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THE IRON CURTAIN AND THE SILVER SCREEN
Visual Media as a Propaganda Instrument
during The Cold War (1947–1991)

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INTRODUCTION

I. Object and motivations

1. Object

This investigation aims to review the use of cinema as a tool for crafting ideological propaganda during the period of the Cold War (1947–1991), by the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This objective will be useful to understand the broader influence of culture and soft power in international politics, as well as the relationship between certain films and the strategy of the two aforementioned states.

2. Motivations

The concepts of ideology, nationalism and soft power are a focal point of study in the International Relations degree, as well as in the field of international relations more generally. It is thus relevant to research these topics, seeing as they often go unnoticed when examining international relations and foreign policy. Since International Relations is a multidisciplinary area of research, it is relevant to take as many points of view into consideration as possible.

The focus on Cold War cinema comes from a point of personal interest in the use of film as a vessel for the transmission of ideology into popular culture, which in turn influences concepts such as personal belief and public opinion. This spanned all types of genres in cinema during the selected time period, from war dramas to black comedy since they all, to some extent, reflected the hegemon's idea of both them and the opposing side. This phenomenon, when used appropriately, can become a very useful tool to demonstrate power.

3. State of the art

The matter of cinema and ideology has been studied from various points of view, even if authors such as Cynthia Weber (*International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction.*), or Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (*Power in International Politics*) have argued that ideology and constructivist analysis has unfairly been relegated to a second plain in the field of international relations, and more attention should be paid to it.

Some authors like Joseph Nye focus on the concept of soft power as such and the ways in which it is important for nations, in particular the United States. Other authors such as Diana Roig Sanz (*Culture as Soft power: Bridging Cultural Relations, Intellectual Cooperation, and Cultural Diplomacy*) or Pierre Sorlin (*The Cinema: American Weapon for the Cold War*) focus on the use of soft power interwoven with culture. Likewise, Maria Belodubrovskaya speaks about the use of cinema by the Soviet Union, and its attempts to emulate the Hollywood model.

II. Objectives

1. To determine the effectiveness of cinema as an instrument of ideological propaganda during the time of the Cold War
2. To verify to what extent cinema informs ideology, and vice versa.
3. To analyse if current approaches of international relations theory are sufficient in examining cinema as a tool for foreign policy

III. Hypotheses

To fulfil these objectives, we will set out to verify the following hypotheses:

1. What is the relevance of the study of cinema in the Cold War to understand the concept of soft power?
2. Does the analysis of soft power on international relations necessitate a constructivist approach?
3. Was cinema an essential tool in furthering ideology during the Cold War?

IV. Methodology

The international relations discipline has traditionally been studied through a realist perspective, focusing on concepts such as the balance of power, war, and dominance. However, this approach focuses mostly on what scholars refer to as ‘hard power’, and as such neglects to take the concept of ‘soft power’ into consideration. It is for this reason that an exclusively realist analysis is considered insufficient since we believe it is necessary to focus on other elements such as propaganda, culture and cinema. This study will apply a constructivist analysis, studying ideology, human behaviour, and their instrumentalisations as a means to control narratives. This will be done through the study of culture and film, an approach already employed by authors such as Cynthia Weber in her Book *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*.

Contrary to more materialistic schools of thought in international relations such as realism or liberalism, constructivism focuses on ideational factors, particularly those which are held by society, which in turn shape human identities. Thus, identity is socially constructed and mutable. Some prolific authors in constructivist theory include Alexander Wendt (*Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*), Noam Chomsky (*Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*) and Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*), the latter’s studies focusing on the construction of nationalist identity in particular. This theory is believed to be the best approach for this paper, as the identities that constructivism focuses on is displayed through cultural elements such as cinema.

V. Variables

This paper will principally focus around the rhetorical and cultural aspects, as well as ideology, soft power and propaganda. This paper will not focus on variables such as the economy or the foreign policy of specific states.

VI. Sources

The following research was conducted through specialised books and articles, as well as films which were used as a way to showcase examples throughout this investigation. Some consulted authors include Joseph Nye, Cynthia Weber, Edward Bernays (*The Psychology of Public Relations*), Denise Youngblood (*Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005*) and Jason Stanley (*How Propaganda Works*).

FIRST CHAPTER. PROPAGANDA AND ITS ELEMENTS

In the first section of our investigation, we will first have to define and discuss the forces that were at play during the Cold War, which are the main underlying themes that our discussion intends to deal with. Firstly, we will discuss the nature of ideology, where it comes from, and how it manifests in the actions of states and their governments. Next, we analyse how the desire to propagate ideology and to accrue power results in the inception of nationalism and how states subsequently act pursuant to nationalistic ideals. Third, we will study how these three previously discussed concepts shape and inform the creation of propaganda. Lastly, we will discuss the nature of power in international relations, and how ideology characterises the perception of power on the international stage.

I. Propaganda and its psychology

Of all the elements that we discuss here, propaganda is easily the most complex. The mere mention of the term in casual conversations nowadays conjures up a wide-ranging variety of thoughts and emotions in people's minds, and a simple definition of the term, –disseminating information, be it true or false, to influence public opinion¹– leaves any discussion of the topic feeling far from complete. Far from understanding what propaganda is, it is infinitely more important for our discussion to understand how propaganda works, and what the intent is for the institutions that use it.

In his work *La propagande politique*, French author Jean-Marie Domenach argues that “political propaganda became one of the dominant phenomena of the 20th century, maintaining that it was a crucial instrument in the success of authoritarian regimes all over Europe, including fascist Germany and Soviet Russia”².

We can almost conceive propaganda as a way for state governments to advertise their ideas and instil a certain way of thinking. One could even say that propaganda can in many cases be equated to advertising, in the way that both media aim to push the interests of governments and institutions, and the companies selling a product respectively.

There are obviously some important distinctions to be made between the two. According to Domenach, “propaganda [...] differs from advertising in that it has a political rather than a commercial purpose: the needs or preferences generated by advertising product, whereas propaganda suggests or imposes beliefs and reflexes that often change behaviour, the psyche and even religious or philosophical convictions. Propaganda is therefore able to influence the fundamental attitudes of mankind”³. Nevertheless, just because propaganda and advertising have two different fundamental intentions, this does not mean that the two cannot work to complement each other. Both World Wars were a prime example, particularly in the United States, of how advertising was used in tandem to promote a company's commercial interests

¹ “Propaganda.” Encyclopædia Britannica, August 27, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/propaganda>. Accessed 9 September 2024.

² Jean Marie Domenach, *La Propagande Politique* (Paris: PUF, 1979), p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

while simultaneously pushing the militaristic messages with which to cater to the sensibilities of young Americans who were eligible for conscription⁴⁵.

Regarding the sources of propaganda, three distinctions are made depending on how clear one can discern the origin of this propaganda categorised into the so-called colours of propaganda. A first category, white propaganda, refers to propaganda in which the source is not only obvious, but it does not try to hide its origins. The public will often know that is being targeted and that attempts are being made to influence their actions or their behaviour⁶.

Grey propaganda, on the other hand, is considerably less overt. While in white propaganda the attributed promoter and the actual promoter are one and the same, grey propaganda often does not attribute a direct source; or at the very least, is substantially less forthright about it. Grey propaganda can roughly be defined as the “semiofficial [*sic*] amplification of a government’s voice”, as Codevilla and Seabury describe it⁷. The last group to cover is the type of propaganda in which the real promoter is not only hidden, but actively trying to deceive the targeted population into thinking that the promoter is someone else. Promoters will often rely on false claims and misinformation to redirect focus, typically to a rival group or institution. An early and infamous example of black propaganda is the anti-Semitic piece known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabricated Russian text of unknown authorship which supposedly describes a detailed plan for Jewish world domination⁸

Colour of propaganda	Attributed promoter	Actual promoter
White	Explicitly named	Identical to attributed promoter
Grey	Implicit or not mentioned	Usually, but not always, identical to attributed promoter
Black	Explicitly named	Different from attributed promoter

Figure 1. Visualisation of subjects in different colours of propaganda. Source: own work.

Neil Postman alternatively postulates that we can divide propaganda into two major groups. Quoting English author Aldous Huxley, Postman asserts that we can distinguish between “propaganda in [favour] of action that is consonant with the enlightened self-interest of those who make it and those to whom it is addressed, and nonrational propaganda that is not consonant with anybody's enlightened self-interest, but is dictated by, and appeals to, passion”⁹. In the frame of a discussion surrounding an international political power struggle such as the Cold War, which spanned over four decades and spread across all continents on this planet, it is more pertinent to focus on the latter kind, as it will become clear that states rarely appeal to a collective’s rationale when trying to get a political statement across.

⁴Daniel Pope. “The Advertising Industry and World War I.” *The Public Historian* 2, no. 3 (1980): p. 4. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3376987>.

⁵ Mia Sostaric. “The American Wartime Propaganda During World War II: How Comic Books Sold the War.” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 38, no. 1 (2019): p. 43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26926687>.

⁶ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973): p. 16.

⁷ Angelo Codevilla and Paul Seabury, *War: Ends and Means* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, Inc, 2006): p. 151.

⁸ Michael Hagemester. “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Between History and Fiction.” *New German Critique*, no. 103 (2008): p. 84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27669221>.

⁹ Neil Postman. “PROPAGANDA.” *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 36, no. 2 (1979): p. 128. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42575397>.

In a similar line to that of Postman and Huxley, William Biddle states that propaganda “relies less upon techniques which help the individual to come into intelligent control of his conduct, and more on techniques which induce the individual to follow non-rational emotional drives”¹⁰. Biddle’s model states the four basic principles that propaganda tends to follow: “(1) rely on emotions, never argue; (2) cast propaganda into the pattern of ‘we’ versus an ‘enemy’; (3) reach groups as well as individuals; (4) hide the propagandist as much as possible”¹¹.

A similar proposition is argued by United States academics Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, the state propaganda model possesses three fundamental purposes. Firstly, it intends to legitimise the ideology of the institution that disseminates it, be it a state, a community or a country or ethnic group. Second, it seeks to discredit or delegitimise a group that has been positioned as a rival e.g. the Soviet Union for the United States during the Cold War, or the Jewish people in Nazi Germany. Finally, propaganda looks to mobilise the population it is targeting. This can mean resorting to political action, like the Communist rallying cry “Workers of the world, unite!”; assisting the source of the propaganda with a specific goal, like in military conscription propaganda; or even to target and harm a specific part of the population like, to use an earlier example, the calls on attacking the Jewish people in Germany¹².

Propaganda intends, above all else, to persuade a population¹³ A large part of why propaganda, in particular that of the non-rational kind is so effective is because most people are rarely aware of the real reasons that motivate their actions¹⁴. Furthermore, propaganda is in any case much more effective on groups than it is on individuals, what Huxley describes as ‘herd poisoning’¹⁵. When combined with the strong emotional responses that it usually elicits, Postman suggests propaganda concludes in societies responding passionately and angrily in a much more normalised way¹⁶. This element of human psychology combined with a simple *modus operandi* makes propaganda an attractive tool to promote and disseminate ideas to the public without having to explicitly acknowledge the intention behind it.

