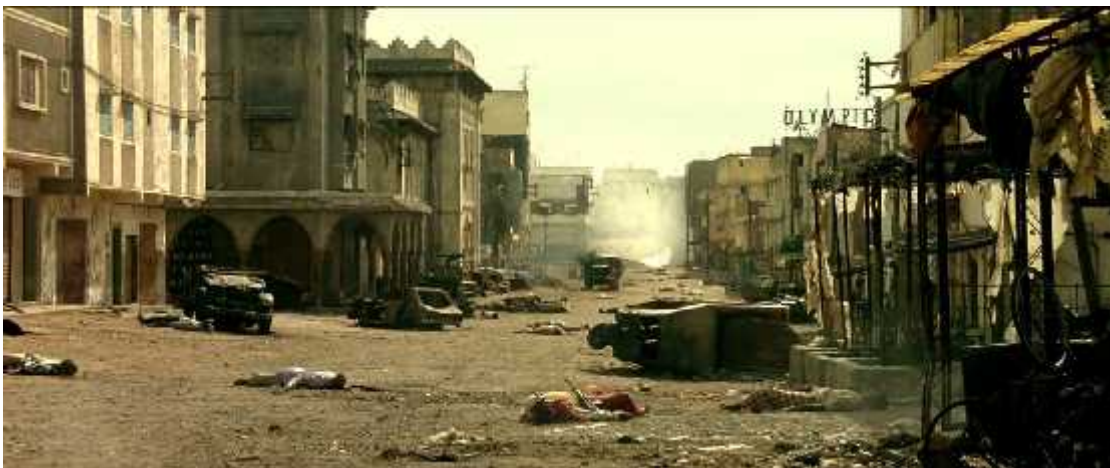


Fig.3: Dead bodies of people in the ruins of Mogadishu (01:09:38)

This is a wide angle shot that captures a large amount subjects within a single frame. Jon Lewis illustrates, “Wide-angle (short-focal-length) lenses offer a wide-angle view of the subjects in the frame” (103). Fig.3 shows the dead body of civilians. The frame captures destroyed houses and vehicles. The city has been turned into a kind of graveyard. Those people are killed by American soldiers as shown in the movie. It is the outcome of the intervention of America. No matter who are the culprits, common people always suffer from the actions.

The conversation between Atto, a businessman who is accused of helping Aidid, and General Garrison signifies how American authorities cover their misdeeds in the fabricated accusation over other. The Somali businessman, Atto says “Mr. Garrison, I think you shouldn’t have come here. This is civil war. This is our war. Not yours” (00:08:39-00:08:50) and Garrison replies, “300,000 dead and counting. That’s not a war, Mr. Atto. That’s genocide” (00:08:51-00:08:57). Garrison condemns the situation of Somalia with anger. His face seems as he is really concerned for the situation over there. However, his motives are clearly known after a while.

The filmmaker wants the audiences to be sure that America cares about the people of Somalia. The use of the word ‘genocide’ is delivered by the actor with extra focus and excitement. It ultimately means that the film tries to influence the mindset of people by making them believe what it puts in the screen as not ‘American Imperialism’ rather a heroic act for humanity. Such harshest word hides the American crimes in Vietnam, Gulf war and so on. Here, the idea of Noam Chomsky becomes relevant about the actions of the states. He claims, “. . . I have never heard of a state that admits it’s carrying out an aggressive act, they’re always engaged in “defense,” no matter what they’re doing—maybe “preemptive defense” or something” (37). In

this movie, an American army chief, Garrison, continuously defends his country's position and presence in Somalia. He never expresses the bitter truth that their presence can make the situation worse there. Likewise, as Chomsky has shown, American behaviour in Somalia is considered peaceful by the movie until Somalis provoke them and compel to open fire in self-defense. The movie terms all those deaths in Somalia occurred because of the war between clans, however, it hides the fact that the civil war was initiated by America itself (it will be explained later).

The movie highlights America's self-created mess from the perspective of American soldiers, whereas there are many American actions as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky show, "The slaughter of over 150,000 South Vietnamese by 1965, the U.S. bombing of villages, mass forced population removal . . . (13) that are totally ignored and justified within various circumstances. This is how a discourse gets manufactured where certain things become right and other things become wrong. It is often seen that media plays a role in manufacturing of state sponsored truth and alibi for intervention upon other countries. Edward Said rightly puts about the characteristic of America, "The Official line most of the time is that the United States is defending its interests, maintaining order, bringing justice to bear upon injustice and misbehavior" (368). The movie like *Black Hawk Down* fails to define 'self-interests' of America as dangerous consequences for the rest of the world. Post-Marxist theorist, Chantal Mouffe, talks about the dominance of America over the world. She argues, ". . . It is the fact that we are now living in a unipolar world where there are no legitimate channels for opposing the hegemony of the United States, which is at the origin of the explosion of new antagonisms which, if we are unable to grasp their nature, might indeed lead to the announced 'clash of civilizations'" (115). Mouffe shows concern towards the existing world order of one nation's domination.

