

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
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**Abbes Laghrour University-Khenchela**  
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**Department of English**



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**TITLE:**

**Heavy Metal as a Cultural Medium to Engage in**  
**Political and Social Activism:**  
**The Case Study of the American Band System Of A Down**

**Submitted By:**

Chourouk Benzaim  
Khadija Maram Kabouch

**Supervised By:**

Dr. Khaled Chouana

**Board of Examiners**

**Examiner:** Dr. Walid Kefali

MCB

University of Khenchela

**Supervisor:** Dr. Khaled Chouana

MCB

University of Khenchela

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## ***Dedication***

*To our family and to all our friends who supported us.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*We would like to thank Dr. Khaled Chouana for his support throughout this research. Also, special thanks go to the panel members who accepted to assess this work; we are very grateful for their time. Last but not least, we want to thank our family who supported us throughout the writing of this dissertation.*

## **List of abbreviations**

SOAD	<i>System Of A Down</i>
WHO	<i>World Health Organization</i>
WTO	<i>World Trade Organization</i>

## Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the different strategies adopted by American heavy metal band System Of A Down (SOAD) as they engage in political and social activism. The research has analyzed several songs of the band and explored the way SOAD address the hopelessness and disenchantment of the most deprived people of the USA. Also, the research has paid attention at the activism of SOAD as they criticize politicians and the institutions that caused the depression of the characters of their songs. In short, it has been recognized that heavy metal can be considered as an effective cultural medium to engage in political and social activism in order to improve the daily life of people and make them believe there is a hope for a better future.

**Key words:** SOAD – heavy metal - depression - activism - transgression

## المخلص

الهدف من هذه المذكرة هو دراسة الاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي اعتمدها فرقة موسيقى الهيفي ميتال الأمريكية "سيستم اوفو آ دوو" أثناء مشاركتهم في النضال السياسي والاجتماعي. لقد تم تحليل عدة أغاني للفرقة والبحث عن الطريقة التي تعالج فيها اليأس وخيبة الأمل لدى أكثر الناس رماً في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. كما أعطت الدراسة أهمية للعمل النضالي لأعضاء الفرقة الذين ينتقدون السياسيين والمؤسسات التي تسببت في كآبة شخصيات أغانيهم. اختصار يمكن القول أن الهيفي ميتال يمكن اعتباره وسيلة ثقافية فعالة للمشاركة في النضال السياسي والاجتماعي من أجل تحسين الحياة اليومية للناس وجعلهم يأملون أن هناك مستقبل أفضل.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** سيستم اوفو آ دوو - هيفي ميتال - الاكثئاب - النضال - التجاوز

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# **Introduction**

## 1. General Background

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines music as “The art of combining vocal or instrumental sounds (or both) to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion.” Research suggests that music can be benefit on the physical and mental health in different ways. Music therapy can be used in cases of variety of illnesses and disease, such as depression, anxiety, stress. Music can improve mood, decrease pain, and facilitate emotional expression. It is also used to express various social and political issues, increase people’s awareness, and solving many problems. Music has several genres such as jazz, blues, folk music, and rock and roll, and each one has many kinds.

Heavy metal is a kind of rock music developed during the 60s, from blues and hard rock in the United Kingdom and the United States. It was Black Sabbath who first created the heavy metal genre with their album, *Black Sabbath* (1970). The phrase “heavy metal” was first used in the song “Born to be Wild” by Steppenwolf, released in 1968 (Robert Palmer).

Heavy metal is characterized by distortion, extended solos, emphatic beats, and loudness. Also it has a powerful effect on its audience, and it is free from restrictions.

The lyrics of heavy metal differ from one band to another. They are associated with aggression, machismo, sadness, hell, and wars.

Some heavy metal bands have also been writing songs about social and political issues. One of them is: System Of A Down, an Armenian-American heavy metal band from California, known as SOAD and composed of four members: Serj Tankian (lead vocals, keyboards), Daron Malakian (guitar, vocals), Shavo Odadjian (bass, backing vocals), and John Dolmayan (drums), who replaced original drummer Andy Khachaturian. The band members of SOAD are known for their views against Armenian ethnic cleansing and the war on terror and they declare that in their songs.

SOAD have also criticized politicians and American presidents for their blunders and political mistakes. The band members address social issues in their lyrics and sing about poverty, segregation, and consumerism. SOAD achieved great success by releasing five albums; three of them got the first place upon their release.

We will discuss illuminate the music, culture and performance resources of this place with SOAD music celebrated during the active songwriting period from 1998 to 2005, and the band ten years later, they continued to use the same material for touring performances, which changed their reputation.

The band achieved great success since it appeared, it is one of the most famous and energetic bands that ever existed, they showed the creative work features of their rock-band as an example of cultural model. Their songs have deep meaning and they are perfectly describes what's happening in the world in so smart ways, through using intelligent lyrics and clips.

## **2. Research Problem**

Our research problem has to do with investigating the way SOAD addresses several social and political issues. So, we are going to ask the following questions:

- What do the songs of SOAD deal with? And why are they followed by millions of fans all over the world?
- To what extent does System Of A Down affect their audience?
- What strategies do they use to be successful?
- Why do SOAD use obscene words and informal language in their lyrics?
- Are SOAD engaged in social and political activism? What are the causes that they have supported?

### **3. Aim of the Study**

The aim of this master dissertation is to explore the political and social activism of SOAD through the analysis of their songs, since we are fans of the band and they have huge impact on our minds, simply because SOAD artistry is extremely powerful, they choose the right subject in the right time to deal with by using words and expressions criticizing governments mixed with some obscene words for the purpose of showing us that the situation is very bad (wake up). As well as explaining SOAD transgression and chocking words on stages because this is their way to show their anger. In this research paper we will also discover and then explain the irony of System Of A Down in their songs. Moreover, we will find the answer of weather music can make change in social and political movements or I can never do.

### **4. Historical Overview**

Christopher Small contends that “Classical music is certainly not as significant as it was in the first place, but its meaning is not it means not historical or arbitrary. This is important for the style of pop music. Because they continue to misappropriate sounds from other sources and opposing these things.” He believes that “The Beatles may be the first pop band to use “classical” sound in their music, but doing so has become an important part of heavy metals, especially for the dominant ones the guitarist simultaneous use of signifiers and classic techniques combining the opposite of trying to represent the refined and appropriate associations of classical music in the 20th century, it’s important to consider when discuss SOAD’s style influence and labeling.”

Another major change in rock music occurred in the 1990s even rippling in the heavy metal world. “Master guitar solo disappeared from the radio it’s like a blow,” Joshua Clover said in his chapter on Kurt Cobain of Nirvana. Although it is definitely influenced by classic metal bands like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, Rock music

tries to do it yourself with the anger and contempt of metal, Empower punk.

“Abandoned and embattled punk finally realized their popularity Authority, in the form of grunge,” continues Clover, who compared the two styles in the following way

Analyze punk “There are three chords here, and now they form a band” and rock

guitarist Cobain The statement "learn not to play your instrument". Although the word

punk means Players pick up their instruments only to join the band, Cobain 2019s

famous saying Show that the musician already has such technical knowledge and must now be creative.

