

Nationalism and Hollywood-style Chinese Hero: A Comparative Study of *Wolf Warrior 2* and Rambo Series

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Abstract

Previous studies of film and masculinity already showed that Rambo, the typical muscular male figure that filled American screens in the 1980s, is about conservatism, nationalism, and imperialism. As one of the most iconic male heroic figures of the Reagan era, Rambo came to be seen as the conservative resistance to the left, feminists, the gay movement and anti-war protesters within the United States. Meanwhile, along with the battleground shift from within the United States to Vietnam and Afghanistan, Rambo emerged primarily as a national hero, fighting foreign forces that threatened American security and the "demonic" Soviet Union behind them.

Leng Feng, the male hero of the phenomenal Chinese blockbuster hit *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017, Chinese: 战狼 2), has been dubbed by scholars and critics as "China's Rambo", but more or less simply by the similarity of their characterizations: retired veterans, undisciplined and mostly fighting alone. Through a comparative analysis of the two heroic manhoods of the *Wolf Warrior 2* and the 1980s' Rambo series, this article aims to analyze in-depth the extent to which Leng Feng can be considered a "Rambo-style" hero and whether it is contradictory to use a Hollywood-style hero to symbolize resistance to the Western forces represented by the United States.

Combining masculinity studies, film analysis and cultural analysis of the political and social dynamics of the production of these two sets of films, with a particular focus on Xi Jinping-era China since 2012 and Reagan-era America in the 1980s, this paper argues that Leng Feng does share the conservative and nationalistic core of Rambo. Also, the new Chinese hero film in the recent decade appropriates some established narrative tropes in Western imperialism even though some significant modifications have been made to serve Chinese ideology that promotes collectivism and family harmony based on heterosexual marriage.

Keywords: Heroic masculinity, nationalism, Chinese Hero, Rambo, Hollywood-style

1. Introduction

As a box-office record-breaker, *Wolf Warriors 2* (2017, Chinese: 战狼 2) was a huge commercial

success and an apparent turnaround or high-profile start for Chinese blockbusters, offering a new national hero who has become one of the most notable figures in Chinese pop culture over the past few years. The film, directed by and starring Wu Jing himself, is about Leng Feng (Chinese: 冷锋, which literally can also be interpreted as "cold and sharp"), a manly Chinese veteran who protects Chinese and African workers and Medical aid personnel in an African country from massacres by local rebels and violence-wielding Western mercenaries.

With digital special effects, dazzling martial arts actions and huge war scenes, *Wolf Warrior 2* broke numerous box office records and overwhelmingly defeated Hollywood blockbusters and Marvel superheroes to become the box office champion of mainland China for the first time in recent years⁽¹⁾. The film grossed CN¥5.68 billion (\$874 million) domestically⁽²⁾, which makes it the 2nd best-grossing movie in a single market, following 2015's *Star Wars: Episode VII* (3). It is also the 54th best-selling film in the world and the first non-English film to be listed in the world's 100 top-grossing films. *Wolf Warrior 2* held that position until it was superseded in 2021 by another Chinese blockbuster, *The Battle of Lake Changjin* (Chinese 长津湖), which also starred Wu Jing in the story of Chinese troops who fought and won against American military forces on the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s.

Simultaneously, the film's male hero, Leng Feng, a former Chinese soldier, is also very different from the image of national heroes in previous Chinese war films, especially anti-Japanese films. In the long tradition of making war movies in China, most of them are taken from the Sino-Japanese War. National heroes in classic anti-Japanese films, such as *Tunnel Warfare* (1965, Chinese: 地道战) and *Zhang Ga the Soldier Boy* (1963, Chinese: 小兵张嘎), always look sad and full of indignation because their country has been reduced to semi-colonized and they have to fight with backward and rudimentary weapons, even large swords and lances against advanced Japanese enemies (Steinfeld 2015, Weiss 2014). Now in *Wolf Warrior 2*, the Chinese hero is full of confidence, good at using all kinds of advanced weapons and showing his muscular body in close combat. Most importantly, his battlegrounds extended from the Chinese interior to overseas African countries, and his enemies changed from Japanese soldiers invading China to Western mercenaries led by the Americans. In short, he was no longer a rebel fighting against the Western invaders for national independence but became a more assertive and powerful world leader, protector and defender of peace.