Meanwhile, she favours multipolar world. One example of ‘clash of civilizations’ can be seen in *Black Hawk Down*, due to resistance towards single powerful nation. One ‘higher civilization’ and another ‘lower civilization’ often come face to face because of hierarchical attitude of ‘higher’ one as it tries to impose its values, life styles and moral upon others.

In the movie, one of the American soldiers, Eversmann’s, dialogue reflects a kind of responsibility Americans feel towards the world. It is what they think about helping others as they have this concept of protector and guardian of the world. He says, “Look these people, they have no jobs, no food, no education, no future. I just figure that, you know, I mean, we either, we have two things we can do, we can either help, or we can sit back and watch the country destroy itself on CNN. Right? . . . Well, I think I was trained to make a difference, Kurth” (00:18:16-00:18:39). The sense of making difference in the word ultimately causes a terrible clash with Somalis. There always lies hidden politics behind the destruction of any country. It means it raises many questions when one country shows up out of nowhere to change the existing condition acting as if it took the oath of caretaker. As Mouffe has pointed, unipolar world order or centralized role of one nation leads to disaster as we have seen in the case of Somalia.

The power of the film in this world of technology moves beyond imagination. In case of Hollywood movies like *Black Hawk Down*, they hold enormous power, can easily shape people’s mind and convince them of even half-truth and half lies. Film theorist, James Monaco, highlights the politics of the film and argues about the impact of the film upon the people. He writes, “The politics of film determines its structure: that is, the way it relates to the world . . . film is such a widespread popular phenomenon, it plays a very important part in modern culture, socio-politically.

Because it provides such a powerful and convincing representation of reality” (261). *Black Hawk Down*'s success in the worldwide box office signifies its influence in shaping today's culture as well as establishing the perspective of the filmmaker. The film holds power to create reality and makes people believe that created reality. The same thing happens in the case of *Black Hawk Down*'s representation of Battle of Mogadishu.

Black Hawk Down denotes a clash between American soldiers and Somalis along with the bravery shown by those soldiers for the world peace at surface. However, if we analyze this movie on the political contexts of that time, we see totally different meaning of it. Roland Barthes' concept of 'connotation' and 'denotation' helps to decode the formation of 'myth today'. For Barthes, “. . . myth is a peculiar system . . . it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system” (qtd. in Stuart Hall 68). *Black Hawk Down* portrays American soldiers' tireless actions by labeling them as heroes and martyrs. Here, denotative meaning is the bravery/patriotism of American soldiers. In the meantime, when we trace out post-Second World War global political events, we can see America's intervention upon other countries constantly by providing various reasons. Barthes claims that connotative meaning is camouflaged/hidden under the garb of denotative meaning. In this movie, connotative meaning, that is second order semiological meaning, is American imperialist motive for maintaining American hegemony throughout the globe as inherited rights.

Black Hawk Down narrates only one side of the incident of Mogadishu without considering another side. Howard Zinn points out the failure of American diplomacy and foreign policy in Somalia that cost many lives and properties. He argues, “The Clinton [Bill Clinton] administration made the mistake of intervening in an internal

conflict between warlords . . . The attention of the American public was concentrated, as usual, on the deaths of Americans (glamorized in the film *Black Hawk Down*)” (654). Borrowing the words of Zinn, this movie just glamorizes and romanticizes the death of American soldiers and their killings of Somalis. As we have already seen the power a Hollywood movie holds, movies like *Black Hawk Down* can inspire other Americans to take part in such killings resulted from the misguided foreign policy. American imperial values and characteristics have influenced each and every thing. *Black Hawk Down* cannot be kept separate from state influence. In the name of any excuses (especially as an act against terror as well as humanitarian act) America intervenes and interferes in the so called ‘Third World’ countries with sole hidden motive of establishing itself as lone power of the world. *Black Hawk Down* endorses American hegemony over other nations.