SOAD is the key to these styles; keep balance technicality and simplicity are the hallmarks of its place in the history of punk and music Grunge and whipped metal. 2.3 Down system, 1998 in 1998, SOAD released their first album and began an extensive tour, open to the band. As Incubus and Slayer, and play the second stage on Ozzfest. Opportunities to play its crucial at Ozzfest, because the festival is hosted by the well-respected heavy metal hero Ozzy Osbourne (from the Black Sabbath, also known as a solo artist, and later a reality show) Stars), which helps to promote all the bands that choose to perform at the festival. Turned out to be among the many bands classified as the same booming genre: Nümetal. SOAD this album of the same name laid the foundation for the band unique heavy metal style. Dramatic dynamics, timbre and time changes in the song and the entire album.

The theme also varies from song to song, from very silly to Very poetic, serious and political. The band combines thrash, punk, grunge and the form and popular style will be demonstrated through three examples in this album. Those songs demonstrate the diversity and recognition of SOAD sounds.

## 5. Literature Review

We have explored the state of the existing literature and searched for books and articles that have dealt with the work of SOAD.

Benjamin Myers is an English writer and journalist, who wrote about SOAD in a famous book under the title "System Of A Down - Right Here in Hollywood," released on 2006, it has 300 pages, written in English, the cover contains a photo of the group members with the book title. It describes the singers biography, the band's past and development, their major songs, the importance and effectiveness of these songs in society, the social and political topics covered by the band. The book features many exclusive interviews with the band and the main singers, the writer has interviewed the members on different occasions for various magazines and newspapers as he mentioned.

According to Paul A. Aitken Ph.D. Candidate at the Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds, SOAD music effect on people's emotions and thoughts especially when it orientated toward political activism, he examined the historical memory; specifically the recognition of the Armenian genocide since SOAD members are shared Armenian origins. He talked about how it can blend heavy metal aesthetics with social conscious words and contents; he described how their songs may raise political awareness and social justice. Paul believed that SOAD music should indicate new and different ways to rethink and inquire about history.

The writer Ali Shutler- 6th November 2020 to the NME site, talked about the band reunion for protest Armenian attacks, Explained the difficulties that have been faced by SOAD in realising their two songs "Protect The Land" and "Genocidal", represented in some disputes occurred, according to them people change with time, and the reason of not having new songs is because they're not belong to the same side

anymore. However, the writer showed how the band members put these disputes aside and supports their people. That support comes in the shape of the first new music from the band since 15 years. In which these two songs speak about dangerous war against Armenians.

The journalist Dave Everley wrote about an exclusive new interview with the band guitarist Daron Malakian and about SOAD songs on Metal Hammer magazine published on louder site since a month, in which there was a count down the 100 greatest songs of the 21st century. There were some powerful songs contenders for the top spot; however the winner was "System Of A Down Chop Suey" 2001. Daron Malakian revealed some secrets of the song, such as it was written in the back of an RV, the lyrics were different at first, and it had different title.

LOUDWIRE site talked about SOAD in an article, mentioning that it is a quartet American Armenian band based out of Los Angeles, it has a huge popularity, impressive music, and an impact on people's attitudes, the band has many albums reached the world such as 'Toxicity', took the first place upon release, selling an estimated 12 million copies worldwide. 'Steal This Album' in 2002 after MP3s of the songs were leaked, then 'Mezmerize' and 'Hypnotize' in which the band's popularity continued to build. The site also mentioned a list of the 10 band's popular songs, starting by Chop Suey!' from: 'Toxicity' (2001) considering that this song is earned the one spot in their list of the Top 50 Hard Rock Songs of the 21st Century, it achieved huge hit and the most popular song of the band, the site described it as 'A musical masterpiece that defies description' and 'The song is one of the most unique and groundbreaking tunes in the history of rock music'.

The second is 'Lost in Hollywood' from: 'Mezmerize' (2005), in which Malakian gave an epic tune about the dark side of Los Angeles. The third is 'Aerials'

from: 'Toxicity' (2001), the operatic vocals and the tribal melody helped to make the song number one, and it's one of the most hard-rock tunes of the past 20 years as mentioned in the site. The fourth is 'Sugar' from: 'System of a Down' (1998), it is one of their most beloved songs, featuring offbeat lyrics, talk-sing delivery, and powerful tune. 'ATWA' from: 'Toxicity' (2001) took the fifth place, described by the site as a 'such a catchy tune that it's hard to believe that the song wasn't a single.' Then 'Hypnotize' from: 'Hypnotize' (2005), represented their Armenian roots. Next is 'Toxicity' from: 'Toxicity' (2001), it has been very popular, 'B.Y.O.B.' from: 'Mezmerize' (2005), the group was called as a political band instead of a rock one with a set of political songs, among them 'B.Y.O.B' which spot light on the Iraq war, with asking many questions about it. The ninth was for 'Spiders' from: 'System of a Down' (1998), this song shows that SOAD has many sides and deal with varied topics.

The last place number 10 is for 'Psycho' from: 'Toxicity' (2001), according to the site the song shows SOAD in its most stranger state. But musically, it shows the band in all its glory and offers up Eastern European flavors for the music. And also mentioned its main artists; Serj Tankian, Daron Malakian, Shavo Odadjian, John Dolmayan, Scars on Broadway.

## **6. Definition of Concepts**

This master dissertation needs to be clear and therefore we are going to define some concepts that we are going to use throughout the research. Our goal in here is to develop a logical and a coherent conceptual framework.

Protest song is a song connected with trends or current events of a certain country in order to make a social (loneliness, suicide, depression...etc.) or political (wars, dictator policies...etc.) change by the lyrics and the way the song was performed. The lyrics of a protest song must be powerful and meaningful. Empowerment is a political

step or the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. In addition, resistance is the capacity of not being affected by something, the strength of standing on one side until the end no matter what happens. Furthermore, advocates are supporters or those with special minds and different views decided to be spoke men/women willing for a better society. Moreover, activism is supporting strong actions in politics, economic or social environment followed by the desire of making changes within society.

## 7. Primary and Secondary Sources

After giving some definitions of key terms, we have to examine the sources we have relied on to conduct this research.

Primary sources in this master dissertation include SOAD songs. We have chosen 10 songs from the discography of SOAD that will be analyzed. We will take a look at the lyrics, the performance, the cover art, and the music videos of songs. Secondary sources include academic books about history, politics, and society of the USA in addition to books and articles about protest music, political activism, and US culture. We will analyze articles and magazines about SOAD in addition to videos that describe their songs.