The striking characteristics of Leng Feng have also attracted widespread attention internationally. He has been dubbed by scholars and critics as "China's Rambo", but more or less only because of their similar personalities and the same cinematic emphasis on violently fight scenes. Berry defines *Wolf Warrior 2* as "a phenomenally successful Rambo-style action adventure" (Berry 2020, p.38), and Leng Feng resembles Sylvester Stallone's Rambo since they are both highly skilled but "troubled" former Special Forces soldiers because they lack military obedience (Berry 2020). Teo and others came to this

conclusion more intuitively from their shared external characteristics, such as being muscular, fearless and fighting alone (Teo 2019, Huang 2017, VornDick 2017, Hsu 2017). From a production and distribution perspective, it is not surprising that the protagonist of *Wolf Warrior 2* resembles Rambo, the once prevalent Hollywood tough guy image in the United States, as it was the first Chinese blockbuster to embrace the so-called "Hollywood paradigm" and achieve spectacular success (Su 2016, Teo 2019, Berry 2020).

However, is it successful simply because it emulated the market-tested Hollywood model? Apart from the fact that Leng Feng is an unruly veteran like Rambo, do we have any other deeper reasons to affirm his status as the "China's Rambo"? To explore and answer these questions, this paper provides a comparison of the similarities between Leng Feng and Rambo and also digs deeper into the political and social dynamics behind their heroic masculinity. Also, this paper exemplifies the differences between Leng Feng and Rambo to explore how Hollywood-style heroes have been altered in a Chinese context to serve Chinese ideology better.

2. Rambo and the Reagan-era America in the 1980s

This chapter offers an overview of previous research on Rambo, sorting out how Rambo, once one of the quintessential tough male images in the 1980s, is interpreted as conservative, nationalist, and imperialist. On the one hand, Rambo was first seen as an iconic figure in the "re-masculinization" of conservative resistance to the left, feminists, the gay movement and anti-war protesters in America. On the other hand, with the Cold War and Reagan's more assertive foreign policy, Rambo's battleground shifted from the United States to Vietnam and Afghanistan. Rambo himself emerged as a national hero, who fought primarily for justice, to protect the "American Way" against foreign powers that threatened American security and the demonic Soviet Union behind them. The figure of Rambo simultaneously fits the imperialist narrative trope in Hollywood films because of his mass killings and power over other nations: they either appear as evil enemies or as innocent objects in need of protection and liberation by white male heroes.

2.1 Rambo as a iconic tough guy of "re-masculinization"

Rambo series are American blockbusters starring Sylvester Stallone that began in the early 1980s and continued until 2019, spanning nearly four decades of American history. Its first film, the critically acclaimed *First Blood* (1982), tells the story of a Vietnam veteran named Rambo, who returns to America with the psychological trauma of war only to be ostracised. In *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), Rambo returns alone to rescue the American POWs left behind, killing many Viet Cong and

Soviet officers. And in *Rambo III* (1988), he fights the demonic Soviet army in Afghanistan alone, saving people who suffer from Soviet aggression.

Although the *Rambo* series is controversial for rewriting history and justifying American atrocities against the Vietnamese (Jeffords 1989, Ryan and Kellner 1988), it remains one of the unmissable series in the history of Hollywood cinema for its powerful blend of heroism, patriotism, and warrior mythology (Hammer and Kellner 2009). Franklin claims *Rambo* is America's most distinctive cultural product because he is a man with superhero-like powers that allow him to face thousands of bullets for justice and the American Way (Franklin 2000).