In Western power, there has always been a mentality of superiority. They have been leading the world since the Renaissance. They have been in the centre of the world for hundreds of years. After the Second World War, America has taken the role of leader of Western hegemony. It tries to control and make influence all over the world. Shaobo Xie explains the growing domination of American power, especially in the post-Cold War period:

Never before has Western imperialism been so successful in infiltrating and consolidating European-American master narratives of history; never before has the majority of Western society been so unanimously bound together by the structure of feeling that, to borrow terms from Said, "we are number one, we are bound to lead, we stand for freedom and order, and so on". (12)

The imperialist forces come together for the stronghold of their position. They control the most of the world. They run it the way they like. In the case of *Black Hawk Down*,

when one commander of American army tells about the growing impatience of Washington regarding the mission in Somalia, General Garrison replies, “This isn’t Iraq, you know. It’s more complicated than that” (00:09:22). The statement of Garrison implies that let it be Iraq or Somalia or any other country, America accomplishes its mission regardless of the time consumption. There seems feeling of imperial consciousness in Garrison and all other American military personnel.

Black Hawk Down as a war movie raises many questions regarding its portrayal of subject matter. It shows contrasting issue without realization of maintaining realistic representation. It also tends to create a kind of image of America’s activities in the foreign land as people rely on the media as a medium for the truth. The movie plays the card of ‘nationalism’ for the purpose of gaining profit out of pain of thousands of Somalis. Though it has been initially planned for a release date, the movie makers sent it in theatres just after the attack of 9/11 and president Bush’s infamous declaration of ‘War on Terror’. Such big budget movie is driven by business motive. This clearly reveals the intention of capturing the American people’s and other people’s sentiment. However, if one thinks more deeply, s/he will find that it speaks for the legitimization of the American policies in the name of establishing peace and security throughout the world, as America did in Somalia.

Black Hawk Down’s relation with the U.S. looks suspicious because of the very nature of the movie. This movie can be clearly scrutinized through the argument of Talal Asad about the behaviour of people [here we can assume them as Americans]. He claims, “Acts of war are not disturbing to most civilians when the human damage perpetrated by their armies occurs abroad” (30). It can be clearly seen in case of this movie. The one-sided narration of American soldiers’ means: those who died except for ‘our’ soldiers should not be concern of American people. It wants

people to believe that the killings of thousands of foreign people becomes necessary for good causes and consequences, the value of their [Somalis] life must be the least importance for Americans as America must preserve world order by hook or crook. It has been rightly put by V.G. Kiernan, “America loved to think that whatever it wanted was just what the human race wanted” (127). *Black Hawk Down* carries this same ideology. This very line of thinking guides the presentation of the filmmaker, who in return sets such circumstances for the constructed and fabricated events in order to create and insert this same mentality among people.

The ‘act on terrorism’ creates a division between those who belong to ‘us’ and those who are against ‘us’. It is done through the process of representation. How someone gets represented determines what meaning comes out from that. In the case of visual representation, it holds tremendous power than other forms of representation. The visual images can set a narrative where it has equally a greater chance of creating the misleading meanings. The power of representation has become one of the important assets in modern film making process. In *Black Hawk Down*, Somalis are termed as ‘Skinnies’ by American soldiers. Most of the time, they refer the natives without proper specific respectful terms. One American soldier says, “Ask. Sgt. Eversmann. He likes skinnies” (00:17:59). Momentarily, another soldier follows the first one and asks, “Sgt. Eversmann, you really like the skinnies?” (00:18:02). Likewise, in a scene, an American fighter pilot while giving ground report to other soldiers, says, “63 confirm. Skinnies are moving in on all sides” (00:58:05). Another voice can be heard saying, “Indigenous personnel advancing to Wolcott crash site” (00:58:11). These are just some of the examples and that only of verbal representation of Somalis by American soldiers. This pattern of calling them by some stereotypical name tries to represent them by that very specific identity. These name calling reflect

what they feel towards other people. It shows their inherent perspectives about different person.

Stuart Hall clarifies the connection of language, representation and meaning. He basically argues that it is through the language one represents anything and in aftermath it gets meaning. Hall points out the meaning making process:

The meaning is not in the object or person or thing, nor is it in the word. It is we who fix the meaning so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable. The meaning is constructed by the system of representation. It is constructed and fixed by the code, which sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system . . . (21)

As Hall argues, one's perspective, concept and attitude towards people, events, objects, etc. reveal through his/her choice of words and language s/he uses. In this movie, the constant use of derogatory terms to represent Somalis fix their identity in the same way as they have been regularly specified. The term like 'Skinnies' gives negative connotation. The negativity has been naturalized through repetition of the same coined word and phrase again and again. It indirectly means they are different from American soldiers. It reflects Somalis as inferior as well as marks a clear demarcation between so-called civilized Americans and people of third world country, Somalia.