## 8. Method of the Research

To answer the questions raised in the beginning of this introduction, we have conducted a content analysis of 11 songs. The following table gives an overview of the 11 songs which have been selected for the analysis (see below).

n°	Song	Album	Year	Theme	Charts
1	"Lonely Day"	<i>Hypnotize</i>	2005	Loneliness- depression	Single peaked at number 10 in the USA ( <i>Billboard</i> )
2	"Lost in Hollywood"	<i>Mezmerize</i>	2005	Hopelessness - fragmentation	Album peaked at number one on <i>US Billboard 200</i>

3	“Violent Pornography”	<i>Mezmerize</i>	2005	Hopelessness – fragmentation	Album peaked at number one on <i>US Billboard 200</i>
4	“Spiders”	/	1999	Simulation – Internet – Government suspicion	Single peaked at number 25 on <i>US Mainstream Rock (Billboard)</i>
5	“Peephole”	<i>System of a Down</i>	1998	Use of drugs - depression	Album certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)
6	“Cigaro”	<i>Mezmerize</i>	2005	Mockery and criticism	Album peaked at number one on <i>US Billboard 200</i>
7	“Chic ‘N’ Stu”	<i>Steal this Album</i>	2002	Advertisement, consumerism	Album peaked at number 15 on <i>US Billboard 200</i>
8	“Toxicity”	<i>Toxicity</i>	2001	Corruption of urban cities / drugs / hypocrisy of modern world	Album peaked at number 15 on <i>US Billboard 200</i> / Album received 3 Platinum certifications
9	“Boom”	<i>Steal this Album</i>	2002	Criticizing the Iraq War	Album peaked at number 15 on <i>US Billboard 200</i>
10	“B.Y.O.B.”	<i>Mezmerize</i>	2005	Criticizing war and violence in Iraq	Album peaked at number one on <i>US Billboard 200</i>
11	“P.L.U.C.K.”	<i>System of a Down</i>	1998	Armenian Genocide	Album certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA)

## 9. Plan

We have organized a plan divided into three main chapters based on the artistic strategies of System of a Down.

The first chapter deals with the transgressive songs of SOAD. Here we will examine the obscene words they use in the lyrics as well as the chocking scenes when SOAD perform on stages. The point is to explore how transgression can be considered as an effective strategy that affects the audiences of SOAD. By the end of this chapter, we will show that transgression is very important for SOAD as they use informal language and screaming in their songs.

Chapter two is entitled irony, which deals with anti-wars albums of System Of A Down, because this band used to criticize governments and leaders especially when they oblige poor people to go to wars and make them do what they don't want to do while they stay at homes with their families.

The third and last chapter analyses the social and political activism of SOAD. They have also their places within social and political movements; they are involved in various activist organisations and is shown in their websites. In addition, the singer, Serj Tankian was a member of an organisation concerned with genocide awareness (axis of justice), and combating issues such as poverty...etc. this chapter will deal with every movement SOAD involved in. Moreover their interests in social problems like depression, loneliness and suicide through some songs to show that even if sometimes you are surrounded by millions of people you feel lonely and sad.

# Chapter One: Songs about Depression and Disappointment

*“Depression is not a weakness of character, laziness, or a phase. [...] Depression is a disorder that develops from environmental and biological issues that are unique to each person.” – Deborah Serani (Psychologist)*

*“Blessed is he that expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.” – Benjamin Franklin*

Chapter one deals with several songs of SOAD in which the characters feel depressed and disappointed because of their social condition. It will be shown that they are isolated and feel disappointed and nothing makes sense for them anymore.

It will be revealed that SOAD are able to stand up and speak to the listeners via their music and lyrics and tell them that everything will get better soon. There are several songs such as “Lonely Day”, “Lost in Hollywood”, and “Spiders” which give the listeners something to relate to when life is going through a rough patch. Through the analysis of those three songs we will explore the strategy of SOAD of singing about hopelessness and disillusionment and providing listeners with hope and optimism.

### **1.1. Depression and Loneliness**

Sometimes people feel sad. Sadness is a normal emotion that can make life more interesting. Grief is almost always accompanied by loss. When people say goodbye to the one we love, we often feel sad. If the close relationship ends or a loved one dies, the sadness will be deeper. Sadness also helps people appreciate happiness. When people’s mood finally turns from sadness to happiness, the feeling of contrast increases the enjoyment of the mood. Feeling down at times is a part of life because of bad events that could happen to everyone, but if this feeling is regularly, people could develop depression.

Depression is considered as a dangerous medical case that can get worse with no treatment. It is a mood disorder, the set of negative feelings such as sadness, loss, or anger that effect on one’s life in different ways. Depression can affect people’s daily work, relationships, and health.

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 8.1 % of American adults aged 20 and over had depression in any given 2-week period. The common causes of depression including low self-esteem or being self-critical, personal history of mental illness, certain medications, and stressful events, such as loss of a loved one, economic problems, or a divorce.

SOAD focuses on depression and its effect as they sing about disillusioned characters who feel depressed and lonely. This is shown in “Lonely Day”, a song which was released by SOAD in 2006 as the second single from their fifth album *Hypnotize* (2005). The song was composed by lead guitarist Daron Malakian and was nominated for Best Hard Rock Performance at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Grammy Awards.

“Lonely Day” is a simple song with simple lyrics. It has no hidden or ambiguous words. The song is about loneliness and depression. A depressed or lonely person is fighting every day and it seems that no one care about him.

The title of the song includes the word “lonely”. It must be said that the word “alone” is an adjective and an adverb meaning that no other person is with you. When we use alone as an adjective, it never comes before the noun (predicative adjective) as in the following example: she was alone when she heard the sad news. (Adjective)

The word “lonely” on the other hand means that no other person is with you and that you are sad and unhappy as a result. We may choose to be alone but generally we do not choose to be lonely: Without her friends, it was a long and lonely journey. She says she feels very lonely and depressed living in that big house. We do not use lonely as an adverb: I prefer going to lunch alone. Not: I prefer going to lunch lonely. In short, the title of the song reveals that the fact of being lonely is something people do not predict or choose. People simply try to adjust to the depression and hopelessness resulting from loneliness.

The music video contends the idea of loneliness. There is fire everywhere, but people are acting normally without thinking about the chaos that is happening around them. The slow motion which is an effect in film-making where time appears to be slowed down is used in the music video to reinforce the idea of depression and loneliness felt by the different characters in the song. The members of SOAD are also

playing characters in the music video and act in a fragmented way which contends their loneliness and disappointment.

It must be noted that Daron said the following comment about “Lonely Day”:

I write a lot of songs and some of ‘em I never thought worked for System so I didn’t take ‘em to System, and that’s one that I wasn’t going to take into the band, [...] I kind of [regretted] it. It has been criticized by Pitchfork Media for its lyrics, especially the use of the most advanced double “lonelier” in this song.

Also bassist Shavo Odadjian added: “Yes, we had to take it away from him [Daron]. He brought it in, we liked it very much, and he said, ‘I really don’t want to record it, but this is something that needs to be heard’.”

The music video contains footage of the band on the coach, and many of the things they experienced caught fire. It can be said that fire may represent loneliness. Another explanation is that the fire depicts scenes in Iraq. Buildings caught fire due to bombing during the 2003 Iraq invasion by the American army. With the destruction of the city in the background, life is still going on normally.

Another explanation comes from the last line of the song “This is the day I am glad I survived”, which convinced some fans that the song was about 9\11 or the Armenian genocide.

Also there is a reference to the covert art of Pink Floyd’s album *Wish You Were Here*. At about 50 seconds, there is a scene that can be seen as a reflection in the glass. It reproduces the album art, in which two men, one of them on fire, are shaking hands.