II. Ideology and propaganda

If our previous section sought to understand what the intent of propaganda is, in this section we will look to analyse the main object of the propaganda machine. Referring back to the earlier definition of propaganda, we are not just interested in the fact that propaganda sets out to influence the public’s beliefs and opinions; but also, on what specific beliefs and opinions it seeks to change.

1. Ideology in society

Ideology makes up an immense part of the discussions surrounding several academic fields, from philosophy to sociology to international politics: Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek maintains that ideology is an object so vast and all-encompassing that it transcends

¹⁰ William W. Biddle, “A Psychological Definition of Propaganda,” *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 26, no. 3 (October 1931): Abstract. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0074944>.

¹¹ Postman (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 130

¹² Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

¹³ Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2012).

¹⁴ Edward L. Bernays. “The Psychology of Public Relations” in *Propaganda* (New York: Ig, 1928).

¹⁵ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World, Revisited* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2010).

¹⁶ Postman (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 130.

perception and intelligibility¹⁷. The reasons for the increased interest in the field of social science, according to David M. Minar, are two: first, the prolonged history of the concept which “has been used long enough and frequently enough to make a habit of itself”; and second, that ideology “constitutes a particularly effective tool for dealing with phenomena and relationships at certain levels of political behaviour that are important but difficult to reach”¹⁸.

Karl Marx is amongst the most influential thinkers on the concept of ideology, even if studies on ideology can be found on authors as early as Francis Bacon¹⁹. To Marx, ideology pertains less so to the idea of discovering truth and is more interested in designating a quality of thought, particularly in social settings, that is illusory or has been distorted²⁰.

On the topic of Marx, it would furthermore be relevant to define communism as it pertains to ideology, particularly since it plays a significant part in the ideological battle of the Cold War, the Soviet Union campaigning to legitimise communism, while the United States sought to discredit it. Shortly explained, communism advocates for a society devoid of a ruling class, in which all people have an equitable domain over social and economic means of production. While a capitalist society opposed by Marx and his ideological current celebrates private property and a possibility to achieve power through means of economic wealth, communism denounces it as communist society would entail the absence of private property and social classes, and ultimately money and the nation state²¹.

Mullins however disputes Marx’s conception of ideology. He states: “as [Marx] views ideology, it encompasses all the mental misconceptions that constitute the failure of individuals to understand their alienated relationship to their surroundings and the significance of that relationship within the whole development of history”²². In other words, Marx’s conception of ideology fails to consider how outside forces can, as previously mentioned, take advantage of people’s irrationality to hijack their preconceived notions. A person’s misconstrued view of the world will unlikely just come from alienation; on the contrary, people’s beliefs are shaped by the political and social context in which they live, and it would be a mistake to insinuate that people are irrational by disposition, and are not so in part through the influence of social and political forces that want to influence their way of thinking.

Jason Stanley argues that propaganda’s effectiveness depends on the existence of “flawed ideology”. According to him, a consistent worry in the context of democratic societies is that problematic ideologies that can threaten a democratic foundation are seemingly inevitable²³. This argument is particularly relevant in the context of our discussion, and not exclusively because of what it implies of the Soviet Union and its unabashedly undemocratic defence of communist ideology: when it comes to the discussion surrounding the United States’ glorification of free-market capitalism and militaristic imperialism it becomes rather apparent

¹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

¹⁸ David M. Minar, “Ideology and Political Behavior.” *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 4 (1961): p. 35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2108991>.

¹⁹ Hans Barth, *Wahrheit und Ideologie*, 2nd ed., enlarged (Zurich: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1961).

²⁰ Mullins, Willard A. “On the Concept of Ideology in Political Science.” *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 2 (1972): p. 505. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1957794>.

²¹ Nikolai Bukharin and Yevgeni Preobazhenski. "Administration in the communist system". *The ABC of Communism*. Translated by Cedar Paul and Eden Paul. (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1922).

²² Mullins (1972), *op. cit.*, p. 507.

²³ Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

that, just because a state's ideology is not inherently authoritarian, it does not mean that it is, according to Stanley's definition, not problematic²⁴.

Even in democratic societies states dispose of complex and intricately though out machinery to disseminate their ideology to the public; what Louis Althusser calls the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)²⁵. Through multiple institutions, some more visible than others, states and their institutions instil upon the public, sometimes not even consciously²⁶, what beliefs and opinions they should maintain over a certain phenomenon. Althusser makes a contrast with the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) i.e. the military, the police, the prison industrial complexes etc. Whereas the RSAs are centralised and unitary, ISAs are multiple and scattered. The crucial difference, however, both according to Althusser and being that which is most relevant to our study is the following: "the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'"²⁷. This however does not imply that the RSA has no ideology of its own; unambiguously it does, only that it seeks to implement it through violent means, while the ISAs use more subtle means.

The aforementioned lack of rationality is relevant here in the sense that emotions play a strong role in propaganda and ideology: when a person in a collective is seen as displaying the wrong emotion towards a piece of information, they are more likely to be seen as unwelcome in the community of which they are a part²⁸. This dynamic further serves to isolate anyone who is firmly convinced that a *status quo* opinion is wrong or should be put into doubt. Especially in the context of authoritarian political systems, ideology seeks to produce insecurity in the people that it tries to control²⁹, so any conviction that may put the ISA's ideology into question has the potential to be seen as an outside influence that can threaten a system³⁰.

2. Ideology in international relations

International politics are, of course, not unacquainted with the influence of ideology. Ideology in international relations manifests through currents of thought that contemplate to explain the *raison d'être* of the order of international politics. The three main schools of thought in international relations as they pertain to the object of this discussion are realism, idealism and constructivism.

In realist ideology, nation states exist in a state of anarchy in which they struggle for domination over each other in a society that is devoid of any central authority to control it. In realism, the main drive for a nation is a struggle and quest for power. Richard Devetak explains how realism "centres on states as rational primary actors navigating a system shaped by power politics, national interest, and a pursuit of security and self-preservation"³¹.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)", trans. by Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Press, 1971), p. 150.

²⁶ Abigail Thorne, *Jordan Peterson's Ideology*, essay in video form (Youtube, 9 April 2021). 23:00 to 23:58, <https://youtu.be/m81q-ZkfBm0?si=XIFzGoSntvLdxRWY>. Accessed 12 September 2024.

²⁷ Althusser (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 141.

²⁸ Sara Ahmed. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. NED-New edition, 2. (Edinburgh University Press, 2014): p. 9.

²⁹ Cassinelli, C. W. "Totalitarianism, Ideology, and Propaganda." *The Journal of Politics* 22, no. 1 (1960): p. 70.

³⁰ Andrew J. Falk. *Upstaging the Cold War: American Dissent and Cultural Diplomacy, 1940-1960*. (University of Massachusetts Press, 2010): p. 23.

³¹ Devetak, Richard. *An introduction to international relations*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): p. 38.

Idealism, on the other hand, believes that nation states are part of an international society which promotes cooperation as the principal interest of a nation. Furthermore, nation states under idealism believe that the most effective way to conduct foreign relations is to replicate a nation's principles under domestic policy abroad³².

Finally, and most relevantly, constructivism maintains that the society in which nations exist is very largely focused on behavioural factors. Whereas the two previously mentioned ideologies have a much more rigid, innate understanding of what an international society looks like, constructivism claims that this state of international society is changeable based on the ideation and conduct of the states that inhabit it³³. Constructivism is particularly relevant to the concept of ideology as it asserts that states' own ideas can change international society into that which they want it to become. We can argue that propaganda makes explicit what ideology keeps under the surface. Ideology is in many instances unconscious, but at the same time there is a defined interest in stirring the opinions of a population towards a certain idea. As Bernays states, "[g]roup adherence is essential in changing the attitudes of the public and we repeat constantly our beliefs and habits until they become a cumulative retrogressive force."³⁴. Propaganda, at the end of the day, becomes solely a medium through which this force can be implemented.

III. Nationalism and ideology

We have stated that ideology is the main object that propaganda intends to spread. In the context of Cold War propaganda, however, it is of interest to us to be a little bit more specific as to the particular ideologies that are at play. The *tête-à-tête* between the United States and the Soviet Union was on the surface surrounding the ideologies that the two giants of the twentieth century sought to defend –capitalism and communism respectively. However, even when taking these economic systems into account, there is still a much larger cause regarding the perceived power of the nation that these two powers were interested in exalting. The defence of communism and capitalism were, at its most subtle, a façade, and at its most obvious, a preface for the nationalistic ideals of these two nations, which they hoped to promote both domestically and abroad.

Nationalism, insofar as it endeavours to rally the citizens of a nation in order to pursue the interests of the latter, requires to an extent the fabrication of a myth for both the nation that looks for protection, as well as the outside forces that want to “destroy” the nation. With respect to this Fuchs remarks that “[i]n nationalist ideology, a national group is fetishised. It is categorically distinguished from outsiders, enemies, immigrants, refugees, etc. who are seen as not belonging to the nation”³⁵.

Benedict Anderson is a prolific proponent of this idea, which he refers to as “imagined communities” in his book of the same name³⁶. According to Anderson, communities proposed

³² Andrew Moravcsik. “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics.” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): pp. 513–53. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2703498>.

³³ Alexander Wendt. “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics.” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): p. 394. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706858>.

³⁴ Edward L. Bernays. “Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and The How.” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): p. 959. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2765989>.

³⁵ Christian Fuchs. “Nationalism, Communication, Ideology.” In *Communication and Capitalism: A Critical Theory*, 15. (University of Westminster Press, 2020): p. 235. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv12fw7t5.14>.

³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

by nationalism are imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. These communities are also “limited” insofar as all of these have boundaries in which they end, these boundaries being, namely, other nations; and “sovereign” due to the historical context in which the concepts of nationalism and the nation are born, namely the Enlightenment era, in which the concept of the sovereign nation state was essentially equated to that of the nation as a community³⁷.

This is not to imply, however, that nationalism is created out of thin air. Nations have their own ethnicities, history, religion and culture that they have created and kept alive by virtue of them existing. State nationalism, likewise, does not exist in a plain of existence isolated from the lives of the people whose thinking it influences. As Eric Hobsbawm humorously puts it, “[t]he Irish were not nationalists because they believed in leprechauns”³⁸. What happens in many cases is that nationalism often takes said formed identity and weaponises it in favour of the uses of the state³⁹, culture often being used as an example of what nationalism looks to defend. Hobsbawm explains that, according to nationalist ideology, “[s]ome nations – the large, the ‘advanced’, the established, including certainly the ideologist’s own – were destined by history to prevail or [...] to be victors in the struggle for existence; others were not”⁴⁰

To put it a different way, we can interpret Anderson’s analysis as nationalism being something constructed. The State Apparatus takes the shared historical and cultural experiences that the people in a state live and they turn it into a collective ideology that the members of a nation might see themselves represented in, even if it does not necessarily represent them or it goes against their own interests.

IV. Power as an end-goal of propaganda

To conclude this chapter, it is of interest to determine what ties the previously mentioned concepts together. Power is the dynamic that motivates a large part of action in international relations and is thus far from absent in the discussion surrounding propaganda. Though the concept and nature of power in international relations will be more at length discussed in the next chapter, it is still relevant to discuss the relationship between power and propaganda.