This movie deals with representation of 'difference'. Somalis are shown from the eyes of the West. The key point relates with the representation of non-westerners through the layers of western preconceptions, prejudices and bias. The issue of representing 'other' has always been complex. Theo van Leeuwen in talking about the depiction of people through visual representation says, "In looking at how images depict people, I ask two questions: "How are people depicted?" and "How are the

depicted people related to the viewer?” (137). Importance of those being depicted and to whom they are being depicted plays an important role. Similarly, in the process of representation ‘how’ attracts the central role. In the case of visual representation, *Black Hawk Down* shows Somalis as poor, violent, aggressive, uncivilized and barbaric. It has been narrated from the perspective of American soldiers, so, there are clear evidences of the presence of huge gap between neutral understanding and foreknowledge about Somalia and Somalis. As Stuart Hall illustrates the matter of representing the different people than oneself is not an easy task. He argues, “Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with ‘difference’, it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way” (226). Moreover, the incident this movie picks up consists of casualties of American soldiers, and in a way defeat of Americans in Somalia. So, there can be seen the personal sentiments and feelings of the moviemaker and his targeted audiences as Hall clarifies regarding the subject matter of portraying the difference.

Black Hawk Down uses different methods for the representation of ‘difference’. When Somalis are shown in the screen, the slow Arabic type music has been used as a background music. Especially, the opening two minutes of the movie plays sad and gloomy like music. On the contrary, American soldiers are shown with rock music, full of energy and enthusiasm. This kind of audio representation plays with symbolic meaning in the meaning formation. Jon Lewis explains the purpose of different sounds and music in the contemporary films. He writes, “. . . close reading in film also requires attention to the variety of sounds that accompany the images on-screen. These sounds are as carefully designed, produced, and edited as the images and are integral to a film’s meaning” (149). Sound, known as music and background

score, gives meaning to a movie. The sound used in the movie depends upon the genre of the movie as well as the vision of the moviemaker.



Fig. 4: Body of a Somali (00:00:51)

The above screenshot is a close-up shot. It solely focuses on the dead body by emphasizing it. Jon Lewis claims, “Close-ups and extreme close-ups [shots] obliterate background” (93). Fig.4, shows brutally killed Somali’s body and the sound (especially music in the background while this scene displays in the screen) creates special effect at that time. In *Black Hawk Down*, the moviemaker tries to draw attention of the audience fully to this one particular scene so that it can establish the ground for appreciation of American soldiers’ military intervention in Somalia.

Similarly, visual representation tries to create a sympathy towards Somalis. The movie tries to insert that America could not bear such scenes so that it took action. The problem in visual representation is that it tends power to mislead towards wrong narrative. The same thing happens with the above shown screenshot. The movie shows the dead body of Somali and claims that it has been done by the local warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. Obviously, such picture disturbs the mindset of viewers and as a normal human reactions, they would like to see the culprit punished. The moviemaker plays with the color in the Fig.4. The scene contains fade out colour.

It attracts more sentiments from the people. All these lead to justification of American soldiers' actions against Aidid and his men in the eyes of common people. Likewise, this screenshot also shows stereotyping which audience often see in Hollywood movies.

According to Stuart Hall, “. . . ‘Stereotyped’ means ‘reduced to a few essentials, fixed in Nature by a few, simplified characteristics’” (251). In Western societies, Black people are often stereotyped as violent, aggressive, wild and criminal. Similarly, most of the Western people assume third world countries like Somalia contain trouble, civil war and instability. In *Black Hawk Down*, Somalis, ‘Black’ people, can be seen carrying weapons openly around the city, killing American soldiers brutally and conducting violence. Even the opening scene asserts that Somalis killed each other mercilessly as in the Fig.4. This movie divides Somalis into two categories: terrorists and docile. Either they are begging for food and mercy helplessly as in Fig.1 or they are carrying weapons and creating violence as in Fig.2. The deep structure of stereotyping has been a serious issue in the west. In the modern days, in particular case of America, those people from non-western countries are typically labelled as the outsiders and intruders. This mindset generates the feeling of supremacy among Americans, thus leading towards imperialistic actions as well as creating hierarchical attitudes. They feel themselves as naturally superior while others are taken as naturally inferior.