“Lonely Day” conveys the idea that people may feel depressed and disappointed because of the circumstances surrounding them or because of the decisions taken by their government. This is embodied in the cover art of the single (see below).



Cover art of “Lonely Day” (2005)

The picture represents two faces of the same person which are intermingled. As a matter of fact the depression that is created from loneliness fragments the characters and causes a kind of dedoubling of their consciousness as illustrated by the surrealist painting of the cover art.

When it comes to the reception of the song, we can say that the single “Lonely Day” has been received positively as 280,274,255 YouTube viewers watched the music video. Also, the music video aired in Australia and ranked 37<sup>th</sup> on the Australian Recording Industry Association’s list. The song peaked at number 10 in the USA (*US Alternative Airplay and Mainstream Rock- Billboard*).

## **1.2. Hopelessness and Fragmentation**

In this section, we are going to deal with two songs which focus on hopelessness and fragmentation of the mind. The first song is entitled “Lost in Hollywood” and the second one is entitled “Violent Pornography”. Both songs are featured on *Mezmerize* (2005), the band’s fourth studio album which peaked at number one in the USA (Billboard 200).

Hollywood is the land of stars, dreams, and money as the majority of people thinks. However, they ignoring its hidden and dark side and usually do not give importance to sexual harassment, assault, racism, sexism, bigotry, and abuse that happen in the prestigious mansions of Hollywood.

This is one of the memoirs that reveal the dark side to fame and fortune : *The Girl: A Life in the Shadow of Roman Polanski* by Samantha Geimer who was a girl aged 13-year-old aspiring model when in 1977, Roman Polansky the film director drugged, assaulted, and raped her in the home of actor Jack Nicholson. One of SOAD's songs talked about the same issue in "Lost In Hollywood".

The song was written by the guitarist Daron Malakian who grew up and lived in Hollywood near Vine Street and Santa Monica Boulevard. It shows a girl who had a dream to become big in Hollywood, and then she just ends up selling her body for money. Daron here is telling the girl that the celebrity lifestyle is full of lies and control.

What is Hollywood? It is a city of evil. Hollywood is nothing but a place filled with broken dreams. People lie, do drugs, sex and cheat and steal to get an edge over nothing more.

"Lost in Hollywood" talks about Hollywood during the 80s. It was a bad place for many people, filled of broken dreams, many aspiring actors ended up on the street; however, SOAD grew up in it, and achieved great success. In the song Daron Malakian was describing to a friend the dark side of the city. The following lines contend the idea that Hollywood is a hostile place that may cause people to lose themselves:

"You were the biggest fish out there; you should've never gone to Hollywood" (13-14)  
The singer is giving a piece of advice to his friend. He assumed he could make it in Hollywood because he has not experienced failure. He did not realize he was a big fish

in a small pond, and when he has been faced with real competition he has been overwhelmed and became hopeless and fragmented.

The sad voice of Malakian who sings the songs reinforces the fragmentation felt by the character that has lost everything because of Hollywood.

The second song that focuses on hopelessness and fragmentation uses the theme of pornography as a trope to contend the idea that life is meaningless and it is like violent pornography.

SOAD guitarist Daron Malakian wrote the music and lyrics for “Violent Pornography” and produced it with Rick Rubin. During this time, Malakian exercised more creative control over the band, which was a factor in their dissolution a year later.

It is mainly about the media and how we are insensitive to the horror incidents (“the kind of shit you see on TV”) that we see on TV every day. He points out that what we see on television is just as bad as violent pornography, but it is socially acceptable. He also noted that television is brainwashing viewers (“Can you say brainwashing?”), referring to a large American snack company that may have been advertised in the United States (“I bet you’re Nabisco”) and having told the audience. Off (“Turn on your TV”), this all supports the view that this song is not actually related to pornography. This song is about rape culture, capitalism and normalization of sexual violence against women.

Everybody, everybody, everybody livin’ now  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody fucks  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody livin’ now  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody sucks  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody livin’ now  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody cries  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody livin’ now  
 Everybody, everybody, everybody dies (1-7)

The singer repeats the word “everybody” to tell the listeners that all people are concerned with the existential conditions of living, crying and dying. We are all going to die and therefore all becomes meaningless. The singer shouts in a pathological way and this contends his fragmentation and hopelessness.

The singer carries on by shouting: “It’s a non-stop disco; bet you it’s Nabisco; bet you didn’t know, woo-oo” (8-10). Here the singer wants to say that things are not getting better; rather there is a kind of continuation of the status quo. Nabisco is an American manufacturer of cookies and snacks. They embody hegemonic capitalism as they use mainstream media to manipulate consumers and encourage them to buy their commodities. Nabisco can be compared or likened to laundering, serving the masses.

The singer reaches the climax of the song as he sings: “It’s a violent pornography; choking chicks and sodomy; the kind of shit you get on your TV” (43-45).

Television and the media have portrayed women in unreal and destructive ways. These excessively sexual and degrading portraits incubate the normalization and justification of violence against them. The singer alerts the listeners about the bad effects of TV and suggests in a subtle way that the best thing to do is to turn the TV off.

### **1.3. Distrust of Government**

Hopelessness and disappointment cause people to be suspicious vis-à-vis their decision makers. As a matter of fact, it can be said that distrust of government is a common theme in SOAD’s lyrics. “Spiders” (1999) highlights the idea of not trusting the federal government because it is the one which put people in the desperate conditions that they face.

“Spiders” is featured on the *Scream 3* soundtrack and in the video game *Rock Band 4*.

The song criticizes the US government at the personal level. Spider symbolizes the computer chips (the V-chip) which refer to a technology used in television set receivers to let the owners block the violent content. SOAD believes that these chips exist in smart TVs, phones and computers. For them, the government acts as an Orwellian Big Brother to watch people. The government uses modern technology to monitor citizens and also uses the digital data to know everything about users.

According to many opinions spiders is talking about Simulation. It is suggested that everything real in life including the earth and the universe could be an artificial stimulation, such as a computer simulation controlled by unknown entities.

Some philosophers and authors talked about this simulation such as Jean Baudrillard who in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) claimed that the current Western society has replaced all reality and meaning with symbols and signs, and that human experience is a simulation of reality. The idea that we live in an unreal world is embodied in the movie *The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999) that depicts a future in which humanity is unknowingly trapped inside a simulated reality.

The music video of “Spiders” was directed by Charlie Deaux, who is known for making short films. It starts with showing the singer Serj Tankian sung in a strange and dark world with light illumination, and then a woman appears lying in what looks like a tank, surrounded by water and wires.

The woman looks like her physical body has dissociated from her consciousness, dreaming about another world, encountering strange monsters and trying to escape, then she sees a big spider which probably symbolizes the simulation theory. At the end of the video the woman rises from the tank to wake up.

The use of “June” in the song refers to a woman’s name. The singer uses the sentence “All the life running through her hair” which refers to wires inside her head.

The singer also uses the phrase “approaching guiding light”. It means that people are following the path that is determined by God or fate, but in this song, it means that people are following the path that stimulation has determined.