Rambo is considered a representative of conservative ideology because of his militarism and distaste for bureaucracy (Kellner 1995), and also the iconic "tough man" of the cultural moment of "re-masculinization" domestically. From this perspective, Susan Jeffords has offered a highly informative analysis of the *Rambo* series. She argues that, *Rambo*, the uncharismatic but decisive man is a counterpoint to America's left-wing movements, including feminism, the gay movement, and America's anti-war protesters (Jeffords 1989). When *Rambo*, "forced" by the American police to desperation, squatting on the ground to his former boss, crying and remembering his friends who died horribly in the war, he angrily and sadly shouts: "those maggots at the airport, protesting me, spitting, calling me a baby killer". Ignoring Stallone's clumsy emotional performance, this segment is the one in which he says the most words in the entire movie and the climax that gets much attention.

Seeing *Rambo* as a conservative reflection of the realist policies, Jeffers notes that the aggrieved and lonely *Rambo* on the screen is a symbol of the "hard bodies" (Jeffords 1994, p.24), who fought against the Viet Cong, the Soviets and other enemies of the United States, but were treated unjustly at home. By reading them as "mutant", who protect the conventional lives of others but are often normative outsiders because their powers are often uncontrollable and destructive, Yann Roblou affirms the complexity of the masculinity of the hero with superpowers (Roblou 2012). To this extent, like other heroes with hyperpower, *Rambo* is full of this "complexity," i.e. he represents a super-masculinity but is also marginalized.

Messner interprets *Rambo*'s toughness and this "man-as-weapon" as hegemonic masculinity, which is difficult for individual men to achieve in real life and functions more as a symbolic paradigm of manhood (Messner 2007, p.463). He also suggests that imperialism and hegemonic masculinity are often closely linked (Messner 2004). From a global perspective, Cornell, Kimmel et al. further remind us that understanding hegemonic masculinity requires recognizing that it also includes class, racial, and national aspects (Connell 1987, 1998, 2003, 2005, Kimmel 1987, 2005). In the *Rambo* series, the American nation has been shaped by racism in portraying white heroes (Spencer 2006), while other ethnic groups are rarely seen. Race seems to exist only outside the American nationality, the

Vietnamese, the Burmese, the Afghans, and the Soviets enemies. They are either evil empires, violent armies or weak people waiting to be rescued by Rambo, and even local resistance forces with their arms need to be "liberated" and freed with the leadership and help of a white man.

2.2 Rambo as the symbol of hard foreign policy

Roughly speaking, the release period of the Rambo franchise is very interesting: the first three films were mainly released in the Reagan era in the 1980s, while the fourth *Rambo* (2008) was released during George Bush's term, telling the story of Rambo fighting Burmese drug dealers to rescue American missionaries, and the *Last Blood* (2019) was released during Donald Trump's term, in which Rambo was fighting alone to eliminate criminal Mexican gangs.

Although Stallone was often unwilling to identify Rambo as a right-wing symbolic image, the presidencies in which the Rambo series was able to be screened happened to be known for pursuing conservative and hard-line policies abroad, not to mention the fact that Rambo posters were used in the U.S. Army's recruitment offices (Jeffords 1994). In particular, President Reagan and Rambo had a close association in the media, and he often even enjoyed associating himself with Rambo. In addition to Reagan's presidency, which lasted from 1981 to 1989, being the era of the full release of the Rambo franchise, he publicly mentioned Rambo on several occasions. In his comments before addressing the nation from the Oval Office on June 30, 1985, Reagan joked that *Rambo: First Blood Part II* showed him what to do if he faced another hostage crisis (Los Angeles Times 1985) at a time when 39 Americans were held hostage in Beirut had just been released after the hijacking of a TWA jetliner. In a public speech the same year, in front of 20000 cheering fans, he said, "...in the spirit of Rambo, let me tell you, we are gonna win this time" (AP NEWS n.d.).