Difference always draws the line between two entities. In almost every aspects of a society, there exist a kind of binary opposition. In case of imposing imperialistic authorities over others in large scale through any country it requires clear demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In case of America, ‘them’ are always stereotyped with negative connotations. ‘Us’ signifies centred, valuable, superior and powerful.

Meanwhile, except ‘us’, others automatically turn into marginalized, cheap, inferior and weak. This stereotypical representation of Somalis in *Black Hawk Down* reveals real feelings and attitudes of Americans towards different people, culture than they are acquainted with. Such types of ‘deep structures of stereotypes’ that prevail in Americans’ attitude towards non-westerners can be termed as ‘Pathological’ in the words of Sander Gilman. He argues, “The pathological personality does not develop this ability and sees the entire world in terms of the rigid line of difference. The pathological personality’s mental representation of the world supports the need for the line of difference” (qtd. in Stuart Hall 285). Pathological personality prevents one from overcoming the anxiety of difference. It shows aggressive nature towards stereotyped subjects. In this movie, the moviemaker’s as well as American soldiers’ sense of pathological personality can be seen from the beginning to the end. The soldiers could not overcome the dark barrier of stereotyping as the movie maker chooses selective narrative that favours one side, in the meantime antagonizes the other side.

The fabrication of truth guided by stereotyping falls under Noam Chomsky’s concept of ‘Propaganda model’. In this model, Chomsky and Edward S. Herman clarify the concept of worthy and unworthy victims as labelled in America and basically through the means of media (movies too fall, under this category). They discuss how media creates heroes and villains under the influence of powerful people, billionaires and state authorities. The ambiguous role of media in recent time has created some sorts of confusion in audience. They claim:

A propaganda system will consistently portray people abused in enemy states as *worthy* victims, whereas those treated with equal or greater severity by its

own government or clients will be *unworthy* . . . While this differential treatment occurs on a large scale, the media, intellectuals, and public are able to remain unconscious of the fact and maintain a high moral and self-righteous tone. (37)

This idea helps one to be clear about the movie's treatment towards the Somalis.

To borrow the words of Chomsky and Herman, for American media, American soldiers in Somalia become 'worthy' victims who attract large attention of the public and that could turn out to be economic benefit. On the other hand, the poor conditions of Somalia caused by America itself is not considered as something to be talked and explored about. *Black Hawk Down* follows the same path of propaganda model.

It hides the facts and misinterprets the tragic incident of Somalia. Elizabeth Schmidt shows the background of incidents that happened before the battle of Mogadishu. She writes, ". . . the United States provided Somalia with \$500 million worth of military and economic assistance between 1981 and 1986, making Mogadishu one of the largest recipients of U.S. military aid in sub-Saharan Africa" (155). Before 1993, the availability of weapons had already occurred in Somalia through America. In the time of Cold War, America saw an opportunity of expanding its influence and imperialism in Somalia. She further claims:

By the late 1980s, clan-based militias and Islamic militants who had been repressed by the Siad Barre dictatorship were united in their hatred of his regime. Because American support had been key to Siad Barre's survival, his opponents were generally hostile to the United States and distrustful of its motives. (156)

These information are hidden in *Black Hawk Down*. The movie only shows brutality of Somalis out of the blue. There is no mention of how that hatred towards Americans

grew inside Somalis. The rage Somalis express has been linked with their poverty, illiteracy, and social condition. It clearly works within propaganda framework.

Misrepresentation, politics of inclusion and exclusion of information for personal benefit are some of the features of propaganda. An imperial power uses media for personal benefits through manipulation facts. Noam Chomsky claims, “A propaganda model leads to different expectations. On its assumptions, we could expect media coverage and interpretation of the war to take for granted that the United States intervened in the service of generous ideals . . .” (170). The same thing happens with *Black Hawk Down*. It tries to make people believe that American intervention in Somalia intends nothing but pure humanitarian purpose. In one scene, an American soldier asks for permission to engage against Aidid’s men, who are shown killing civilians. The commander denies the request by mentioning United Nations’ regulations, “UN’s jurisdiction, 64. We cannot intervene” (00:04:33). It asserts as if America follows UN’s laws honestly and tries to establish that its presence over there lies within UN’s criteria. Again, Noam Chomsky reveals UN’s role in America’s imperial activities. He illustrates, “In contrast to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United Nations never condemned the U.S. “intervention,” nor did it investigate or denounce the crimes committed in the course of U.S. military operations, a reflection of U.S. world power and influence” (178). The reality and the information shown in *Black Hawk Down* totally differ regarding America’s role and motive behind the intervention in Somalia.