“Our shallow years in fright” means people are under control and living as slaves because of this stimulation. “Dreams are made winding through my head” means the wires are in everyone’s head and that people live in a fake reality. The singers suggests that “the spiders all in tune.” The spiders refer to the connecting wires with people’s minds. It must be noted that the song was released in 1999 at a time of Internet development and also a time when humanity was going to celebrate the third millennium and the 2000s. Theories about the end of the world and the apocalypse were feeding people’s thoughts and it becomes clear that SOAD’s “Spiders” focused on the depression resulting from the use of Internet and technologies.

SOAD force their listeners to think about the apocalypse and simulation without telling them what is going on in the modern world. It can be said that their song “Spiders” is a pedagogical tool that informs the listeners something about their humanity and fragility.

#### **1.4. Using Drugs**

One of the topics that are linked to depression and disappointment is the use of drugs. Put another way, it can be said that using drugs is a consequence of depression and the sadness as people find refuge by using psychotropic substances.

According to World Health Organization (Who) drug is substances affect the mind functions and the psychological state. “Psychoactive drugs are substances that, when taken in or administered into one’s system, affect mental processes, e.g. perception, consciousness, cognition or mood and emotions. Psychoactive drugs belong to a broader category of psychoactive substances that include also alcohol and nicotine.

“Psychoactive” does not necessarily imply dependence-producing, and in common parlance, the term is often left unstated, as in “drug use”, “substance use” or “substance abuse.”

Drugs cause seizures, stroke, mental confusion and brain damage, lung disease, problems with memory, attention and decision-making and other health problems which make daily living more difficult especially if one gets addiction.

There is much kind of illicit drugs that have been prohibited under international drug control treaties. The main groups of illicit drugs used in international statistics are opioids, cocaine, amphetamines and cannabis. However, there is a range of other illicit drugs included in international drug control treaties, such as plant-based and synthetic hallucinogens. The full list can be found o in the UNODC’s publication.

SOAD focuses on the bad effects of drugs on characters who feel depressed and hopeless in their song “Peephole” which was released in 1998 from their debut studio album *System of a Down*. The song introduces the topic of marijuana because during the 90s, the war on drugs was still going on in the USA. Today, this war carries on as the federal government fights against the different Latin American cartels who sell drugs on the American soil.

“Peephole” is a good example of the unpredictable madness of SOAD’s first album. Produced by Rick Rubin, this song has many musical directions, mixing some folk music and circus sounds. Lyrically, it is full of false moons and crying mermaids.

In the album liner notes, SOAD noted that a World Health Organization report stated that cannabis is safer than alcohol or tobacco, but the report was suppressed under political pressure.

It is hard to know what position the song is taking yet the listeners think that it may have a deeper meaning than drugs. The phrase “Do you believe it, when you are

up, you've tried it in your life" makes the listeners think that this song can try to grow as a person. When things are going well, do you stop to assess whether they still challenge you as a person? When you have encountered no opposition, have your views and beliefs been tested? Medication referral can be seen as a way to temporarily forget about your problem.

Then the singer tells us not to get in trouble ("You will never be stuck in heaven") because we will never deal with our problems or grow as a result.

"When your stars are baked"

When something that seems out of reach is ready to be "digested" As some people say that marijuana can help you understand things more deeply, "It's like opening my third eye" Also "baked", which means throwing stones.

"And your rivers fly"

This means that what we think is impossible "can" happen to "you", and the effect of use is relative to the celebrity. We can imagine things that we would never have thought of without this "eye-opening".

"When your castle breaks and your feet are dry"

When your world protector breaks your drug ideology, when you taste marijuana, it will break (like a castle) because it is not dangerous and you will not get any harm (like your feet are dry the same).

"Do you ever believe you were stuck in the, Sky"

This will ask us if we think we have lived a "blind" life, the world is a good place, where we live the least corruption, and marijuana is a "malignant" and "dangerous" drug.

"Don't ever get stuck in the sky, when you're high"

Most likely, addiction is good, but what does it have to do with marijuana?  
Metaphorically speaking, maybe it means that we should never believe what the government tells us, and never fall into a “blind” life. We live a “heaven” life like a “heaven” because our society is obviously free of defects.

## Chapter Two: Of Transgression and Mockery

*“Avoid transgression. How’s that for advice” (Marilynne Robinson, Gilead, 122)*

*“To hold our tongues when everyone is gossiping, to smile without hostility at people and institutions, to compensate for the shortage of love in the world with ore love in small, private matters; to be more faithful in our work, to show greater patience, to forgo the cheap revenge obtainable from mockery and criticism: all these are things we can do.”—Hermann Hesse*

Chapter two is entitled “of transgression and mockery”. It deals with songs that include laughter and transgression and here is an example from one of SOAD’s songs, “B.Y.O.B” (2005), that is about the business behind war, and how American government tries to makes it sound good, when they say (Everybody is going to the party) than (Dancing in the desert).

Here they are playing with words. Also, (Blowing up the sunshine) this can refer to pointless distraction of nice places in war. SOAD clearly hates their government “why don’t presidents fight in the war”, it is obviously committed to revealing the president as coward who would rather use poor people’s need for money in order to calm or to end the threats in the world. The poor are suffering because they have not because they want to; no human being in the right mind wants to kill another human.

## 2.1. Making Fun of US Government

“Cigaro” is included in SOAD’s fourth album, *Mezmerize* (2005). They decided to split it up, and released the second batch of songs on the *Hypnotize* album six months later. Both albums went to #1 in America. “Cigaro” sarcastically criticize people in power; rich fat cats and wealthy business men who wouldn’t be complete without a cigarette, and think they are better than everyone. Serj says “propagators of all genocide” are “burning through the world’s resources”. They are talking about how the World Bank, the WTO and the US force Latin American countries to deregulate their power, water and oil industries so that corporations can buy the power plants and the water systems and sell it back to inhabitants. The idea behind “my cock is bigger than yours” is a portrayal of foreign policy towards other powerful nations. Regulators, killers in denial that their actions can harm countries and economies. The World Bank could easily be as they make low interest loans to these countries (animating their economy) in exchange for removing regulations and privatizing their national infrastructure which slowly drains money out of a country. The greatest thing about this song is the ability to shout “can’t you that I love my cock?” while head banging like a savage beast.

## 2.2. Advertising

The Cambridge English Dictionary defined ‘Advertising’ as “the business of trying to persuade people to buy products or services.” According to many consumer researchers, advertising has lot of negatives regardless on its benefits.

James Ashley published an article in 2017 in which he mentioned the different negative aspects of advertising. He started by misrepresentation, that is the false representation of a product, because advertising aims at presenting it in its best light. Then we have false images, the unrealistic image about the product. Moving to

unrealistic expectations, he talks about drugs effectiveness and their side effect that is not appearing in the advertisement. He said “Disclaimers are often hidden in very small print on product packaging and out-of-the way spots in ads.” Next is promotion of harmful products such as ads on alcohol consumption. Then the political influences in which negative ads are harmful to democracy. Corrupting the Youth (Through cigarette and alcohol use, obesity), and environment threats. Ashley ends his article by asserting that advertising has true potential. It can affect, human behavior, political elections, creates financial monopolies, and has the ability to reshape different cultures.