Power in international politics, according to Barnett and Duvall, is expressed either through interaction or through constitution. In the former, “power works through behavioral relations or interactions, which, in turn, affect the ability of others to control the circumstances of their existence [, becoming] an attribute that an actor possesses and may use knowingly as a resource to shape the actions or conditions of action of others”⁴¹. As for constitution, they argue that “power works through social relations that analytically precede the social or subject positions of actors and that constitute them as social beings with their respective capacities and interests. Constitutive relations cannot be reduced to the attributes, actions, or interactions of

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

³⁸ Hobsbawm, Eric J. *On Nationalism*. (London: Little, Brown, 2021), pp. 89–123.

³⁹ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

⁴⁰ Hobsbawm (2021), *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁴¹ Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, ‘Power in International Politics.’ *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): p. 39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877878>.

pregiven actors [...] In other words, constitutive arguments examine how particular social relations are responsible for producing particular kinds of actors”⁴².

The use of propaganda as an artifice for power fits right in with the former expression. Propaganda can act both as a way to manifest the power of a nation or state, as well as a way in which a state searches to accrue power over the people who are subjected to their propaganda⁴³. This speaks substantially to the argument of power politics being a socially constructed force, argued for by the likes of Alexander Wendt. As he puts it, “it is through reciprocal interaction, in other words, that we create and instantiate the relatively enduring social structures in terms of which we define our identities and interests”⁴⁴. This social construction is that which lays the ground out of which nationalism emerges, and which states later look to exploit through the use of propaganda.

When it comes to film specifically used as propaganda, one also has to focus on the ways in which states employ non-forceful means, most notably culture, as a way to make themselves more appealing and attractive –what Joseph Nye coined as ‘soft power’⁴⁵. The dichotomy of domination versus attraction in power gives way to the distinction made by Nye and others, to distinguish between ‘hard’ power or coercion; and ‘soft’ power, or co-option or attraction). According to Nye, the post-Cold War era of international politics has been marked by a shift in what constitutes a nation’s power. He writes,

“The definition of power is losing its emphasis on military force and conquest that marked earlier eras. The factors of technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population, and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important.”⁴⁶

While no one can deny the doors that a strong military can have on a nation’s capacity to influence foreign policy, the ability to build partnerships and alliances that cement trust and better a nation’s reputation has also proved crucial.

V. Closing remarks

Though its aims are quite universally acknowledged, there are several different ways that we can categorise propaganda, be it by the clarity of its source of origin, which academic circles tend to categorise into the colours white, grey and black; or be it by the intention of the response it is meant to cause, either rational or irrational.

Propaganda is likewise the main instrument by which ideology is disseminated, a concept that is encompassing to the point that it is able to touch almost every academic field that seeks to understand human behaviour. International politics are, as a result, not any different. In our context, ideology is used to explain the reasons behind the state of the international order, which might be natural or fabricated depending on what ideology is asked about it. Nationalism is also a relevant ideology to this discussion, as it is that through which

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴³ James Chapman. “Review of *The Power of Propaganda*”, by Paul Lashmar, James Oliver, Graham Roberts, Aviel Roshwald, Richard Stites, and Richard Taylor. *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 4 (2000): p. 679. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/261067>.

⁴⁴ Wendt (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 406.

⁴⁵ Joseph S. Nye. “Soft Power.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): p. 153.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

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states legitimise their own superiority while rejecting any that of others, especially states that are seen as rivals or enemies.

SECOND CHAPTER. SOFT POWER AND SMART POWER

Having explained the main objects of our study, it is also necessary to understand the principal dynamic at play in international relations, as it will play an important part in the framing of the relationship between the United States and the USSR, and their interactions. In this chapter we will be discussing the dynamics of power in international relations; specifically on soft power and smart power –the two most applicable variants in the context of propaganda– and we will also introduce the notion of film and its role in soft power.

I. The construction of power in International Relations

To open this chapter, it is perhaps important to understand that the field of international relations typically uses a private definition when referring to the word power. While the general understanding of the word in a sociopolitical context might be something along the lines of the capability of producing effects that might influence the actions and beliefs of others, power in international relations requires adding a bit more nuance to this definition⁴⁷.

1. Morgenthau's realism and the struggle for power

Hans Morgenthau is perhaps the foremost expert on the subject of power as a source of political will in states on the international level⁴⁸. Also a central figure in the realist school of thought in international relations, this current can be found in his magnum opus, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. According to Morgenthau, “whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim. Statesmen and peoples may ultimately seek freedom, security, prosperity or power itself [...] But whenever they strive to realize their goal by means of international politics they do so by striving for power”⁴⁹.

Morgenthau furthermore lifts heavily from the works of Max Weber: like the German intellectual before him, Morgenthau explains that ‘the Political’ as Weber describes it, is in its essence a struggle for power, regarding morality as a concept that stays relegated to the human soul and which cannot be extrapolated to any other area of contemporary society⁵⁰. As Pichler writes, “by defining the struggle for power as a dynamic a priori and fundamental to political and social reality, Morgenthau finds a way to resolve the problem of [moral] objectivity in the analysis of social reality⁵¹”. Simply put, the reduction of the dynamics of international politics to an amoral makes the struggle for power easier to understand. Since states further look to maximise their power, international relations can thus be understood as a group of entities (i.e. states) trying to exert domination over others⁵².

⁴⁷ Barnet and Duvall (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁴⁸ K. J. Holsti, “The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations.” *Background* 7, no. 4 (1964): p. 183. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013644>.

⁴⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knop, 1948), p.14.

⁵⁰ Morgenthau, „Kann in unserer Zeit eine objektive Moralordnung aufgestellt werden?“, unpublished ms., Geneva, 1937, p. 114, quoted in Hans-Karl Pichler “The Godfathers of ‘Truth’: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics.” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): p. 191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097517>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵² Morgenthau (1948), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Morgenthau's conception of power has however not been without its detractors. This essentially self-interested view of international politics creates, in many ways, an excessively antagonistic framing that seems to leave no space for cooperation between states and their governments.

2. Idealism and power

Many of Morgenthau's critics argue that he fails to submit his conception of power to further examination, leaving a lot of ambiguity in his work. Holsti addresses this point very succinctly:

“[Morgenthau] implies, for example, that power is also a major goal of policy or even a determining motive of any political action. Elsewhere, however, he suggests that power is a relationship and a means to an end. Because of this ambiguity, we do not know what the concept explains or fails to explain in international politics. Does the term "struggle for power" shed light on the many processes that go on within an international system? The word "struggle" certainly does not tell us much about the relations between Norway and Sweden or between Canada and the United States. Does the term "power," defined as the immediate goal of all governments, explain the major external objectives of Nicaragua or Chad or Switzerland?”⁵³.

Amongst his contemporaries, there was also an opposition to the idea that all international politics revolved around power, one of the main proponents to this idea being former United States President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was much more unwelcoming to the idea of 'power politics' as the only way in which a state could be able to conduct itself. In Wilson's idealism, states have a very conscious choice they can make, between practicing power politics and carrying out foreign relations through other means⁵⁴. Furthermore, Wilson and his supporters assume that how states conduct their domestic affairs is often reflected in how foreign relations are conducted.

Wilson himself can be seen as a prime example of this ideal in action. Wilson had to reconcile his desire to reform international power politics with his growing fear of Germany's power during the course of World War I⁵⁵. Though a believer in international peace, Wilson believed that peace could only be achieved by designing an international liberal society, with the United States having a responsibility to export ideals of democracy and anti-imperialism⁵⁶.

Link describes Wilson as 'not only an idealist, but a crusading idealist'. According to him, "in international relations he did not give undue weight to material forces or base his policies upon the assumption that nations must always act selfishly. At times he did seem to give the appearance of believing that he was a kind of messiah divinely appointed to deliver Europe from the cruel tyranny of history"⁵⁷.

⁵³ Holsti (1964), *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁵⁵ Ross Kennedy. "A Net of Intrigue and Selfish Rivalry": Woodrow Wilson and Power Politics During World War I." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 159, no. 2 (2015): p. 157 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24640212>.

⁵⁶ N. Gordon Levin Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). Cited in Martin Ruhaak. "Wilsonian Ideology and Revolution: U.S. Foreign Policy and Intervention in Bolshevik Russia." *EIU Historia* 13, no. 1 (2004): p. 70. <https://www.eiu.edu/historia/Ruhaak.pdf>

⁵⁷ Arthur S. Link. "The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson." *Journal of Presbyterian History* (1962-1985) 41, no. 1 (1963), p. 4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325905>.

The shortcomings of idealism seem evident. Though promising in theory, history has shown us that praxis and international societies can and do often get in the way of an attempt to better different aspects of other nations by imposing one's own values. To introduce a more recent example, the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya shows how the philosophy of power of Wilson and the like can have dismal consequences and cause more harm than good⁵⁸.

3. Anarchy is what states make of it: constructivism in power politics

Though foundational in the understanding of classical nation-state power politics, realism and idealism generally tend to be quite simplistic and ambiguous in their attempts to explain the dynamics of international politics.

If realism argues that power is obtained through conflict and a persistent struggle between nations to dominate each other in an international anarchy, idealism that power is a product of cooperation in an international society; no matter if this cooperation is accepted willingly or is imposed. Though both can at first glance be regarded as polar opposites of each other, the two prevalent ideologies regarding power in international politics have one thing in common: they both think of the state of international politics as something found *in natura*, its foundations unable to be shaped by the whims of human interaction. Scholars like Michael Barnett have argued that the treatment of power in international relations as “the exclusive province of realism” has left a lot of unanswered questions as to how the nature of power can and does become influenced by human behaviour⁵⁹.

To the assumption that realism makes of anarchy, constructivist theorists like Barnett or Wendt will ask “who decides what anarchy is?”⁶⁰. Wendt writes that “in contrast to the ‘economic’ theorizing that dominates mainstream systemic international relations scholarship, this involves a ‘sociological social psychological’ form of systemic theory in which identities and interests are the dependent variable”⁶¹. Simply put, idealism and realism in particular do not seem to recognise that, behind every move or decision taken that is able to influence global power dynamics are people, and these people are as well influenced by the society around them.

At the same time, however, constructivists argue that decisions in international politics are, firstly, not necessarily driven by power above all else; but secondly and most importantly, this first supposition is based on the fact that nations and their leaders are not necessarily tied to an innate and immutable international system. As Wendt states, “social threats are constructed, not natural”, and states can therefore decide what kind of international system they want to build⁶².

Anderson's conception of the nation as an imagined community, for example, has deep constructivist routes. Through the shaping of a social perception of national identity, nations create an image of a culture, a religion or an ethnicity that must be defended, a lot of the time even associating the system of government with the nationalist ideal⁶³. With this focus on

⁵⁸ Horace Campbell, *Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya: Lessons for Africa in the Forging of African Unity* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013).

⁵⁹ Barnett and Duvall (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁶⁰ Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

⁶¹ Wendt (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 394.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁶³ Anderson (1991), *op. cit.*, pp. 83–112.

national identity, constructivism in nationalism argues that states can control the narrative around what interests are most prevalent if we want to maintain this national identity.

This conception of power ends up being rather relevant in the discussion of propaganda. If social threats, including threats to the nation, can be constructed as Wendt assures, then what better way than diffusing propaganda to create an antagonistic view of a nation that appears to threaten one's own? Something else that warrants mentioning is that just because threats are socially as opposed to naturally constructed, this does not mean that these constructions are based in reality. Since propaganda often relies on flawed ideology, it often instrumentalises this in order to build an image of an international society it wants to influence⁶⁴.