The movie selects what suits it and presents in front of the people. There are many evidences of breach of UN’s code of conduct by America but the movie does not pose a single question mark over American actions. Instead, through the stereotypical representation of Somalis it hides background incidents leading to that

battle on October 3-4, 1993. Even UN's silence towards American imperialism leads to the question about the world order along with issue of globalization and America's role in it. The British journalist, Tim Marshall, claims, "There were only three places from which a challenge to American hegemony could come" (78). It means there still exists hegemony of America in the world. The issue of globalization and position of America as shown in *Black Hawk Down* is another point to explore in this paper.

It is often said and observed that today's world has been globalized. The introduction of technology and its advancement can be labelled as major factor for bringing the world so close. There are pros and cons of global village. This paper is concerned with traces of globalization and its representation in *Black Hawk Down*. Many critics have often argued that globalization is nothing much than disguised form of 'neo-colonialism' (Shaobo Xie 899). On the one hand, it practices decentralization, and on another hand, the power recenters to one country, that is America. In the case of Somalia and Battle of Mogadishu, role of America has come under question.

From the start of the movie, it brings references of other countries, Red Cross to assert that the world works together, it responds in other's pain, thus it has become unipolar. Right after that, it presents America's presence over Somalia. The following scene is about the American army base in Somalia.



Fig. 5: American army in Somalia (00:09:41)

The Fig.5 is a high-angle shot. This shot taken from the high angle captures the large canvas of the scene. Such shot establishes the authority of higher power over the subjects that have been presented in the frame. In this shot, American higher authorities' power can be felt upon American soldiers who act as per their command. It can be seen that America has established army headquarters in Mogadishu airport. It has been narrated as, in Shaobo Xie's words, ". . . international efforts to maintain peace, stability, and prosperity" (892). The movie shows American steps intend end of 'civil war' in Somalia and establishment of peace. Does any country have right to intervene in internal affair of a sovereign country without consent? As seen in above screenshot, America captures Mogadishu airport and establishes Military base. Again to quote Xie, "There is no mutual penetration of military commands, but only the extension of military missions from the imperial centre to the dominated countries" (892). In the name of international attention and concern, America puts power domination over Somalia. In the movie, Fig. 5 has been given emphasis. The wide shot reveals the concentrated power of American army.

One trait of globalization as one assumes deals with mutual cooperation, understanding and respect between countries of the world. However, in the *Black Hawk Down*, audience see different scenario. In the beginning of the movie, it is said that the 'world' unites to maintain peace and end civil war in Somalia. But suddenly America attacks without coordination with other countries' peacekeeping force under the UN. Once the situation gets aggravated, then American soldiers get sucked inside Mogadishu, the American commander, Garrison, orders his officer, "We need 10th Mountain there. Everything they got. Pakistanis, Malays, I want their tanks and APCs" (01:31:36-01:31:42). His officer, Cribbs, replies, "They don't know we've

gone in” (01:31:44). In another scene, Cribbs calls and tells Garrison, “Pakistani General says, since we didn’t deign to inform him of the raid, It’ll take some time to mobilize the 10th Mountain and 100 vehicles” (01:43:35-01:43:43). In response to this, American army commander, Garrison, with rage, says, “You tell the General this: I understand, but it is my duty to remind him that my men are surrounded by thousands of armed Somalia militia. It’s imperative that we move them out of the hostile area and into the safe zone. I need his help, now” (01:43:45-01:44:00).

Immediately after this command from American authority, Pakistani UN peacekeeping force is compelled to assist America. There seems complete American dominance over the other country. First, they attack one sovereign country. Then, they order another sovereign country to clean their mess. This has been the ‘true’ face of globalization in a larger scenario.

There has been many debates about globalization. Joseph E. Stiglitz claims, “Globalization today is not working for many of the world’s poor” (214). However, he finds globalization as the suitable system for the world. He argues, “I believe that globalization can be reshaped to realize its potential for good” (215). He advocates for revised version of globalization that can be helpful for all the countries. On the other hand, the role of America in the name of globalization has always come under the question. Its actions like we see in *Black Hawk Down* creates doubt among people. Fredric Jameson sees this globalization as Americanization. He opines, “The standardization of world culture, with local popular or traditional forms driven out or dumped down to make way for American television, American music, food, clothes and films, has been seen by many as the very heart of globalization” (qtd. in Shaobo Xie 893). The overall trend in the world justifies Jameson’s claim.