“Chic ‘N’ Stu” is a song which is featured on *Steal This Album* which was released on November 26, 2002. Obviously, the song is about advertising. We think this song is about how advertising controls us so much that we think we need everything we see in advertising. We know this song sounds silly, but this is its explanation of how stupid we interact with ads.

The singer screams over and over the words: “What a wonderful cake, pizza, pizza, every minute, every second, buy, buy, buy, buy.” Things that keep happening on the Internet, like pizza. We thought it was a great product (because they showed us how perfect their product is), and then we thought BUY BUY BUY BUY BUY. SOAD goes on to say that we must treat our addiction to advertising. Although this cake can have pepperoni, green peppers, mushrooms, olives, and chives.

This is a simple message and a simple song. “need therapy, therapy, advertising causes need,” we think Serj and Daron are saying that every time people see something they like in a commercial, they naturally need it. Sometimes it can reach the point where you feel overwhelmed by everything you think you need, just like you need treatment. “Advertising’s got you on the run.” The listeners of the song think this sentence just shows that the song is obviously for publicity. Systems tend to use a

combination of completely obvious and seemingly absurd lines in their songs to convey their point of view. And we think the literal meaning of this line is that in all this hype, we seem to often need to go out to buy groceries, clothes, etc. As for the introduction, it is difficult to give an accurate explanation. “Ball games in the refrigerator, door’s closed, lights are out, and butter’s getting hard.” But the rest seems to be saying that when the refrigerator door is closed, the lights will automatically turn off and the butter in the refrigerator starts to harden from the cold. People usually store frozen pizza in the refrigerator. We really don’t know what the introduction is. We think one of the best parts of SOAD is that half of the time we don’t know what they are talking about. So perhaps it is better not to get their message and simply enjoy listening to their masterpieces.

### **2.3. Toxicity**

“Toxicity” was released on the album of the same name *Toxicity* in 2002. The song has 554 million views, as the second single song. It can be categorized as nu metal and was written by Daron Malakian, Shavo Odadjian, and Serj Tankian.

The term toxicity means a level of toxins in an item, anything that the band feels is poisoning people, such as drugs, and corruption. The song was composed when SOAD was in deep touch with the Armenian genocide (1915-1917). The song depicts Armenian roots, way of life, and the largest Armenian community outside of Armenia.

SOAD drummer John Dolmayan told MTV: “Toxicity was one of those songs where we hadn’t done anything like it before. It required something completely different than any other System song did. The guitars are just, in some ways, really powerful, and in others, they just step back so that the melody can take over a little bit. So it’s a really good combination of aggression and melodic elements, which represents this album.”

“I’m constantly trying to find ways to reinvent myself as a writer,” Tankian said in an interview. SOAD recorded “Toxicity” in 2001 at Cello Studios in Hollywood with producer Rick Rubin and engineer Dave Schiffman. Rubin encouraged the band to start shooting from the hips, not to save anything or over think their ideas. “[Rubin] I hope this album is really dry, to your face, no apologies,” Schiffman told Los Angeles Weekly. “That’s part of what makes him feel so honest and powerful.”

A single from the toxic "Chop Suey!" written when the band was on tour home to support their first album System of a Down is very happy to release the first album, but also eager to show that they can create songs with more musical depth and cohesion than the first album.

Toxicity shouldn’t be a political album when it comes to promoting the horrors of the Armenian genocide to the public. “I think this is where Sergi is different from me,” Malakian told the authors of *Speaker Than Hell*. “Serj tends to be a bit concerned about politics, so I think it makes people pay more attention to politics, and there are many more for us. In addition, he is more involved in political affairs outside the band. I don’t really go out to participate in organizations or the like. I just like to leave my thoughts in the lyrics.”

The album *Toxicity* has been nominated by the Grammy for two consecutive years. In 2002, it was nominated for the Best Metal Performance Award, and the following year, “Aerials” one of the songs of the album was nominated for the Best Hard Rock Performance Award. Accompanying the second nomination was an invitation to perform at the Grammy Awards, but SOAD refused to perform on the stage.

## **Chapter Three: Political and Social Activism of SOAD**

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” Elie Wiesel

The third and last chapter analyses the social and political activism of SOAD. The heavy metal band has their places within social and political movements. They are involved in various activist organizations and this is shown in their website. In addition, the singer, Serj Tankian, was a member of an organization concerned with raising awareness about the Armenian Genocide, and combating issues such as poverty and exclusion.

This chapter deals with every movement SOAD is involved in. Moreover SOAD is interested in social problems like depression, loneliness and suicide through some songs to show that sometimes people who are surrounded by millions may feel lonely and sad.

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines 'activism' as "a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue."

Similarly, the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "The use of direct and public methods to try to bring about esp. social and political changes that you and others want: political/social activism."

Activism is to support issues, using different forms, including: strikes, sit-ins, rallies, street marches, writing letters to newspapers, running or contributing to a political campaign, or preferential patronage (or boycott) of businesses and many others.

The writer Brittany McSorley wrote in 'Vocal' site about the activists through history under the title "Most Famous Activists in History," started by "History is shaped by those who take a stand and fight for change, such as the most famous activists in history."

According to her throughout history activists have the big role in making changes through their working and fighting for issues they believe in, and those are who shaped progressive change. She wrote about many characters among them, 'Gloria Steinem' which was the first who Brittany started with, in which she has been a feminist leader and activist. She wrote a lot of articles and books about women's rights, and helped them to appear in social media and real life. 'George Orwell' used his fiction writings to treat and expose social hypocrisies; he talked about abuses of power, government overreaches, volatile nature of power. His novel 'Animal Farm' was an example about these (Russian Revolution). 'Martin Luther king' suffered from racism with many African-American in the USA. He led campaigns against racism and prejudice, in form

of nonviolent protests. He got the Nobel Peace Prize for the opposition of racism, one of his famous speeches 'I Have a Dream.'

### **3.1. Political Activism**

Political Activism: is the use of direct method to support or confront an issue. "The ways in which citizens participate, the processes that lead them to do so, and the consequences of these acts," notes Norris Pippa.

The use of term 'Political Activism' has become popular, it's the participation in political activities by different social groups, dealing with political events, and providing individual and social political activity.

According to 'Political Science Vocabulary' political activism are social groups or individual activities to improve and change various social, economic or political conditions, and to participate in politics.

Its definition is written in 'Political Science Encyclopedia' as the form of political activity that has an effect on political decisions.

Zhuravliov explains political activism as all forms and facilities that effect on different political subjects and on people. Also, Olshanskyi determines political activism as political groups or individual activity, connected to the expression of demands and special interests.

### **3.2. Social Activism**

"Social Activism is working with other people to bring about a change in society. The word "social" applies both to "society" and to the idea that the activism fosters opportunities for participation. It reflects a personal choice to engage in society. If the participation is forced or coerced, it is not social activism...." Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research.

Social activism is the use of direct action to support or confront an issue, and working to achieve a positive social change. Here are some famous activists: Jane Adams: developed community social services and training for people in poverty. Saul Alinsky: community organizer. David Brower: ecologist, environmentalist, writer.