The second installment of the Rambo series, mentioned by Reagan, deals with the issue of American POWs left behind in Vietnam. Rambo returned to Vietnam alone to begin a highly bloody rescue, and after being wounded by the Viet Cong, an enraged Rambo brutally killed his enemies one by one in a mud puddle, contributing to an chilling and violent scene in Hollywood film history. *Rambo: First Blood Part II* transformed Rambo into a national and imperial superhero, and *Rambo III* (1989) leaned further in that direction. In the third *Rambo III*, he fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan, with bloody scenes of countless people - both Afghan civilians and Soviet soldiers - being shot and killed on screen. *Rambo III* was named the most violent film ever made by Guinness World Records in 1990, as it featured at least 108 character deaths, 70 explosions and 221 violent incidents (Cotter 2022).

Although we cannot say that Reagan's initiative was behind the Rambo series, it was used to symbolise Reagan's determination to "get tough". As a representative of neoconservatism, Reagan

pursued a strong military policy (State.gov 2019.) and a hard-line confrontation with the Soviet Union (Prados 2011, Scott 1996, Schweitzer 1989). His famous phrase "peace through force" is not far from "peace through war" (Bacevich 2010). Since the opponents he fights change from the American police, who despise him, to the Soviet soldiers, whom Reagan calls the "evil empire", it is easy to see why Rambo's battles become increasingly bloody in the second and third films, as his weapons gradually become more deadly.

As Reagan called it, the "evil" nature of the Soviet Union is also represented in Rambo franchises as their aggression and manipulation of weaker nations. Behind the Viet Cong and Afghan forces are Soviet-backed weapons and direct troop dispatches. They slaughter local civilians, control the entire country with violence, and aim to threaten the security of the United States. The film's evil recreation of the Soviet Union certainly goes a long way toward supporting Reagan's hard-line policy toward the Soviet Union. Rambo, on the other hand, represents the forces of justice, often leading local civilian forces, or "liberation forces," into battle together, and although he has few American partners, he acts as a leader among the locals. In this struggle for "liberation" and "freedom", Reagan's hard-line foreign policy and imperialist nature toward weaker nations were similarly rationalized as Rambo's bloody battles and brutal killings of the "enemy" became acceptable and understandable.

3. China's Rambo and the Great Rejuvenation

This part delves into the extent to which Leng Feng fits the "China's Rambo" as suggested by scholars and critics. Beyond the common external characteristics already mentioned, such as retired veterans, indiscipline, and mostly solo combat, the main reason why Leng Feng truly deserves to be "China's Rambo" is that this heroic masculinity shares Rambo's conservative, nationalistic, and imperialistic core. By comparing the political and social dynamics of Xi-era China and Reagan-era America, this part finds that the popularity of tough-guy heroes like Leng Feng should be understood in the context of a domestic cultural and political moment that China is also experiencing, namely, a call for a return to masculinity. The brief rise of soft masculinity, little fresh meat, the women's movement, and LGBT culture is overshadowed by tough conservative masculinity and the traditional gender binary of male and female.

On the other hand, after more than three decades of reform and opening up, China has embarked on a relatively assertive foreign policy, launching a self-centred globalized trade strategy that challenges the world order built around the United States as the post-World War II superpower. Thus, assertive masculinity and patriotism are tied together and are shown in the film as Leng Feng's protection of the Chinese abroad against evil forces, mainly American. Moreover, as a mimic of the

Hollywood blockbuster, *Wolf Warrior 2*, while garnering extremely high box office revenues, inevitably falls into the white masculine centrism and the imperialist narrative trope of the Hollywood paradigm manifested in a Han Chinese male's protection of foreign women and innocent Africans.

3.1 Calling for a strong and patriotic manhood in domestic China

Since the beginning of the Xi era in 2012, Mainland China is also experiencing a return to hard masculinity. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, scholars like Louie, Song, Hird, and others have focused their research on masculinity in China and East Asian countries on the phenomenon of "pan-East Asian soft masculinity". They argue that there is an epidemic of masculine change in China, where softer, fancy boys with a penchant for makeup and slimmer bodies are making a splash in popular culture, simultaneously rebelling against the silent, hardened masculinity of traditional East Asian Confucianism and the hegemonic masculinity of the West (Song 2016, Song and Hird 2014, Louie 2016).