II. Soft power: co-option versus coercion

A discussion in the effects of power dynamics in propaganda and film will nonetheless feel incomplete without acknowledging the ways in which power manifests in these media devices.

When discussing power on an international level the concept that most commonly comes to mind is that of military might and economic capacity. Though this is by no means immaterial to the showcase of power of a nation (nobody will look at the armies of the United States, China or Russia, or at the wealth of Germany and Japan and negate their power), it is in no way the singular form in which a nation can display its ability to influence others in the pursuit of their own interests.

While the aforementioned examples are those of what we could call exhibiting power through coercion—convincing another to do or not do using threats, though not necessarily violent :a refusal to give money for aid and/or investment can be a good example of this—, more relevant to our discussion is the ways in which nations can influence others through co-option, i.e. to subsume a target by sharing similar interests⁶⁵. It is for this reason that Nye believes that soft power has become an indispensable tool in the struggle to make other nations act in its own interest. In this he resources that give soft power to a country arise in large part from the way in which a country expresses its culture, in the examples set by its practice and policy, and in the way it carries out its relations with other countries⁶⁶.

Since our discussion surrounding propaganda in film has a temporal focus on the Cold War, we cannot leave out a concept tied to soft power that heavily emerged during this period, this being Public Diplomacy. Gilboa states that Public Diplomacy “became a more substantial area during the cold war, dominated by campaigns to garner support for the delicate balance of nuclear weapons and the ideological battle of the hearts and minds of people [...]”⁶⁷. Public diplomacy is a way to connect with foreign audiences and “capture their hearts or minds” in order to form a more appealing image⁶⁸.

⁶⁴ Stanley (2015), *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶⁵ “Co-Option,” Wikipedia, September 10, 2023. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Co-option>. Accessed 17 Sep 2024.

⁶⁶ Nye, “Soft Power and Public Diplomacy”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): p. 95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.

⁶⁷ Eytan Gilboa, “Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): p. 55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097994>.

⁶⁸ Gyorgy Szondi, “Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Difference.” Clingendael Institute, (2008): p. 6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05374>.

Nye argues that a country's soft power is generally obtained from of three sources: "[1] its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), [2] its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and [3] its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)". Thus, when a nation struggles to maintain its influence through its military hardware or monetary capabilities, it can pull draw from one or all of these three elements to attract both allies and opponents to their own interests. Let us use some examples to illustrate this.

In contemporary international politics, Japan can be used as an example of how a nation with a comparatively modest military, in particular next to its neighbours China and South Korea⁶⁹, has been able to market its culture with enormous success. By promoting cultural aspects such as manga, anime, tea ceremonies, flower arrangements and other elements of Japanese 'indigenous culture', as well as the language through institutions like the Japan Foundation, Japan strives to give the world an image of being a country that belongs in the universal realm of liberal democracy⁷⁰

Austria, on the other hand, exemplifies the practice of foreign policy as soft power. A neutral country since 1955, Austria has employed its neutrality as one of its primary foci for its foreign policy. In turn, its refusal to join military alliances or to allow foreign military operations within its territory has put a lot of trust in Austria as a political middle ground. The headquartering of organisations like the UN, OSCE, or OPEC in the country's capital city of Vienna has made the small central European country solidify itself as a safe and reliable political middle ground on the international stage, as well as help it distance itself from its past as having played a crucial part in the advances of the German Nazi regime^{71,72}.

Lastly, Sweden heavily relies on its values as a source of soft power. While its policy of neutrality has waned in recent years with its accession to NATO in early 2024, its positions on human rights, feminist foreign policy, sustainable development and environmental protection have solidified Sweden as a leading example in what values a nation wants to export. This has shown effective as many policies originating in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have been shown to influence multiple reforms in other nations⁷³.

It is thanks to the effectiveness that cultural diplomacy has transcended the temporal borders of the Cold War. Cultural diplomacy is arguable more present in current day than it ever has been thanks to the process of globalisation, encompassing areas as obvious as film and

⁶⁹ "2024 Military Strength Ranking." Global Firepower - World Military Strength. <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>. Accessed September 27, 2024.

⁷⁰ Alexander Bukh, "Revisiting Japan's Cultural Diplomacy: A Critique of the Agent-Level Approach to Japan's Soft Power." *Asian Perspective* 38, no. 3 (2014): p. 471. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43738099>.

⁷¹ Emil Brix, "Austrian Cultural and Public Diplomacy After the End of the Cold War." In *Austria's International Position after the End of the Cold War*, edited by Günter Bischof and Ferdinand Karlhofer, 22:95–107. University of New Orleans Press, 2013.

⁷² James J. Sheehan, "What Does It Mean To Be Neutral? Postwar Austria from a Comparative Perspective." In *Austria's International Position after the End of the Cold War*, edited by Bischof and Karlhofer, 22:121–40. University of New Orleans Press, 2013.

⁷³ Elise Carlson-Rainer, "Sweden Is a World Leader in Peace, Security, and Human rights." *World Affairs* 180, no. 4 (2017): 79–85. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26510627>.

literature, to areas as unconventional as yoga or acrobatics⁷⁴⁷⁵. Grincheva writes that with cultural diplomacy “has always been an expression of national cultures and traditions, playing a foundational role in establishing bridges across borders and bringing people together for a meaningful dialogue to nurture mutual trust and understanding”⁷⁶.

All this said, it must be pointed out that, though soft power has proven an effective tool for crafting foreign policy, it is not without limitations. Notably, other nations can develop a resistance to cultural efforts, particularly when the image of the promoter’s core political ideology has become too negative. When speaking of the Cold War, the Soviets’ patent rejection of the American ideal comes to mind, transcending even the most unassuming areas of the culture. For example, when speaking on the Soviet perception of art, Johnston writes: “the Soviet painters take a most pronounced stand against those bourgeois artists of Western Europe and America whose pathological concoctions stand for the art of their decaying societies”⁷⁷; but so does the current of anti-Americanism that was ubiquitous in Cuba following the appointment of Fidel Castro, whose anti-Americanism aimed to abolish all social configurations linked to U.S. influence.⁷⁸

For a more recent example, China has become a prime example of failure of soft power, particularly amongst its Asian neighbours. This has had very bad consequences, as nations like the Philippines and South Korea, where China has a comparatively big cultural presence, have reacted with imposing policies that go directly against the interests of Beijing⁷⁹. Similar things have been said about the EU’s so-called Eastern Partnership, whose success in implementing European soft power in post-Soviet Europe has been seen as mixed at its best⁸⁰.

III. Carrots and sticks: smart power and its use during the Cold War

Now that we have seen that there is no need for a nation to have an army or economic wealth to accrue power, the following question arises: is it not unrealistic to expect a nation to only use one of the two? After all, one can cite examples, such as the aforementioned United States, of nations that, along with economic and military power, have an unparalleled cultural attractive that give them a great advantage when selling their image to an international audience.

Joseph Nye answers this question with a concept that blends the tough hand of hard power with the attraction of soft power in what he calls ‘smart power’. Though a relatively new term, the sentiment of combining a strong military with an investment in alliances and

⁷⁴ Debidata Mahapatra. “From a latent to a ‘strong’ soft power? The evolution of India’s cultural diplomacy”. *Palgrave Commun* 2, no. 16091 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.91>

⁷⁵ Kuo Hsienwei and Kuo Chinfang. “Strategic Role of Taiwanese Acrobatics in the Cultural Diplomacy of the Republic of China Since the Cold War.” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 38 no. 15 (2011): 1594–1611. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.1999930>.

⁷⁶ Natalia Grincheva, “The Past and Future of Cultural Diplomacy.” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 30 no. 2 (2023): p. 180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2183949>.

⁷⁷ Gordon Johnston, “Revisiting the Cultural Cold War.” *Social History* 35, no. 3 (2010): p. 297. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27866662>.

⁷⁸ Alan McPherson, “Cuba, 1959: Revolutionary Anti-Americanism and U.S. Panic.” In *Yankee No!: Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations*, 38–76. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.)

⁷⁹ Zuri Linetsky, “China Can’t Catch a Break in Asian Public Opinion,” *Foreign Policy*, (2023). Accessed 16 October 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/28/china-soft-power-asia-culture-influence-korea-singapore/>

⁸⁰ Kristian L. Nielsen and Maili Vilson, “The Eastern Partnership – Soft Power Strategy or Policy Failure?”, Paper prepared for the EURINT International Conference, ‘The EU as a model of soft power in the Eastern Neighbourhood’, Iasi, Romania, 2013. <https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/European+Foreign+Affairs+Review/19.2/EERR2014012>

partnerships can be traced to much earlier times. The expression ‘carrots and sticks’ is used a lot in the context of smart power, in reference to 19th century caricatures of donkey races in which the losing jockey uses twigs and sticks to punish his steed, while the winner holds the butt end of a carrot⁸¹. A similar idiom, “Zuckerbrot und Peitsche”, translated to English as ‘pastry and whip’, can be found in the German language and can be found in texts as early as Otto von Bismarck’s. In strong opposition to Bismarck’s social policy, social democratic publicist Franz Mehring wrote, „*Sein Zuckerbrot verachten wir, seine Peitsche zerbrechen wir*“ (“we hate his carrot, and we break his stick”)⁸². In a more modern rendition, Nye writes that “if a state can set the agenda for others or shape their preferences, it can save a lot on carrots and sticks”⁸³. Ernest Wilson writes similarly:

“A country's capacity for creativity and innovation can trump its possession of armored divisions or aircraft carriers, and new hi-tech tools can greatly enhance the reach of military and nonmilitary influence. Armies and militaries remain important, but their relative role has changed radically, in terms both of how the military conducts warfare and in the mix of military to nonmilitary assets. The world of warfare has become more digital, networked, and flexible, and nonmilitary assets like communications have risen in the mix of instruments of state and power”⁸⁴

Smart power combines the techniques of coercion or co-option, but the definition in and of itself leaves some ambiguity regarding which of the two techniques should be used depending on the situation. The ability to discern when to use force and when to use attraction is what Nye calls ‘contextual intelligence’: “In foreign policy, contextual intelligence is the intuitive diagnostic skill that helps policymakers align tactics with objectives to create smart strategies”⁸⁵. Nye and others use this concept, for example, to criticize the policy misfire that former U.S. President George W. Bush’s foreign policy during his presidential administration: by overly relying on a neoconservative approach of militaristic intervention, with very little in the way of cooperation or multilateralism, the Bush era has widely been regarded as lacking in the United States’ history of foreign policy⁸⁶

To showcase an example of an instrument of smart power relevant to the historic period that we set out to discuss we can talk about two mass media outlets from the United States and the USSR that served as strategic tools during the Cold War.

The U.S.-owned radio service Voice of America (VOA) succeeded in its impressively long reach, being transmitted in twenty-four different languages in over fifty different countries⁸⁷, a number that has only grown since the network’s inception in 1942. Its displays of military might alongside a large variety of music and talk shows, e.g. shows featuring African American jazz musicians, so called ‘jazz ambassadors’ revealed to listeners that the United

⁸¹ Edward P. Montague, *Narrative of the late expedition to the Dead Sea: From a diary by one of the party*. (Carey and Hart, 1849). p. 139.