“In March 2003, U.S. forces invaded Iraq vowing to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and end the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein. When WMD intelligence proved illusory and a violent insurgency arose, the war lost public support. Saddam was captured, tried, and hanged and democratic elections were held. In the years since, there have been over 4,700 U.S. and allied troop deaths, and more than one hundred thousand Iraqi civilians have been killed. Meanwhile, questions linger over Iraq’s fractious political situation.”

“Boom” is from *Steal this Album*. It was released on November 26, 2002 .It has 22 million views on YouTube. It was written by Daron Malakian and Serj Tankian.This song is a protest against the war in Iraq.

The music video of the song shows thousands of people from different countries who protest against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The band members participate as well in the demonstration and choose to promote peace over war.

It describes how money spent on bombs and weapons when it could be spent on better things. Also it shows the bad consequences of wars; starving, I’ll, death, displacement, orphan how the war is wrong and nothing good comes behind it. I’ve been walking through your streets, Where all you money’s earning, Money takes control of every single thing in humans life, they have become slaves.

Where all your building’s crying. Buildings are built by exploiting the poor for very low payment for corporations with companies which made them as slaves of money. And clueless neckties working, revolving fake lawn houses, Housing all your

fears, it means that all we get whether it is a Ferrari car or a castle, we will always feel unsafe because of the lack of security.

Despite the fact that organizations and companies led by the government money controls them luck dolls they have no choice to live normally Desensitized by TV, Overbearing advertising, God of consumerism, And all your crooked pictures, Looking good, mirrorism, we watch TV for hours yet there is no interesting nor good things in it. We watch ads which are made ready for consumption and the strategy is making them a reflection of our life issues and problems.

Moreover, it provides us the perfect lifestyle which every one of us dreams to live but we cannot reach it in order to relate us with those ads. Unfortunately the fact that they are crooked and they don't care about our odds, they want money and only money .Filtering information, for the public eye, Designed for profiteering, your neighbor, what a guy. Media always hide facts, everything we receive is fake and false, they show us only what they want us to know). They know about the truth behind murdering Kennedy yet they told us that is a mystery.

Adverts are made only to gain money, people nowadays are chasing money rather than animals. Moreover, everything is illusion; we prefer to dream about a huge house instead of being stable in a cave. Boom, boom, boom, boom, Every time you drop the bomb, you kill the God your child has born. Boom, boom, boom, boom. Boom here indicates growth and development and things with positive effect, work and businesses are going up but in every time we make more money we kill our God Child has born, means that we don't devote enough time to God. And children, we only work and think about money, although system of a down is not very religious, Jesus, the god our child was born as was Jesus. Judas killed him, betrayed him for money. In the same way we betray god, spirituality, anything that is good beyond material for money Modern

globalization, Coupled with condemnations, unnecessary death, we and the government kill for money, and everyone needs money, and there is no life without it.

Money took a global level and America has enslaved the world with US dollar. We have been vastly affected by American culture. We want the American dream, means we want money and fame. We are coupled by our thirst for money for our hate of them, whoever they are. It could be communism, terrorism, oil, Iraq, the Jews whatever they want us to hate and blame for all our pain that was not caused by them but by us, by I the individual. Matador corporations, Puppating your frustrations, with the blinded flag. They use our thirst for money to make their slaves, and to kill for them. The blinded flag meaning they blind us with their national anthem, patriotism is brainwashing.

While we are blinded with patriotism they brainwash us to use us for their own selfish demands such as globalization. Manufacturing consent is the name of the game, The bottom line is money, Nobody gives a fuck. 4000 hungry children die per hour, From starvation, While billions spent on bombs, Create death showers The purpose is money, We don't care as long as I get my money they may use people as well, they really don't give a fuck . They get a lot of money from the trade of guns and ammunition from using us as they profit. Money.... money l...., we want a lot of money and they will give to us if we make their weapons of mass destruction, we could use the money to save millions of people yet we prefer to use it to kill them because it is much easier. We are insane over money. (A dead corps cannot starve). Why, why, why, why must we kill, kill, kill, kill, our own, own, own, own kind... Why must we kill humans like us for materials or for money or for fake lawn houses, why we are jealous because they have what we want. Sense of wholeness but money can't buy wholeness only try to fill the hole with nothing real. Boom, boom, boom, boom, Every time you drop the

bomb, you kill the God your child has born. Boom, boom, boom, boom  
 Boom/boom/boom/boom/boom/boom/boom/boom Every time you drop the bomb.  
 Every time we drop the bomb, every time we kill our god. We drop our values, our  
 freedom, our children, family, our own kind. We drop bombs on nations for land,  
 domination, resources and most of all money the root of all evil.

This song is about how corrupt governments or any governments or countries would rather kill than give and preserve life. It also explains how greedy these nations can be. "Every time you drop the bomb, you kill the god your child has born." I think this means that any child that is born has the capabilities to change the world or make us feel a different way. Someone that can be our political "savior" and make us see why we need to spend money on life not death.

"B.Y.O.B" from the album *Mezmerize* was released on March 29, 2005. It has 353 million views; written by Daron Malakian, Serj Tankian. B.Y.O.B: is a term that means "Bring Your Own Booze." It is often used in parties. If no alcohol is served, one is free to bring his or her own. In this case, it stands for "Bring Your Own Bombs"

This song is about the war in Iraq, and how presidents and politicians don't ever fight themselves, but send the poor to do the dirty work. In the 2003 ,System Of A Down made it very clear they opposed the war ,and used the video for their song "Boom" (directed by Michael Moore) to draw attention to protests. By the time "B.Y.O.B." was released two years later, it was clear the war would be a conflict with no clear victory.

The song begins with the question "Why do they always send the poor?" and at the end it is changed into the exclamation "They always send the poor!" criticizes the Politicians and the poor which have low level of education in the US army.

The video was directed by Jake Nava. The video started with an army soldiers marching through the street and the members of the band playing inside a night club, then the soldiers storm the night club and forced everyone to put on the drone masks, at the end of the video, the members of System of a Down are shown wearing the drone masks. The song talks about the American dirty tactics that work with, war, injustice, and cruelty. The song criticized American politicians and their government the writer of the song, Serj Tankian wanted to enable the listener to know how the American politicians and their government are enacting on the poor by always assembling them to be the ones to fight the American wars, also described them as brutal and ceremonious.

### **3.3. The Armenian Genocide**

The lack of documentary evidence and the systematic suppression of historical facts for economic reasons made the Armenian genocide a “forgotten genocide.” Armenians generally seek historical justice in the form of acknowledging the formation of events in the early 20th century systematic ethnic cleansing. Modern Turkey, for historical reasons the guilt and political desire to join the EU, refuse to recognize events are not the natural course and reaction of history meet the political needs of the time. Because of understanding the surrounding events are becoming more and more common, some brief Context is necessary.