Even in the case of this movie *Black Hawk Down*, it falls under the above mentioned line. This movie reaches out all over the world, becomes huge box office success, people completely believe what it represents and totally forget there could exist another version of truth. Also, people failed to realize the politics behind this movie. That is why, Jameson specifically points out, “the entertainment business itself [is] one of the greatest and most profitable exports of the United States (along with weapons and food)” (qtd. in Shaobo Xie 893). America has taken itself as the sole leader of the world, especially in the scenario of post-cold war. This tendency continues even in the era of globalization. David Harvey claims that America thinks itself “. . . as a beacon of freedom, individual rights, and democracy in a troubled world, as a model society to which everyone aspired” (192). Harvey’s claim perfectly fits to *Black Hawk Down* movie. The way it paints America matches one country’s dominance in the name of universal brotherhood and world order.

The particular shot below in *Black Hawk Down* reveals the situation of Americanization in the name of globalization. Audience can see an American soldier points out the gun to a child who is mourning for his dead father. It has been shown that both the child and father are terrorists. The camera work by the moviemaker indirectly imposes the American domination and imperialistic nature in the name of world peace.



Fig. 6: An American soldier pointing the gun to Somalis (01:01:57)

Fig. 6 is a kind of subjective point-of-view shot where the shot shows what the character sees. Here, this particular shot suggests an American soldier's mentality who sees terrorist in every Somali. Jon Lewis shows the importance of form analysis in the film. He claims, "Form embraces all aspects of a film's construction that can be isolated and discussed" (12). It means for the proper analysis of the movie particular shots need to be interpreted to make meaning out of any movie. In case of *Black Hawk Down* too, the above shot carries the intention of the overall movie.

Black Hawk Down's indirect inclination towards official line of state authorities gives rise to an issue of a serious threat globalization faces from America. Shaobo Xie puts forward the present condition of the world system as "Western or American culture and ideology are neo-colonizing geopolitical peripheries, erasing indigenous traditions, non-capitalist values and psychological habits as capitalism eradicated pre-capitalist traditions, cultures and sensibilities in eighteenth- and nineteenth- century Europe" (899). His argument brands present form of world order as neocolonialism by America. The way America takes action against Somalis, the direct order to other countries peacekeeping force, an attack on sovereignty of Somalia, mentality of sole proprietor and so on make Xie's claim stronger, more valid

and relatable. The world system has been designed in such a way that the country like Somalia could not escape the grasp of America in the name of globalization. In this regard, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue, “Presented as driven exclusively by the information revolution, the forces of globalization are detached from their political dimensions and appear as a fate to which we all have to submit” (xvi). This imposed fate has been supported in *Black Hawk Down*. Likewise, it advocates for American model of democracy.

Liberal democracy has been considered as American model of democracy. However, despite its traits like representation, election and rule of majority, it has failed to carry the pure spirit of democracy. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe claims “. . . the problem with 'actually existing' liberal democracies is . . . with the system of power which redefines and limits the operation of those values” (xv). Such model of democracy benefits limited number of people. Most of the time, bourgeoisies control and regulate liberal democracy. It is often claimed that after the end of cold war, America took a turn towards Neoliberalism.

For the last some decades America and American model of democracy has influenced the world. American system has been highly influenced by capitalism. David Harvey explains about political and economic model of “. . . neoliberal states such as the US and Britain” (81). He explains the features of neoliberal states that concentrate for the benefits of a few people in the power. Directly or indirectly American version of neoliberalism has spread its impact in many countries. However, neoliberalism opposes pure form of democracy in which every person shares equal power. Harvey claims that in neoliberalism “democracy is viewed as a luxury” (66), due to this “Neoliberals therefore tend to favour governance by experts and elites” (66). Many critics often label the American democracy as neoliberal democracy in

which in the name of free market and trade, majority of people suffer for the welfare of small number of elites. Majority of people are deprived of wealth, whereas few billionaires possess power to change laws of the country. Likewise, the government and state become mere apparatus of the influential people. Common people suffer endlessly in absence of basic ingredients of happy life.

In *Black Hawk Down*, there is a dialogue between an American pilot who is captured during battle and a Somali rebel leader, Firimbi. This dialogue holds the important perspective of this movie:

Durant: I'm not in charge.