⁸² Nils Freytag, *Zum Stand der Bismarckforschung*. In Dominik Petzold, *Das „lange“ 19. Jahrhundert. Alte Fragen und neue Perspektiven* (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2007.)

⁸³ Joseph S. Nye, “Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power.” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): p. 160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20699631>.

⁸⁴ Ernest J. Wilson, “Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): p. 114. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097997>.

⁸⁵ Nye (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁸⁶ Iskren Ivanov, “Reshaping U.S. Smart Power: Towards a Post-Pandemic Security Architecture.” *Journal of Strategic Security* 13, no. 3 (2020): p. 47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26936545>.

⁸⁷ Leonard Carlton, “Voice of America: The Overseas Radio Bureau.” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1943): p. 46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745320>.

States was a force to be reckoned with, while at the same time presenting the American ideal of freedom and promoting it⁸⁸. Pravda, on the other hand, was significantly more focused on the spread of communist ideology as well as serving as a much more overt mouthpiece for the Soviet government. At the same time that it sought to put out messages for communists to come together and to unite with one another, it also served as “a way to purify the image of the Soviet Union by justifying their more forceful foreign policy decisions”⁸⁹.

But smart power does not only appear in times of peace. Armed conflicts during the Cold War served as opportunities for the two bipolar powers to transform sympathy towards their cause into military might. The United States, for example, was successful in turning public opinion massively against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan through tactics such as the mass boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, which worsened the image of the USSR to a point that it even made them look weak by comparison⁹⁰. In a more subdued manner and less successfully, though with a similar objective, the Soviet Union tried similar tactics during the Vietnam War during the 1970s, offering both propaganda support and military assistance to their Viet Cong allies setting out to counter US influence in the region⁹¹.

IV. Popular culture as a tool for soft power

While we have previously discussed the resources that give nations the ability to yield soft power, to close this chapter we would like to investigate what material assets these resources originate from. With respect to the power of culture, Carbó-Catalan and Roig Sanz write,

“Culture is important in domestic and foreign policy, as a shared culture can create a strong sense of community. It can also be used to consolidate a particular community or shape its image on the international stage. It is of paramount importance to recognise the role of cultural practices and the importance of historicising cultural relations, intellectual collaboration and cultural diplomacy to better understand the changing dynamics of power.”⁹²

As one of the three resources of soft power, culture is undeniably influential in shaping a state’s image when promoted abroad. The term ‘cultural diplomacy’ is utilised a lot in this context to refer to a country’s culture being able to play a role in defining a state’s foreign policy. Effective cultural diplomacy initiatives can “be wholly original, or they can build on extant programs, exhibitions, or performances; they can be sponsored by the government or by the private sector. Most important, though, is that they resonate with the local population. Sometimes a positive impact is predictable, other times not”⁹³.

There is no arguing, for example, that the United States has its fair share of soft power, with it its stronghold on global popular culture through its entertainment industries in

⁸⁸ James E. Dillard, “All That Jazz: CIA, Voice of America, and Jazz Diplomacy in the Early Cold War Years, 1955-1965.” *American Intelligence Journal* 30, no. 2 (2012): p. 42. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26202013>.

⁸⁹ “Pravda Article Justifying Intervention in Czechoslovakia.” *International Legal Materials* 7, no. 6 (1968): pp. 1323–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20690434>.

⁹⁰ Robert Kornfeld, “Afghanistan: Reflections on the Invasion.” *Harvard International Review* 3, no. 6 (1981): p. 10. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42763658>.

⁹¹ Ilya V. Gaiduk, “Soviet Policy towards US Participation in the Vietnam War.” *History* 81, no. 261 (1996): p. 43. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24422549>.

⁹² Diana Roig Sanz and Elisabet Carbó-Catalan, *Culture as Soft Power Bridging Cultural Relations, Intellectual Cooperation, and Cultural Diplomacy* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022): p. 12

⁹³ Cynthia P. Schneider, “Cultural Diplomacy: Hard to Define, but You’d Know It If You Saw It.” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2006): p. 194. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24590653>.

Hollywood and elsewhere, even if this becomes, at the end of the day, a tool to solidify their already colossal military and economic strength. Cynthia Schneider describes how literature, film and music has played a significant part in shaping relations between the United States and diverse countries across the Asian continent, from Iraq to India⁹⁴. She cites an example of how the export of hip-hop from the United States to the Middle East became so popular that it wound up warranting an entire Wikipedia page for the genre described as Arab hip-hop⁹⁵. The jazz musicians that frequented live shows on Voice of America (see *supra*, footn. 78) are another remarkable example of this.

Sports are as well a powerful way to give a positive image to a country. When talking specifically about sports as a means of soft power, H. E. Næss purports that

“[T]he movements induced by soft power do not necessarily change in the same way as with hard power. Often, actors compete on the same ranking criteria in terms of ideological promotion, nation branding and business opportunities by arguing that their country—as evidenced by a mega-sport event—is a more attractive partner than others. Although soft power contests might be seen as explicit in sport, where the culture war metaphor has been used to describe the tension between Europe/US, China, the Middle East and Russia, the mechanisms are more diverse than with hard power strides.”⁹⁶

Another reason why sports are such an effective tool for this is because of the personal factor of many sport stars and sporting events. We can cite examples such as Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic or Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt, or having a country’s city become a host for the Olympic games⁹⁷. Sports personalities and sporting events are often used by their home countries as a point of pride, and as promoters of their national identity.

V. Closing remarks

Different schools of thought in international relations have different ideas of what the nature of power is and where it comes from. While realism and idealism are largely focused with an immutable and unchanged world order, constructivism maintains that it is the people in control of states and their ideational factors who shape power.

Furthermore, while the idea of military might is very closely associated with the idea of power in a state, it is not the only way that it can showcase it. Soft power, by relying on attracting allies instead of threatening enemies can not only be helpful in an era in which military resources are less of a direct indicator on power, but sometimes even be the sole tool by which a state is able to exert its influence.

Of course, this does not mean it has to be one or the other. Smart power combines the coercion of hard power with the attraction of soft power to create a middle ground in which states can use their foreign policy to punish and reward in the measure that they see fit. Popular culture in particular, including but not limited to music, cinema, art and sport serve as a potent source for nations to build an image that they can export with the aim of making themselves seem more appealing.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁹⁶ Hans Erink Næss, “A figurational approach to soft power and sport events. The case of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™”. *Front. Sports Act. Living* 5 (2023): p. 4. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2023.1142878>

⁹⁷ Tom Horan, “How Jamaica Conquered the World,” *The Guardian*, August 5, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/05/how-jamaica-conquered-the-world>. Accessed 30 Sep 2024.

THIRD CHAPTER. SOFT POWER IN THE COLD WAR

After laying out the theoretical framework under which our discussion falls, we will continue by using the next and final two chapters to examine how propaganda and soft power were used in tandem by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (years 1947-1991). In this first chapter we will examine the use of soft power more broadly, taking a look at how both nations used their cultural exports to legitimise the ideologies of capitalism and communism. First, we will describe the sociopolitical context that lied under the relation between the two states. Next, we will compare how the USSR and the USA employed soft power. Lastly, we will introduce the use of film as a tool for soft power, so that we may analyse some case studies in the next chapter

I. US-USSR relations before and during the fall of the Iron Curtain

World War II caused a landmark shift in international politics. The desire of Germany, Italy, and Japan to undo the global distribution of power following World War I was not something that could be done through small moves or at the expense of smaller regimes –such as Czechoslovakia– or by weakening already feeble regimes like the Soviet Union⁹⁸. To say that this attempt proved a failure would be an understatement: Hitler accomplished the same result for which he had reproached the leaders of Imperial Germany, bringing Britain, the United States and Russia together once more, the latter of whose leadership was hoping to remain neutral in this conflict⁹⁹.

It must however be remarked that this brief period of allyship between the United States and the Soviet Union constitutes a true anomaly in the perpetually confrontational relationship that the two have historically maintained. There is often an erroneous assumption in Western public consciousness that ideological warfare between America and Russia is exclusively contained to the years of the Cold War when this could not be further from the truth. So long as the two countries have simultaneously existed there has been efforts from both sides to vilify the other, while at the same time reaffirming that their ideology –American capitalism and Soviet communism respectively– were not only desirable, but a preferential way of organising society.

Going back in time a few decades, instances dating back as far as the years of the Woodrow Wilson administration can be found of the United States perceiving Russia–and later the Soviet Union practically since its inception– as a threat to America. From a theoretical standpoint, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the consequent establishment of the USSR is widely considered to be the final nail in the coffin for Wilson’s commitment to liberal ideology¹⁰⁰. Liberalism offered the premise that democratic governments would not only be less likely to enter into war but would also be more inclined to cooperate with the United

⁹⁸ Gurian, Waldemar. “After World War II.” *The Review of Politics* 8, no. 1 (1946): p. 3.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1403969>.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁰⁰ Ruhaak (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 72.

States¹⁰¹. Thus, communism and an authoritarian Bolshevik regime posed a threat to both the U.S. and Wilson's interest¹⁰².

On the other side, anti-American sentiment had been imposed by Lenin's Soviet Union long before the beginnings of the Cold War. One very common tactic was painting domestic dissidents and enemies of the Bolshevik regime as shills who were either financed or even directly controlled by their capitalist opponents from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean¹⁰³. This tension and antagonization bled into the Cold War as both nations looked to legitimise the ideology that they defended. The expansion of communist systems into Eastern Europe was found to be threatening to many free-market liberal democracies in the West, particularly in the US which had attempted to secure its influence in the continent which had recently been ravaged by war through the implementation of programmes such as the Marshall plan¹⁰⁴.

Particularly during the 1950s, events such as the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the launch of Sputnik, the Berlin crisis of 1958 and in particular the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 caused tensions between the superpowers to become as high as they had ever been¹⁰⁵. The fear of retaliation from either party, particularly in a context in which the presence of nuclear weapons loomed over the conscience of every world leader, gave way to the policy referred to as 'détente', which sought to encourage peaceful coexistence between the USA and USSR in an attempt to de-escalate tensions between the two states¹⁰⁶.

Another theme indispensable to an understanding of the Cold War is the contrast between two clashing views of the world order: the "universalist" view, by which all nations shared a common interest in all world affairs; and the "sphere-of-influence" view by which each great power would be assured by the other great power that they would be able to maintain an acknowledged predominance in their own area of interest¹⁰⁷. While the universalist view assumed that national security would be maintained through an international organisation, while the sphere-of-influence focused more on the realist idea of balance of power i.e. the idea that for a state to guarantee its survival it may prevent other states from gaining too much power¹⁰⁸. Both states were much more obviously motivated by maintaining their sphere of influence than by maintaining an abstract ideal of peace.

Perhaps the strongest indicator of this was the creation of military alliances with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact, which the United States and the USSR respectively played a big role in, in no small part because they were a crucial tool in maintaining their sphere of influence. This combined with the so-called Truman and Brezhnev

¹⁰¹ Tony Smith. "Making the World Safe for Democracy in the American Century." *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2 (1999): p. 177. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24913737>.