Since the authoritarian rule of Sultan Hamid II in the late 19th century Through the Young Turk Revolution, Armenians have long been unpopular. In the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Armenians were accused of Russian supporters; forced deportation turned into torture and mass killing. It is estimated that between 300,000 and 1.5 million Armenians died. 7 Turkish The United States Refuses To Acknowledge That Events During World War I Were Systemic Turkish Nationalist Movement (Akçam 2004), the geopolitical strategic importance of Turkey during the Cold War

(Bal 2004) and the current turmoil in the Middle East (Dakwar 2003), etc. Recent negotiations on accession to the EU (Tannock 2005). Society and culturally, the situation in contemporary Turkey shows repressive characteristics three. There is a law prohibiting “insulting the character of Turks”, according to which it is possible to only implies genocide (Rainsford 2005); situation Armenians are not in Turkish school curricula; some even claim Anti-Armenian sentiment is widespread, so many Turks have a know your own history (Rainsford 2009); and the Turkish government the tutor systematically and publicly rejected the efforts of the international community received recognition of genocide (BBC News 2010). In the United States, human rights groups put tremendous pressure on the federal government recognition of genocide.

Therefore, for many people, this problem is far from being satisfactorily resolved. What is the point There is controversy in the debate on the Armenian genocide is it death and displacement? The question is whether these constitute a reasonable response from a country caught in geopolitical turmoil treat today in a formal way the internal enemies of the country known as relocation in Turkey, or these incidents are deliberate attempted ethnic cleansing. Therefore, the main focus of genocide activists is symbolic and seek recognition in the form of official national announcements; these are packed with powerful authority to correct historical records.

“P.L.U.C.K.” is song which has a political content and unusual formal structure make it an important description of SOAD diversity. This song refers to the U.S. government refused to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Feelings of this injustice fuel the song to the point that the revolution is just the "solution". The lyrics provide a very clear image of the information required by the song.

Lyrics combined with music create a combination of thought patterns that can disrupt the deposition to create conditions for political action. In other words, every

capital in these songs used sabotage the links between the parts are influencing and politically motivated lyrics. Aitken and me accepting destroy is common in the Heavy Metals Convention, and also noted.

## **Conclusion**

SOAD's involvement and influence on countercultural trends at the turn of the century is still relevant. There is much more by continuing to research and analyze the band's records and current research opens the door to many underused roads to explore. Throughout this thesis we have analyzed a selection of SOAD songs to situate the band's social and political activism.

We have focused on providing an introduction to the band's members including their names and some important fragments from their lives, as well as a discography through some specific and unique songs of SOAD. SOAD filled the gap in the market during the band's 1998-2005 period of active song production. That period based on providing young metal fans with a socially conscious such as depression, fame desire, loneliness, suicide and more.

SOAD is a band which uses humor and mockery in their songs. But after 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, SOAD has become more serious by being involved in politics and protest. This counterculture trend reached its apex with the 2003 anti-Iraq War protests, but remains relevant after the occupy movements and looking forward in this volatile time. Throughout this thesis I have used analysis of a selection of SOAD songs to situate the band's music within that social relevance.

Chapter one deals with any negative feelings that may affect humans' emotions, we dealt with SOAD songs that talked about this, in which we analyzed many of them, that we found youth interacted well with, because they are in a way or another reflect their thoughts and feelings and had a global resonance and impact, they give hope that everything will be change to the best through the band's lyrics and music.

The first song was "Lonely Day," before analyzing the song, we started by giving general ideas about loneliness and depression and their effects on people and how depression is considered as a dangerous medical case, we gave some studies about its

spreading and how are men suffering and fighting every day. Then analyzing the two songs “Lost in Hollywood” which talks about the dark side of Hollywood, and “Violent Pornography” that talks about media, brainwashing and the role of TV in passing stupid things, the band mentioned that these contents are bad as violent pornography, but it is socially acceptable. Next is “Spiders” which is about stimulation theory (mind control through technology). Moving to “Peephole” is about drugs and how it affects humans’ emotions and minds negativity, and how it can destroy their life.

Chapter two based on one of the most important ideologies of SOAD which is mockery. The band’s most popular singles “Chop Suey!” is clear that the political message was not always the audience’s priority; however, System Of A Down exposed enjoyment to the listeners and promoted interest in global politics among fans by making fan of them and their ways to control. Mockery was also mixed with transgression, when the band members use words like "fuck, cock, shit and more".

The album *Toxicity* is the release of the singles that did not emphasize a politicized message while featuring highly politicized songs in the early days and track lists of the album. The controversy surrounding Tankian’s post 9/11 diatribe participate in the success of the album because *Toxicity* caters to the United States government promotes the gang as anti-authoritarian and political conscience at the same time when the album is already number one on the Billboard album charts. We look for any opportunity to expand this dissertation to analyze more songs of SOAD, and do more comparisons band interviews and fans surveys. Exploration of how the conventions of several styles and genres are blended to create SOAD’s unique sound offers a useful prescriptive on mainstream heavy metal and hard rock at the turn of the millennium, and how these styles interact. We realized that freethinkers are only dangerous to those in power who fear change, throughout our fandom of System Of A Down.

Chapter three demonstrates System Of A Down's participation in political activism. We dig so deep into the creation of the song. This song appears on the band's least acclaimed album, in which it was treated as an album of rejects from Toxicity, despite band members emphasized that the tracks were being saved for later release. Despite being celebrity rock stars the video shows the band members are protesters at LA location on the biggest international protest in history and this portrays the band members as merely the source of one of many anti-war chants during demonstration. The only moment when any of the band members plays an instrument is when drummer John Dolmayan is seen playing a giant bass drum with a peace symbol on it while leading the crowd in another chorus round of "Boom! Boom! Boom!."

While the song "P.L.U.C.K." made apparent the band's connection to Armenian heritage, after that we made a comparison between SOAD's music and songs by other contemporary bands such as Slipknot, and Limp Bizkit. Hjelm codifies metal as "distorted guitars, aggressive vocals, denim, leather and spikes" and refers to "the commercially successful 'nu' metal of the mid to late-1990s, in which metal was fused with hip hop" as contrasted with more experimental and underground metal scenes.

We have also demonstrated that SOAD both met and surpassed these expectations of Nu-metal, and have looked more closely at the sonic signifiers of the genre including the use of rap-like vocals; slower tempos; down-tuned, rattling, distorted guitars; and straight-forward song forms.

SOAD stepped outside of these expectations with song-writing that fused thrash metal, punk, and pop styles, while providing melodious – even harmonized – vocals intermixed with the aggressive, distorted screams, and fast, rhythmic ramblings. The importance of disruption, rupture, and constant change to the band's music and place within a counterculture, cannot be understated.

We look for any opportunity to expand this dissertation to analyze more songs of SOAD, and do more comparisons band interviews and fans surveys. Exploration of how the conventions of several styles and genres are blended to create SOAD's unique sound offers a useful prescriptive on mainstream heavy metal and hard rock at the turn of the millennium, and how these styles interact. We realized that freethinkers are only dangerous to those in power who fear change, throughout our fandom of System Of A Down.

To conclude, we think that the doors will be open up to further intensive study of the political and social influence of protest songs in general and SOAD in particular. We started our research as fans of SOAD and by the end of the day we feel that analyzing the artistry of this band goes beyond the fandom level as they give a pertinent overview of the USA of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by being involved in social and political activism and by singing useful songs which help people think the world is a better place to live in.

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