Already grossing over $350 million to date, *American Sniper* is undoubtedly a direct-hit-success. The film has been nominated for 6 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor—the holy trinity all producers of commercial film aspire to achieve. Based on the best-selling book of the same title, *American Sniper* depicts the story of Navy SEAL Chris Kyle, the deadliest sniper in US military history, with over 160 confirmed kills. To go along with all the celebrations and accolades, the film has triggered a raging debate over how the war in Iraq is depicted. While many speak of the film’s patriotic tone, others feel this film is outright propaganda, endorsing an unpopular war that has been dragging on for decades.

Adam Winkler, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, defines the very reason so many have placed American Sniper in their crosshairs: “The choices [Chris Kyle] made as a sniper for the American military are part of a broader cultural argument about the war on terror. Have we spent too much money and time, and for what good gain, and how many civilians have we killed in pursuit of terror?” While the soldiers serving deserve our support, Winkler questions the policies and practices of our government and military, as well as the role of media in reporting and representing war.

Hollywood makes it living off of telling compelling stories that provoke and challenge us. The best stories have characters we root for as they struggle against insurmountable odds. The trouble begins when producers take real-life events and dramatize them to make the story more engaging—especially when the content involves a war American people are increasingly opposing. It’s one thing to honor the life—and service—of an American military member. It’s an entirely different slope to glorify—and justify—the questionable actions and policies of a government leading their country further down a dark road with no end in sight.