However, this pluralism has been reshaped in the last decade into a more conservative gender system dominated by the male/female binary, promoting the so-called "tough masculinity". In 2020, Si Zefu, member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, suggested that young Chinese men have become "soft, inferior and timid" and are pursuing the image of "fresh meat", which is a trend of "feminization" that "will endanger the survival and development of the Chinese nation (Shan and Lu 2021). In a document released in 2021, China's Ministry of Education said it would reform physical education in schools to focus more on the "masculinity" of students to prevent young Chinese males from becoming "feminized" (BBC News 2021). As a result (or in parallel), the Chinese feminist movement and LGBT organizations are facing a new wave of repression, with many pro-feminist individuals and organizations being blocked one after another on social media and online platforms because, as some online opinions claim that they intend to tear society apart and dwarf Chinese men through a kind of 'extreme feminism' (Tang 2021).

The emergence of the *Leng Feng* and *Wolf Warrior* series and other similar war blockbusters fit right into this social moment. As with the 1980s America mentioned above, a relatively conservative tough guy emerged forcefully into the public eye, representing the "strong Chinese male" against other leftist movements that would "weaken" male power. In such blockbusters, the male heroes appear mainly as soldiers whose purpose is to "fight to protect the motherland", reinforcing the patriotic nature of tough manhood. As Wu Jing said in a public interview, China does not want to be like the old days when anyone who came along could carve up the country (The New Yorker 2018).

3.2 From anti-Japanese to anti-America

The enemy (whether imagined or real) as the "other" plays an essential role in the conceptualization and perception of contemporary Chinese nationalism (Ma 2018, Weiss 2014, Reilly 2012, Wu 2007, Gries 2004). Despite indications that since the late 1970s, there has been a partial shift from ideology to profit, Chinese propaganda is still not far removed from the Mao era, and in emergencies it would be easily returns to the "heroic narrative" of defeating the enemy (Pugsley 2006).

However, unlike in the Mao era, since Xi Jinping became the leader in 2012, the "enemy" presented in Chinese film has gradually shifted from the Japanese army (Ching 2019) to a new Western face. The American soldier in Korean War (in Chinese terms: the war to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea) in the 1950s, or the Western-faced "mercenary" with an American accent on the Chinese border or in African countries, became the more exciting new "others" in recent blockbusters.

Nevertheless, there is no longer a straightforward "advanced/backward" or "strong/thin" contrast between Chinese soldiers and the western enemy. They are all muscular bodies using extremely lethal weapons, easily reminiscent of the most impressive and symbolic images from the 1980s Rambo series. What makes a difference is that the "enemy" often fights to fulfil a political mission, to make money, or manipulate other countries, unlike the Chinese soldiers' noble loyalty to their country, who fight to protect their country and all innocent people.

Berry argues that these new shifts are occurring because Xi needs a global military presence to build a global trade network, the "Belt and Road Initiative" (Philips 2017), as, throughout China's history, it has been busy keeping people from other countries from coming in, but almost no Chinese have gone overseas (Berry 2018). He ignores that China once had massive waves of labourers and immigrants coming out to settle overseas; they were a product of China's weakness and backwardness, but now, in film, China can protect overseas Chinese and labourers.