¹⁰² Ruhaak (2004), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁰³ Grigorian, Sergo "Antanta." Red Avantgarde. <https://redavantgarde.com/en/collection/show-collection/131-antanta-.html>. Accessed October 29, 2024.

¹⁰⁴ FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1949, EASTERN EUROPE; THE SOVIET UNION, VOLUME V, S/S-NSC Files, Lot 63 D 351, NSC 58 Series, Report to the President by the National Security Council 1.

¹⁰⁵ H. W. Brands, "The World in a Word: The Rise and Fall of Détente." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1998): p. 46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41939430>.

¹⁰⁶ Brian White, "The Concept of Detente." *Review of International Studies* 7, no. 3 (1981): p. 168. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20096917>.

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, "Origins of the Cold War." *Foreign Affairs* 46, no. 1 (1967): p. 26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20039280>.

¹⁰⁸ A. F. Pollard, "The Balance of Power." *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1923): p. 54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3014464>.

doctrines, which encouraged members of said liaisons to be prepared to support their allies in case of attack set the stage for an international context based much more on competition and attempts to dominate than on cooperation between the parties.

This combination proved that a détente policy was not as fruitful as many would have hoped: this surface level attempt to avoid confrontation was only countered by the practice in foreign policy throughout the second half of last century. Countless proxy wars fought, among others, in Korea, Vietnam or Afghanistan gave the two superpowers a medium through which they could exhibit their military might, as well as adding partisan groups of strategically important states to their sphere of influence¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, the accumulation of nuclear arsenal, as well as their placement in strategic vantage points under a guise of preventing an aggression from the other side gave signs of an arms race akin to that which preceded the First World War, only much deadlier¹¹⁰.

This is to say that, although this study aims to focus on the way in which culture and policy combine to champion a state's ideology and glorify their position as a superpower, there was no shortage of ways in which the 'War' part of the Cold War took place. This political context marked the tempo to which the culture battle between the two nations was set.

II. The cultural battle for power

While there is no denying that there was an obvious confrontation in the parading of military and economic resources in both the United States and the Soviet Union, a large part of the confrontation between the countries remained subdued in nature. Joseph Nye maintains that the Cold War is unambiguously the time after which soft power became relevant as a power strategy¹¹¹. Nevertheless, it warrants interrogating whether there were examples of soft power tactics at play prior to the period to which Nye attributes it. The three sources of soft power, i.e. culture, values and foreign policy; can be argued to be very present in the ideological battle between the United States and the Soviet Union, though their methods varied.

To start off it is important to state that, of the three sources of soft power, foreign policy is, in this context, the one that merits the least amount of discussion. Even though there were source of foreign policy as a tool for soft power, the overwhelming focus of the two nations on military alliances and economic coercion, as well as the endless stream of proxy wars as mentioned before, showcases how foreign policy during the time of the Iron Curtain had a clearly much more hard power-oriented focus. It is therefore undeniable that the export of the countries' culture and values was unambiguously superior in both a quality and volume.

The United States was obviously interested in the depiction of communism as an imminent threat, not just to the democratic system upon which it prided itself so much; but also as being at odds with the long-championed ethos of the American Dream. This is not a new idea. Both the glorification and the contestation of the American Dream as an ideal to aspire to has long been present in the cultural currents of the United States, with many forms of media

¹⁰⁹ Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The Strategy of War by Proxy." *Cooperation and Conflict* 19, no. 4 (1984): p. 266. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45083584>.

¹¹⁰ James G. Blight, Joseph S. Nye, and David A. Welch. "The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited." *Foreign Affairs* 66, no. 1 (1987): p. 181. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20043297>.

¹¹¹ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): p. 153. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>.

dating as far back as the beginning of the 20th century being in conversation with the ideal of the American Dream¹¹².

Sharma writes that “[f]or generations Americans have been conditioned to think of their country not only as the perfect realization of man's dream of freedom but also as the foremost champion of liberty and progress throughout the world”¹¹³. It is thus not surprising in the slightest that an ideal that champions liberty and individualism would rise to the surface as the primary sentiment with which to challenge a regime that was seen as authoritarian and collectivist, as was the case with the Soviet Union. In the role of consumerism during the Cold War, Rosenberg writes:

“The United States sought to build opportunities for US investment and to identify American economic models with job growth, rising prosperity, and freedom. American experts of the postwar era further popularized the so-called Standard of Living, a new measure by which continual economic improvements in the lives of ordinary people could presumably be compared”¹¹⁴.

The American Dream was thus “a hegemonic project that promoted the accumulation of commodities as a social norm, civic duty, display of individual achievement, and a key source of life-satisfaction”¹¹⁵.

What is however notable about the American Dream and the promotion of its values is that the United States government did not directly have as much of a direct hand in advertising this ethos. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, held a much more secluded approach, as well as a significantly more hands-on approach from the authorities in Moscow.

Soviet propaganda focused significantly more on the founding ideals of communism, with the notions of internationalism being primary to the way in which ideology was furthered as a discreditation of anyone considered to be a ‘class traitor’¹¹⁶. This does not mean that the production of consumer goods was completely left out of Soviet Russia. Especially when promoting their image to Western countries, the Soviet shows proudly presented “eye-catching ‘prestige’ displays of the communist ‘way of life’: gleaming space satellites, welding equipment, fashions, model sanatoria, aeroplanes and handicrafts”¹¹⁷. Nevertheless, while the consumerist-capitalist ideology centred a very individualistic ideal with which sought to achieve satisfaction for the individual through the acquisition of material goods, the communism advocated for by the Soviets expected its citizens to give themselves and their work over for a common

III. The dissemination of culture and ideology through institutions

¹¹² Laura Goldblatt, “‘Can’t Repeat the Past?’ ‘Gatsby’ and the American Dream at Mid-Century.” *Journal of American Studies* 50, no. 1 (2016): p. 112. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44162974>.

¹¹³ Sharma, D.C. “Trends In The Cold War Historiography Of U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 55 (1994): p. 798. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44143457>.

¹¹⁴ Emily Rosenberg. “Consumer Capitalism and the End of the Cold War.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, edited by Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, 489–512. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.)

¹¹⁵ Maria N. Ivanova, “Consumerism and the Crisis: Wither ‘the American Dream’?” *Critical Sociology*, (2011): p. 2. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920510378770>.

¹¹⁶ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 56.

¹¹⁷ Verity Clarkson, “‘Sputniks and Sideboards’: Exhibiting the Soviet ‘Way of Life’ in Cold War Britain, 1961–1979.” In *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, edited by Anthony Cross, 1st ed., 285–300. (Open Book Publishers, 2012).

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Although the USA's portrayal of consumerist capitalism is evident in the marketing and in the strong proliferation of novel phenomena such as network television, which shifted reflections of taste and social class during the 1950's¹¹⁸; governments of both power giants made an institutionalised effort to inject the culture of the time with the ideologies that they wanted to propel.

Nowhere is it more evident that in the Soviet concept of agitprop. This political strategy, focused on techniques of agitation (in Russian, *agitatsiya*) and propaganda being used to influence and mobilize public opinion was very much present in Soviet cultural media¹¹⁹. Perhaps the most notable example of this technique can be found in the so-called agitprop theatre, popularised by playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht. Events such as the International Olympiad of Revolutionary Theatre, created by the Soviet regime sought to "mobilize proletarian and leftist theatre to struggle against fascism, social fascism, and imperialism and struggle for the defence of the Soviet Union"¹²⁰.

The plays, whose simplistic messages characterised by stereotypical characters and one-dimensional depictions of good and evil, such as noble workers and greedy capitalists; agitprop plays were designed to educate audiences about important policies or events and perhaps even to inspire viewers to action and had very simplistic messages: work harder, learn the factory rules, give up the church, and donate money to the state¹²¹. Interestingly, Dietz equates to the morality theatre through which the Church would incarnate scenes from the Holy Scriptures¹²², displaying with this comparison how agitprop theatre was, at its core, a highly dogmatic form of art that endeavoured to send an ideological message above all else.

The United States was also able to achieve a similar strategy, through its music industry. We can bring back the previously mentioned example of jazz, a genre which became a significant part of the counterculture in Warsaw Pact countries and which the Soviet regime was adamant in trying to suppress¹²³. Artists such as Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck or Duke Ellington were at the forefront of every VOA broadcast were given immense budgets from the US Department of State to tour around the world, promoting jazz as an ideal of democracy and freedom¹²⁴.

It should also not let go unnoticed that a lot of these figures were African Americans, in an era in which the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing in the domestic politics of the United States and added a veneer of progressivism with which White elites in the United States could feel comfortable¹²⁵. However, Dillard points out how paradoxically it was the lack of an

¹¹⁸ Nigel Whiteley, "Pop, Consumerism, and the Design Shift." *Design Issues* 2, no. 2 (1985): p. 32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1511416>.

¹¹⁹ "Agitprop." Encyclopædia Britannica, August 27, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agitprop>. Accessed 9 September 2024.

¹²⁰ Lynn Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture: The Case of Agitprop Theater." *Slavic Review* 62, no. 2 (2003): p. 329. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3185580>.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

¹²² Robert J. Dietz, "Marc Blitzstein and the 'Agit-Prop' Theatre of the 1930's." *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical* 6 (1970): p. 52. <https://doi.org/10.2307/779925>.

¹²³ Gleb Tsipursky, "Jazz, Power, and Soviet Youth in the Early Cold War, 1948–1953." *The Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 3 (2016): p. 332. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26414239>.

¹²⁴ Stephen A. Crist, "Jazz as Democracy? Dave Brubeck and Cold War Politics." *The Journal of Musicology* 26, no. 2 (2009): p. 141. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2009.26.2.133>.

¹²⁵ Robert K. McMichael, "'We Insist-Freedom Now!': Black Moral Authority, Jazz, and the Changeable Shape of Whiteness." *American Music* 16, no. 4 (1998): p. 388. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3052287>.

centralised cultural policy making that allowed jazz to flourish as a tool for soft power. He writes: “Ironically, it was precisely the absence of a coherent and effective cultural policy at the State Department that created a space for VOA’s unique alliance of artists, supporters of the arts, and liberals to project a jazz vision of America on the world stage”, thus being able to use artists as a propaganda tool while at the same time also giving them creative control¹²⁶.

It must also not go amiss that the cultural war did not only go directed to its allies, but also to those of its opponents, or even to non-aligned states. The United States, for instance, pulled a lot of economic resources in its development policy, particularly in the education of elites from recently decolonised nations, which Unger maintains “seemed to offer a peaceful, constructive way of furthering indigenous as well as American interests in the context of decolonization and the Cold War”¹²⁷. The Soviets countered this strategy, offering a similar programme for science and technology development aimed at the same targets¹²⁸.

In the area of sports, the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow were used as a prime tool for the Soviet Union to market itself, though the Games were far from free of confrontation and controversy. Before the Games had even taken place there was already a rivalry for hosting the Olympiads, with Los Angeles being the only opposing bid at the 75th IOC Session to host that year, which they ended hosting in the next edition¹²⁹.