Firimbi: Course not, you have the power to kill, but not negotiate. In Somalia, killing is negotiation. Do you really think if you get General Aidid, we will simply put down our weapons and adopt American Democracy? We know this: without victory there can be no peace. There will always be killing, you see? This is how things are in our world. (01:45:05-01:45:41)

At first, it seems the above dialogue criticizes American democracy. However, close inspection suggests something else. Actually, it supports American form of democracy. It means to say that Somalis do not follow American model so there exists violence, instability and killings. James Monaco claims, "We are now no longer so concerned with how a film is made as with how it is perceived and what effect it has in our lives" (395). It clearly suggests that along with poetics aspects, the political aspects of the movie have been main concern with the growing impact of Hollywood.

The neoliberal democracy which *Black Hawk Down* directly or indirectly advocates for causes nothing but trouble. It gives full access to multinational companies including weapons manufacturers' of America that want nothing but war, civil war, violence and unrest in other countries like Somalia. Chantal Mouffe has

brilliantly analyzed the capitalistic system that can be related with this movie. She argues:

Most of the advocates of the neo-liberal version defend an idealized view of the United States, whose politics is presented as being driven not by national interest but by the promotion of liberal values: free trade and liberal democracy. This goes hand in hand with a glorification of globalization as bringing the benefits and virtues of capitalism to the whole world. They want us to believe that, under the ‘benign’ leadership of the USA . . . important steps are being taken towards the unification of the planet and the implementation of a just global order. (91)

Mouffe’s claim matches with *Black Hawk Down*. Neoliberal economic system and the way of democracy it supports has attracted nothing but trouble to majority of the people, especially of the third world countries. The trouble in Somalia at that time signifies certain people’s unfulfilled desire of acquiring power, keeping material possession and keeping control over other. And all these characteristics symbolize American form of democracy only with presence of violence. However, the movie suggests for neoliberal democracy. It disregards the consequences of neoliberal democracy as it is seen in Somalia. Despite destructive consequences of a certain governance system, the movie constantly vouches for it.

As we have seen in *Black Hawk Down*, liberal democracy has got a lot of problems. Neoliberalism has born from the drawbacks of liberal democracy. Here, the solution proposed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe becomes relevant so that another incidents like that of Mogadishu can be avoided as well as each person, even opposite group of people, all over the world can enjoy similar rights, freedom and equality. The solution is ‘radical democracy’. Laclau and Mouffe argues, “The task . .

. therefore cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy” (176). They argue that radical democracy is the need of the present world. This system carries the tendency of resolving many problems the world faces in political front. They further claim, “. . . the demand for equality is not sufficient, but needs to be balanced by the demand for liberty, which leads us to speak of a radical and plural democracy” (184). Democracy which guarantees the rights of all people including Somalis is what Laclau and Mouffe suggest.

In a nutshell, *Black Hawk Down* with powerful cinematography represents the Battle of Mogadishu that occurred on October 3-4, 1993 in a problematic way. It deploys the perspective of American authority. This movie glamourizes the battle in an unbalanced way. It does not provide any background information of that battle: how America and Somalia came to that situation has been hidden in the movie. It glorifies American intervention in Somalia. It tries to justify and legitimize America’s actions and all those killings of hundreds of Somalis as well as destruction of Mogadishu. With use of cinematic elements by using all the available advanced resources even from American army, it declares those nineteen American soldiers who died in that battle as martyrs while it presents Somalis as barbaric, uncivilized, cruel, terrorist and inhuman. Denotative meaning of this movie suggests the glamorization and glorification of American soldiers’ acts and deaths. However, contextual analysis reflects the presence of celebration of American imperialism as connotative meaning.

Black Hawk Down acts as a propaganda to legitimize American imperialism. The modern version of colonialism known as neocolonialism has been supported by the movie in the name of maintaining order in Somalia. It has deliberately selected

certain incidents that suit the moviemaker's hidden motives while leaving out others. The American intervention in a sovereign country, establishment of military base over there and killings of many locals symbolize the present version of American imperialism, basically after the end of Cold War era. *Black Hawk Down* advocates for this version by indirectly stating that America lies at the centre of the global power and it can intervene any place, country by hook and crook in the name of maintaining world order.

The stereotypical representation of Somalis, celebration of American soldiers' misdeeds and cooperation with Pentagon suggest that *Black Hawk Down* tends to persuade the Americans to show their sympathy and consent for American authorities' breaching of human rights acts and destroying lives and properties outside of America. Similarly, it aims to hegemonize the audience all over the world to make them believe that America's intervention is directed towards world peace. By using the power and resources of Hollywood and its wide spread global market, *Black Hawk Down* acts as a tool of the state for spreading manipulative propaganda. In short, it promotes neoliberalism as well as American model of liberal democracy by endorsing American imperialism.