For example, in *Wolf Warrior 2*, when a rebellion breaks out in the African country, Rachel, a Chinese-American doctor, suggests going to the American consulate because "that is our safest bet", but Leng Feng tells Rachel that the American embassy and warships have long since evacuated. The Chinese navy is the only one facing danger and still waiting offshore for all the Chinese to evacuate. What is more interesting is the gender, race and nation of the setting: Leng Feng, a Chinese male, is backed by a powerful Chinese army that will never abandon its people, while Rachel, a female doctor and Chinese American, is struggling to find the American warships that have long since fled. Rachel, of Chinese ancestry (or perhaps mixed), is behind a family of immigrants who left China perhaps at the end of the Cold War or earlier, a time when America was the world leader, while China was extremely backward and poor (Louie 2014). However, now everything is turned upside down: the United States is

not only incapable of intervening in the rebellion in African countries, woefully fled and lost its role as a world leader, while the Chinese soldier alone rescued all the people working in Chinese factories, including Africans and Americans. Thus, a new national dichotomy is shaped, from the "American/Soviet demon" in the Rambo series to the "Chinese/decline American" in *Wolf Warrior 2*, and the same Hollywood dichotomy model is applied to the China-centered narrative.

Similar to the U.S. in the 1980s, the Chinese government also adopted a strict foreign policy this time, with "those who violate my country will be punished even if they are far away" becoming the significant subtitle on the last scene of *Wolf Warrior 2*. The "dream of a strong country" and the "dream of a strong military" as the primary purpose of the Chinese Dream proposed by Xi Jinping are the first two requirements for the great rejuvenation of China. With the US and China facing off over the trade war and other diplomatic issues, the two countries are once again in a tense standoff since the end of the Cold War.

Furthermore, *Wolf Warrior 2* inevitably falls into the imperialist narrative tropes of Hollywood. As in the Rambo series, ethnicity is almost absent from the internal Chinese representation, but almost all Chinese, especially Leng Feng, look Han Chinese distinctly. The internal ethnicity issue is hidden, in line with the policy of ethnic harmony advocated in the Chinese dream, while simultaneously creating a unified "self" in the face of the "other". Moreover, Leng Feng's hegemonic position does not lie only in protecting women and other vulnerable men but also involves race and nation. The Africans, for example, are portrayed in the film as a boy (Leng Feng's godson), a husbandless mother, a vulnerable girl (the goddaughter of a Chinese doctor) and a group of unarmed workers who need to be protected. Leng Feng saves them, while a Chinese warship takes in black people who have intermarried or are related to the Chinese, taking them away from war and poverty and back to an imaginary peaceful and powerful China. This narrative is almost indistinguishable from Rambo's, except that the story's hero changes from a white man fighting alone to a Han Chinese face.

4. The Chinese ideology behind a Hollywood-style hero

The success of the Hollywood model, both in terms of narrative and production and distribution, has undoubtedly appealed to Chinese filmmakers, but it has also become the best strategy for political propaganda. In his interview with *The New Yorker*, although Wu Jing said he did not want to get involved in political issues, questioning his excessive borrowing of Hollywood techniques still seems to represent a provocation to the Chinese film industry and, indeed, to the power of the state (*The New Yorker* 2018).

While using the proven Hollywood model as a new strategy for propaganda, some significant

"modifications" were made to suit better and serve the Chinese ideology of promoting patriotism and family harmony based on heterosexual marriage. In connection with Kam Louie's "wen/wu" (文武 literary/martial) theory, this part explores the Confucianism embodied in Leng Feng, which is the key to his difference from Rambo.

In contrast to the more physical and uncertain force of "wu", "wen", as a more thoughtful and self-controlled aspect, is a more advanced and popular form of masculinity in traditional China (Louie 2015). Hu and Guan also point out that Leng Feng's "wen" is reflected in his charisma, romantic mood and team spirit (Hu and Guan 2021). Furthermore, although the scenes are equally bloody and violent, unlike the Rambo series "man as weapon", *Wolf Warrior 2* emphasizes Leng Feng's vulnerability and controllability to imply "restrained violence". After Leng Feng was infected with some African virus, he was abandoned and expelled by the Chinese businessmen, and in his dying and vulnerable moment, it was Rachel who never left to care for and protect him. He curls up like a child in a woman's arms, murmuring because he misses his dead fiancée. His vulnerability and deep affection are his other side beyond his violence and toughness.

