Griefs of War

No one ever realizes what kind of burden soldiers carry inside their hearts and minds. They carry physical as well as emotional strains but rarely express their feelings in front of others. While talking about the wars and the lives of the soldiers, a good leader cannot be denied. As good leader leads to effective decision making and productive results. Similarly, negative leadership has its own pros and cons and can lead to disastrous consequences. Good leaders not only think about the operations but also the well-being of their subordinates. After war, a psychological dilemma is also a crucial factor resulting from wars. Soldiers have a lot of negative effects on their minds and souls. War always brings annihilation for the societies and the lives of innocent suffer, as demonstrated in Tim O'Brien's work “The Things They Carried” and in Michael Bay's movie 13 Hours: The secret Soldiers of Benghazi.

In the story “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’ Brian, he explains to the audience how poor leadership can cause difficulties in obtaining the desired objective. In the story, Lieutenant Jimmy Cross always carried a picture of a girl named Martha, whom he loved more than his life and expected her to love him as he did. He also carries her letters, which he thinks are love letters, but they were not. However, soon he realizes that those letters and pictures are only distractions. As stated in the story, “On the morning Ted Lavender died, First Lieutenant Jimmy burned Martha’s letters and then the two photographs” (Brian 17). When one of his men died, he realized that his focus should be on the war, not on a girl, who is a high school junior in college.
and didn’t even love him. He got rid of those things that were distracting him. As O’ Brian mentions in the story, “He was now determined to perform his duties firmly and without negligence. It would not help Lavender, he knew that, but from this point on he would comport himself as an Officer” (Brian 17). The above statement shows how much Lieutenant Jimmy Cross was distracted from his mission. He could not save the men he lost, but he could now focus on what he had in front of him.

Furthermore, an example of poor leadership can also be seen in the movie *13 Hours* by Michael Bay. Bay explained in the movie that poor leadership could lead to a bigger disaster. In the movie, the Libyan Diplomatic Compound was not heavily secured as it should be. This security flaw gave big leverage to the Islamic militiamen group to easily attack the compound and kill the Ambassador. Who was to blame? Many people still accused Hillary Clinton because of her poor leadership skills as responsible for state of foreign affairs at that time. Also, an act of poor leadership can be seen in the movie by The Chief of the Annex, who failed to respond promptly when the ambassador was attacked. He can also be blamed for the murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens. Clearly “War is only successful with good leadership” (*13 Hours*).

The war also brought harsh psychological effects to the soldiers and their families, especially the soldiers who were returning from the war with cruel memories that left them in never-ending misery. According to *Looking Back on the Vietnam War: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, “The Vietnam War was astonishingly violent, painfully chaotic war. The physically and spiritually exhausted survivors returned to begin a new life with what little remained” (Boyle 5). Wars always bring anarchy and create unbalanced life situations. They do not only affect the lives of the persons that are participating in the war but also the people that link to them. Casualties, on the other hand, is considered as one of the hostile consequence of the wars. Tim O’
Brian explained these effects in his story as, “Then they wrapped Lavender in his poncho” Brian 4). This incident of loss of companion imprinted a bleak memory on their minds, which will haunt them for the rest of their lives due to poor leadership.

Similarly, The Benghazi War also brought some unpleasant memories for the six soldiers fought in Libya. The soldiers always have a constant psychological fear never to see their families if something happens to them on the battlefield. At one point, a Navy Seal operative intentionally conceals from his men that his wife is pregnant with another child because he is distancing himself from the fact that he may never meet his new child (13 Hours). According to War, Literature & the Arts, “Most of what we know about the protagonists that they love their families with whom they skype whenever possible” (lighter 1). In both the short story and the movie, soldiers tried to stay in contact with their families whenever they could because they had no idea what would come for them in the future.

The Vietnam War was a very unpopular war in which the United States intervened. President Lyndon Johnson acts in the Vietnam war unnecessarily by launching an air attack on North Vietnam. The Air attack proved dangerous, not only for the plants but also for thousands of Vietnamese. A great amount of human blood was spilled during this war. According to Politicka Misao: Croatian Political Science Review, “The Vietnamese countryside was torn apart by violence and death, more than 2 million civilians died, and millions more were displaced” (Eyerman 12). A wrong decision from the President caused a fortune in human lives. Vietnam was not the only place where the families lost their loved ones. A considerable number of American life was also killed during this war. According to Air Power History, “The number of Americans killed in action during the conflict approached 20,000, with almost half those deaths in 1967” (Schlight 48). Those number of deaths hit the American economy hard. The inflation
rate went up, and taxes rose high. The United States learned the lesson of not intervening in foreign affairs without discussion. After the war ended, The War Powers Act was passed in 1973 that stated that the President must receive congressional approval to act in oversee wars. In both Tim O’ Brien’s story and *13 Hours*, just as in reality, poor leadership leads to tragic and irreversible results.

Like the Vietnam war, The Benghazi War was also proved to be a pointless war. It started with a video made in the United States to mock Islam and Prophet Muhammad. Later, it was concluded as a terrorist attack. This war might never have happened if the chief of the Annex in Benghazi gave authorization to the Navy Seal officers to save the Ambassador without any further delay (*13 Hours*). This lack of action from The Chief gave the terrorists the confidence to choose the Annex as their next target. Precious Americans lives were taken away in this war, which included a United States Ambassador and three U.S Navy Seal personnel.

In conclusion, war can be won if the leaders are strong. Based on previous wars, it is clear that poor leadership can cause a bigger disaster. In *13 Hours*, if it was not for the poor leadership from The Chief, the Ambassador might have been saved. Alternatively, if Lieutenant Cross in “The Things They Carried” was concentrating more on his objective rather than on Martha, Ted Lavender might never have died. The number of deaths is also the worst and definite consequence of war. Almost 20,000 people died after the Vietnam war. Not only Americans died, but also 2 million Vietnamese were killed during this unnecessary war. War also led to different psychological effects on the soldiers as well as on their families, which is also explained in both the story and the movie. The soldiers were in constant fear of never seeing their family if something happened to them. Also, the soldiers returning from the war are left with cruel memories which they must fight for the rest of their lives.
Work Cited


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