The Soviet Union used this as an opportunity to lean on the patriotism associated with the Olympic tradition, exemplified, among others by its strong opposition to the participation of stateless athletes¹³⁰. During the 1980 Olympics, the best Soviet athletes were “state-supported (often as members of the military or the police apparatus). Stellar performances, such as unofficial world records, were richly rewarded with automobiles, apartments, and cash bonuses”¹³¹. The US-led boycott against the Games in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not particularly effective in demoralising the USSR: a lack of participants made Moscow a success for the Soviet Olympic Team, being awarded a total of 195 medals, including 80 golds. Wrestling was particularly weaponised in the political sphere, used in many occasions to portray the literal strength of the communist giant¹³².

Regardless of the success of previous example, there was no clearer example of a bilateral battle for influence than the decades-long space race. The launch of Soviet satellite Sputnik I in 1957, which became the first man-made artefact to break the space barrier, resulted in a continuous escalation between the two nations in an attempt to achieve superior spaceflight capabilities. The United States viewed the advances made in space exploration by the Soviets

¹²⁶ Dillard (2012), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹²⁷ Corina R. Unger, “The United States, Decolonization, and the Education of Third World Elites”. Chapter in, *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jost Dülffer and Marc Frey (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): pp. 241–261.

¹²⁸ Tarana Jafarova and Aytan Aliyeva. “The Cold War Battlefield: A Comparative Analysis of International Education Strategies between the United States and the Soviet Union”, *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, 8 no. 1 (2024): p. 5. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1431315.pdf>

¹²⁹ Philip A. D’Agati, *The Cold War and the 1984 Olympic Games: A Soviet-American Surrogate War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): p. 31.

¹³⁰ Lincoln Allison, “The Olympic Movement and the End of the Cold War.” *World Affairs* 157, no. 2 (1994): p. 94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20672414>.

¹³¹ Allen Guttmann. “The Cold War and the Olympics.” *International Journal* 43, no. 4 (1988): p. 556. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202563>.

¹³² Dennis C. Coates, “Weaponization of Sports: The Battle for World Influence through Sporting Success.” *The Independent Review* 22, no. 2 (2017): p. 218. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26314817>.

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as especially disconcerting, with the Eisenhower administration reacting very indecisively as they were not certain of what implication space exploration would have in this power battle. Shreve writes:

“This jaded reaction was due to the lack of knowledge about space and its still undefined nature. Since it was humankind’s first foray into this new frontier, Sputnik’s implications were not fully understood by government officials. President Dwight Eisenhower publicly responded with casual indifference, not even holding a press conference until October 9, five days after the launch”¹³³.

Regardless of this indecision, Americans’ feeling of superiority over the Soviets was put into doubt, and this period of confidence in the United States was put into crisis¹³⁴. This prompted a series of the two giants trying to overtake each other in their achievements, with the first object with Sputnik, the first living being with Laika, and the first man in space with Yuri Gagarin all happening on the Soviet side within less than five years of each other. For the United States, the space race culminated with the development of Project Mercury and the consequent landing of the Apollo 11 ship on the moon in 1969.

There is an interesting contrast in the way that both national communities approached their advancements in the space race. Although both nations viewed the space race as a bastion of progress, the framing of said progress was undeniably marked by the ideology of both states. The Soviet Union put a big focus on the people that were part of these missions, viewing the people involved as heroes who were making sacrifices for greater mankind, which tied in not only with the ethic of hard work of the Soviets, but also with the internationalist ideal of benefitting the working class on a global level¹³⁵. The North American framing was quite different: the Apollo 11’s landing was celebrated by the United States as a landmark in scientific and technological progress, but more importantly, was also providing evidence that American capitalism was a leader in innovation, and therefore was the best equipped system to produce these results¹³⁶.

It must however be mentioned that this use of scientific development as a propaganda tool was not universally well received. The scientific community, in the United States in particular was not too pleased on the idea of reframing an opportunity of technological advancement as jingoistic propaganda efforts, particularly as it sought to steer away from other issues. To quote Swauger,

“In evaluating the propaganda effect of such efforts as space exploration, we must not assume that these operations are as important to persons of other cultural backgrounds as they are to us. To a man whose immediate problem is his next meal, the moon is very far away indeed”¹³⁷.

The space race was nevertheless a formidable opportunity for both nations to fuel nationalistic efforts that both nations used as a way to portray themselves as beacons of

¹³³ Bradley G. Shreve, “The US, the USSR, and Space Exploration, 1957-1963.” *International Journal on World Peace* 20, no. 2 (2003): p. 68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20753399>.

¹³⁴ Walter A. McDougall, “Sputnik, the Space Race, and the Cold War.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 41 no. 5 (1985): p. 22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.1985.11455962>.

¹³⁵ Andreas Reichstein. “Space—the Last Cold War Frontier?” *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 44, no. 1 (1999): p. 122. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41157439>.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹³⁷ James L. Swauger “The Space Race.” *Science* 132, no. 3424 (1960): p. 380. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1705843>.

technological progress. These achievements, as well as the ones listed above have served as points of pride that have been not only proudly paraded around but embedded in the cultural myths of the two countries, persisting to this day. This goes to show how the appeal to attraction through objects of cultural significance can serve to build a reputation in international politics.

Regardless of the exponential number of strategies laid out by the governments of the two Cold War giants, its nevertheless warrants examining these efforts were fruitful in accomplishing what they set out to do. The German Democratic Republic is a prime example of this, having rejected to replicate the new Soviet policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* into their own policy when Gorbachev came to power¹³⁸.

The United States were also not able to extend to every corner of the sphere of influence. It is enough to look at Paris in May 1968 which, though lacking a particularly cohesive ideology, went broadly albeit firmly in opposition of the capitalist system¹³⁹.

Soviet influence also has had an influence in many countries' public view of present-day Russia. Poland, for example, has had a consistently negative view of Russia long since the breakup of the Soviet Union, in large part due to their crackdown on democratic movements within the country¹⁴⁰. According to a 2023 poll by Pew Research Center, only one per cent of Poles surveyed have a "very/somewhat favourable" view of Russia¹⁴¹.

IV. Closing remarks

Propaganda efforts on both ends of the Cold War were decidedly targeted. Through their institutions, the two states opted to infiltrate their defining ideologies into the cultural artefacts of the time, mainly the American Dream and the tenets of socialism. Examples of this can be found in theatre, a tool that the Soviet Union used as a vessel for agitprop, a technique that served to agitate the public by way of disseminating communist ideology through culture. Music was also subject to this technique, with musicians from the United States being offered handsome sums of money from the US Department of State to finance their tour and promote American culture in the process. The Soviets also succeeded in using the Olympics and sporting events of the like to promote a literal idea of physical strength.

The space race in particular helped to bring the soft power battle between the two nations to a new high. The groundbreaking achievements in spaceflight and space exploration set yet another battleground for the two superpowers to expose their ideological differences under the guise of scientific and technological development and innovation.

¹³⁸ David Childs, "East Germany: 'Glasnost' and Globetrotting." *The World Today* 43, no. 10 (1987): p. 178. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395865>.

¹³⁹ Mostafa, Rejai and Warren L. Mason. "Revolutionary Ideology: France 1968." *Il Politico* 36, no. 3 (1971): 503–22 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43207401>.

¹⁴⁰ Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc." *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 4 (2011): p. 796. <https://doi.org/10.1086/662547>.

¹⁴¹ Pew Research Center, July, 2023, "Large Shares See Russia and Putin in Negative Light, While Views of Zelenskyy More Mixed". https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2023/07/PG_2023.07.10_Russia-NATO_Report.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2024.

FOURTH CHAPTER.
CASE STUDIES OF CINEMA AS PROPAGANDA: *I AM CUBA*, *DR.*
STRANGELOVE*, AND *COME AND SEE

For the last chapter in this project we will carry out some case studies of films released during the Cold War to put our research from up until now into practice. Firstly, we will give a bit more historical context, examining how the U.S. and the USSR have employed film as a tool for soft power, both before and during the Cold War. Second, we will present the films and summarise them, as well as explain why they were chosen and what thematic connection lies between them. Finally, we will analyse the motion pictures *Soy Cuba* ('*I Am Cuba*'), *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* ('*Dr. Strangelove*'), and *Idi i smotri* ('*Come and See*').

I. Film as a tool for soft power and its use during the Cold War

In his article *War, Cinema and Moral Anxiety*, quoting Cynthia Weber, Lacy maintains that the international relations discipline has, perhaps erroneously, never paid special attention to popular culture, as it is "simply not a 'serious' intellectual concern for a discipline that has sought intellectual coherence through focusing on the anarchic space of geopolitics"¹⁴². When comparing to other mediums of mass communication, cinema stands out from others such as radio, printed media or spoken word such as in political speeches. The ability to mix sound, sight, and text all at the same time gives it the ability to evoke feelings in a much more powerful way, than static imagery or a radio communication.

Lacy argues that "in societies shaped by images, cinema has the potential to give moral proximity, to awaken moral anxiety in everyday citizens"¹⁴³. To quote Hutcheon, "[w]hile no medium is inherently good at doing one thing and not another, each medium (like each genre) has different means of expression and so can aim at certain things better than others"¹⁴⁴. It is like this that the combined audiovisual characteristics of the language of film can often aim at disseminating an ideology in a more emotionally resonating way than literature, radio or paintings can.

Der Derian argues in a similar way that war portrayed through film; what he refers to as virtual war, is "designed to distance not only the pilots and strategists from the reality of death that they are orchestrating, but also to distance the citizenry back home from the suffering that is being carried out under the banner of virtuous war"¹⁴⁵. This argument is incredibly obvious to anyone who has critically engaged in watching any of the dozens of films that Hollywood has produced throughout its history with the cooperation of the United States military (*Air Force One*, *Top Gun* (1997), *The Hunt for Red October* or *007 GoldenEye* are some examples of this).

The potential of subtlety in film language furthermore gives an attractive to use it as an instrument of propaganda, both to governments leaders and to filmmakers themselves. During times of armed conflict, war has captured the imagination of screenwriters and directors, in no

¹⁴² Mark J. Lacy, "War, Cinema, and Moral Anxiety." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 28, no. 5 (2003): p. 614. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40645126>.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 617.

¹⁴⁴ Linda Hutcheon. "On the Art of Adaptation." *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004):p. 109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027920>.

¹⁴⁵ James Der Derian, *Virtuous War* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2001), p. xv

small part due to an increased availability in resources. Reeves explains, for example, how during World War I Britain, the increased interest in war, as well as the prolonged interest in Royal Family History, greater access to military resources and even to the King himself was given to British filmmakers¹⁴⁶.

The portrayal of ideology in international relations through cinema is also well explained through constructivist theory. The emotional resonance of film on its audience provides a tool for the filmmaker to instil an idea on a concept that the audience is unfamiliar with. The myth of “anarchy is what states make of it” is explained by Weber by way of the 1997 production *Wag the Dog*, which brilliantly satirizes the way in which states often fabricate narratives in order to make public opinion cater to its own interests.

Weber describes the world of *Wag the Dog* as a “made-in-the-media world”, in which TV and news broadcasts define our reality; and since television is where reality happens, television is the place where reality can be transformed¹⁴⁷. This is perhaps no better illustrated than in the first scene in which Robert De Niro and Dustin Hoffman’s characters meet: when Motss (Hoffman) asks why Brean (De Niro) wants him to cooperate with this idea, Brean gives him a very simple answer: “War is showbusiness”¹⁴⁸.