At the same time, his fidelity to love not only adds some romanticism to him but also explains his reasons for fighting American mercenaries. In the film's constant flashbacks, the audience is told that American mercenaries brutally murdered Leng Feng's fiancée. That is to say, Leng Feng's battle is not one of pure violence but of revenge. To a large extent, this new hero overlaps with the soldiers in the anti-Japanese T.V. series, who fight because the Japanese enemy has harmed them. Thus, the state is not a violent machine but a harbour full of tenderness waiting for the heroes to come home. It fights not because of militaristic tyranny but because of the provocations and aggressions of the enemies it suffers.

The second difference is that unlike Rambo (and other Hollywood heroes), who fight alone and have difficulty building a long-term relationship (Roblou 2012), Leng Feng always belongs to a heterosexual family and romantic relationship. He came to Africa to avenge his fiancée, and in Africa, he had a father-son relationship with an African boy; plus, he met Rachel, fell in love with her, and ended up in love (or maybe a marriage). His relationship with women is never complicated: they are his lover, the mother of his godson, the little girl who is like his "daughter", and his future wife. They were innocents who needed his protection, more like the foundation on which he built his family relationships than the sex involved.

As his restraint comes primarily from his affection for his family and loved ones, Leng Feng is more in line with the Confucian ideal of male responsibility for the family. His power contains a reassuring sense of controllability, which is a key to the new identity of China that the film seeks to present - not only confident and assertive but at the same time very stable and safe. This also can be

read as a reproduction of Xi Jinping's policy of the "peaceful rise of China", and, in another way, this eagerness to present itself as 'controllable' is also, to some extent, a sign of China's anxiety. Although these uniquenesses of Leng Feng essentially serve the ideology of heterosexual family harmony in China, on the other hand, this family, centred on a Chinese man, a Chinese American as wife and mother, and two African children, still have some more thought-provoking symbolism.

5. Conclusion

The article contains three parts. First, it describes the images of Rambo, the ultramacho fighting machine considered the American icon of the Reagan era in the 1980s. In a cultural and political moment of "re-masculinization," behind Rambo's hyper-masculinity was a conservative backlash against other cultural and political trends in the United States in a domestic sense and a hard-line confrontation between U.S.-led Western forces and the Soviet Union during the Cold War in an international sense. The second part focuses on the interpretation of Leng Feng in *Wolf Warrior 2*. This brand new hero who emerges in a very different way from the national hero that China portrayed against the Japanese invaders when dealing with the "humiliation of the century" before President Xi took office in 2012. His hyper-masculinity and exaggerated provocation of Chinese nationalism and patriotism are projections of China's search for a new position in the world order and the key to his being called the "Chinese Rambo". After reading Leng Feng while comparing him to Rambo, the third part focuses on what makes him different from Rambo, something that previous scholars have not focused on but is very useful for understanding the Chinese gender order and ideology that differs from the West.

It is important to note that the paper does not agree that cinema is directly manipulated by politicians, but it does have the ability to create social discourse, as well as to promote specific topics and ideologies. Particularly for blockbusters with high budgets and investments, although the audience is their primary target, we should always pay attention to the political and social dynamics behind them.

Notes

- (1) Before *Wolf Warrior 2* in 2017, the films that made up most of the top ten at the box office in Chinese cinemas were occupied by Hollywood blockbusters, superhero series and animation film series produced by DreamWorks or Disney. For example, seven were American blockbusters of the top ten Chinese films at the box office in 2012, and only three were Chinese films. At the same time, those Chinese films that made it into the top ten or occasionally became box office winners that year were mainly comedies, fantasy films with comedic elements, or urban romance. See from, <http://www.boxofficecn.com/boxofficecn>
- (2) Retrieved from <https://ys.endata.cn/Details/Movie?entId=641515>.
- (3) Retrieved from https://www.boxofficemojo.com/chart/top_lifetime_gross/.

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