But just as cinema has a cooperative role in ideological warfare, it also serves to oppose the ideology of governmental institutions and criticise the *status quo*. Leab exemplifies this point through Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*¹⁴⁹. He writes how the FBI tried to put the film under categorisation to figure out if it was “in FBI director J. Edgar Hoover’s words, [...] ‘a purveyor of alienisms who seek to transform the America we know and love to a land of class struggle’”¹⁵⁰.

The United States and the Soviet Union constantly looked for ways to discredit each other while in ways that would not involve direct military confrontation. Coming off World War II, where military arsenal was of a hegemonic nature, the apparent danger of nuclear warfare asked the two superpowers to change strategies if they wanted to assure the survival. It is this not surprising to know that cinema played a substantive role in the Cold War as an ideological weapon. Sorlin writes:

“[I]n a nuclear era, when the weakest protagonist could do much harm to its opponent, sophisticated arms had to be brandished but not used. The device was to make the foe, and the rest of the world, believe that one was the strongest. Ideology was therefore of overriding significance during the conflict and it is here that the cinema had a important role to play”.¹⁵¹

Both nations made significant efforts to develop their film industry. The United States was of course on a head start, with Hollywood having been a household industry for decades prior. However, the industry’s priorities shifted when the iron curtain fell. According to Sorlin, “[b]etween 1948 and 1961, the cinema was simultaneously a source of information and a means

¹⁴⁶ Nicholas Reeves. “Film Propaganda and Its Audience: The Example of Britain’s Official Films during the First World War.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 3 (1983): p. 466. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260547>.

¹⁴⁷ Weber (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁴⁸ *Wag the Dog*, directed by Barry Levinson (New Line Cinema, 1997).

¹⁴⁹ *It’s a Wonderful Life*, directed by Frank J. Capra (Liberty Films, 1946).

¹⁵⁰ Daniel J. Leab, “Introduction: The Cold War and the Movies.” *Film History* 10, no. 3 (1998): p. 252. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815221>.

¹⁵¹ Pierre Sorlin. “The Cinema: American Weapon for the Cold War.” *Film History* 10, no. 3 (1998): p. 375. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815230>.

of modelling the public's perspective on the contemporary world"¹⁵². The Soviets tried to replicate the Hollywood model, down to the consideration of coastal cities like Odessa or Sukhumi as potential locations¹⁵³. Though a nationwide industry did not materialise, many concepts of this plan translated into the reforms made to Mosfilm, the flagship production studio of the Soviet era¹⁵⁴.

Before delving into the use of cinema during the Cold War, it first must be remarked that antagonistic relations between the United States and Russia/the Soviet Union are by no means limited to the timespan of 1947 to 1991. So long as the two countries have simultaneously existed there has been efforts from both sides to vilify the other, while at the same time reaffirming that their ideology –American capitalism and Soviet communism respectively– were not only desirable, but a preferential way of organising society.

A fascinating example of a pre-Cold War depiction of the Russians comes in the 1939 romantic comedy *Ninotchka*¹⁵⁵. Greta Garbo stars as the titular character, “a no-nonsense diplomat of the Soviet Union [...], that arrives in Paris to ensure the sale of jewels seized during the Russian Revolution. Meanwhile, carefree bachelor Count Leon d'Algot (Melvyn Douglas) attempts to intercept the valuables on behalf of their former owner [...] Despite their conflicting allegiances, the icy Ninotchka soon warms to Leon's charms, reluctantly going against her better judgment”¹⁵⁶.

The film stands out as a reflection of the perception of the United States' public's idea on ideology and gender. The film portrays the Russian men as a foolish folk, product of a society that has stripped them of their individuality. Ninotchka, in contrast with the licentious French women by whom she is surrounded, is seen as an inaccessible, cold woman, whose absurdly staunch compromise to the socialist cause has left her with no use for love, from which only a Westerner like Count d'Algot can save her. According to McCormick, “Ninotchka's politics are not simply anti-Communist, however; the film's sympathies are much more with the Soviet Ninotchka than with the aristocratic White Russians in exile in Paris whom she meets”¹⁵⁷.

Soviet cinema, on the other hand, while not openly discrediting of the United States *per se*, offered scathing critique of capitalism and firmly voiced the importance for socialist revolution. Few films capture the spirit of the Bolshevik revolution as well as Sergey Eisenstein's *magnum opus*, the 1925 epic *Bronesonets Potyomkin* ('*Battleship Potemkin*'). The film, a pioneer in its use of the montage and the break in continuity for dramatic effect, depicts a romanticised version of the 1905 mutiny in the titular dreadnought, calling for the Russian working class to rise up against the capitalist oppressor¹⁵⁸.

II. Presenting the chosen films: plot summaries and the relationship between them

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 376.

¹⁵³ Maria Belodubrovskaya, “Soviet Hollywood: The Culture Industry That Wasn't.” *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 3 (2014): p.100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43653622>.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁵⁵ *Ninotchka*, directed by Ernst Lubitsch (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1939).

¹⁵⁶ “Ninotchka (1939) - Plot Synopsis,” Rotten Tomatoes. <https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ninotchka>. Accessed 14 October 2024,

¹⁵⁷ Richard W. McCormick, “Transnational Jewish Comedy: Sex and Politics in the Films of Ernst Lubitsch—From Berlin to Hollywood.” In *Three-Way Street: Jews, Germans, and the Transnational*, edited by Jay Howard Geller and Leslie Morris, 169–96. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

¹⁵⁸ *Battleship Potemkin*, directed by Sergei Eisenstein (Mosfilm, 1925).

The following section presents brief plot summaries for the films object of our case studies, as well as a brief explanation of why they were selected.

I Am Cuba is a 1946 Spanish language, Soviet-produced anthology drama that depicts the lives of different Cuban people before the Communist Revolution that took place in the country in 1959. The film follows the stories of four different characters: the prostitute María; the rice farmer Pedro; the student Enrique; and the farmer turned rebel Mariano; and the way that their lives are affected by the corrupt system of Cuba before the revolution¹⁵⁹.

María lives a very modest life in the slums of Havana along with her boyfriend René, who hopes to marry her. Secretly, she lives a double life as a prostitute who goes by the name Betty, who spends her time in the casinos of the Cuban capital servicing rich American tourists. She meets one who she ends taking home. The next morning the client escapes the couple's small hut, looking at how the people around them live in squalor.

Pedro's farm is sold by his landlord to a farming company, despite him having worked on that land his entire life. He takes what little money he has left and gives it away to his children to spend it in the town, meanwhile, he burns his plantation down, dying of suffocation from the smoke.

Enrique is frustrated with the small efforts of the student revolutionary group and wants to do something drastic, planning on assassinating the chief of police. However, when he sees him surrounded by his young children, and Enrique cannot bring himself to kill him. While he is away, his fellow revolutionaries are infiltrated by police officers who arrest them. One of the revolutionaries begins throwing flyers out to the crowd below only to be shot by one of the police officers. Later on, Enrique is leading a protest at the university. More police are there to break up the crowd, and Enrique is finally shot by the chief of police after the demonstration becomes a riot. In a martyr-like fashion, his body is carried through the streets.

Mariano, the last character of the story is a farmer who rejects the call of revolutionary soldiers to join their ranks, even as they promise him a better life for him and for his family. This changes when the governments planes start to bombard the area in which he lives, destroying his home and killing his son. The film ends with him joining the revolutionaries as they march into Havana to take the city.

The same year as *I am Cuba*, Hawk Films released Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*; an adaptation of the Peter George novel *Red Alert*¹⁶⁰. Set in the middle of post-World War II détente, this black comedy satirises the terror of the time surrounding nuclear warfare in the United States. When a paranoid United States Air Force Brigadier General, quite aptly named Jack D. Ripper, orders his executive officer Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers) to to put the base on alert (condition red, the most intense lockdown status), confiscate all privately owned radios from base personnel and issue "Wing Attack Plan R", the elites in Washington D.C. go into a frenzy.

They promptly convene into the War Room at the Pentagon, where key persons including U.S. President Merkin Muffley (also played by Sellers), General Buck Turgidson (George C. Scott) and nuclear scientist and adviser, a former Nazi named Dr. Strangelove (also

¹⁵⁹ *I Am Cuba*, directed by Mikhail Kalatozov (Mosfilm, 1946).

¹⁶⁰ *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Hawk Films, 1946.)

Sellers), are discussing measures to stop the attack or mitigate its blow-up into an all out nuclear war with the Soviets. Against Turgidson's wishes, Muffley brings Soviet Ambassador Alexi de Sadesky into the War Room, and get his boss, Soviet Premier Dimitri Kisov, on the hot line to inform him of what's going on. The Americans in the War Room are dismayed to learn that the Soviets have an as yet unannounced Doomsday Device to detonate if any of their key targets are hit. As Ripper, Mandrake and those in the War Room try and work the situation to their end goal, Major T.J. "King" Kong, one of the B-52 bomber pilots, is working on his own agenda of deploying his bomb wherever he can on enemy soil if he can't make it to his intended target.

Our third film to analyse will be the 1985 Russian-Belarusian production *Come and See*, directed by Elem Klimov¹⁶¹. Set in 1943, this antiwar film portrays the massacre of Belarusians and Soviet partisans by Nazi soldiers, portrayed through the eyes of its protagonist, a sixteen-year-old boy called Florian Gayshun (nicknamed 'Flyora', or 'Flor' in the English translation), played by Aleksey Kravchenko. Having dug up a carbine among the remains of barbed wire, rusted machine gun belts, and pierced helmets, he is conscripted to join the ranks of the partisans. He meets Glasha, an girl of a similar age working as a partisan nurse. The film then follows the horrors that he experiences as a low-ranking militiaman, crushing Flyora's juvenile oblivion.

Little by little, the unsettling, irrefutable evidence of war disfigures Flyora's once-rosy, youthful face into that of a middle-aged man. In the last scene, Flyora finds a framed picture of Adolf Hitler in a puddle, which he starts to shoot at while a montage of Hitler's life in reverse, stopping at an image of the Führer as a baby, in the arms of his mother Klara.

The uniting thread between all three films vaguely portray their characters and their struggle to face against a dangerous other, be it the ruling class, nuclear warfare, or human suffering under war. Another motivation for the selection of these films is that the narrative framework behind all three of them facilitated an analysis of ideology and propaganda. In all three films, the characters are more inclined to act sociologically rather than psychologically, i.e. the characters' arcs and decisions are much more motivated by the social and political trends around them than by their own personal whims. This gives the selected films an appeal to explain how the environment in which they are set orients the story into a particular direction.

The temporal releases of the films were also a deciding factor: while *I am Cuba* and *Dr. Strangelove* are films released during the height of the Brezhnev and Johnson administrations, an epoch of very heightened tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. *Come and See*, on the other hand, was released during the early Gorbachev and Reagan years, at the beginning of *glasnost* and towards the end of the ideological conflict between the two superpowers, which allows the film to portray a significantly less positive look of the Soviet ideal.

III. *I Am Cuba*: propaganda as a cultural export

The influences of the Soviet and Cuban regimes on Mikhail Kalatozov's anthology film are worn on their sleeve. The influence of Russian filmmaking is also present in many of the technical and narrative elements of the film, such as the montage as mentioned in the previous

¹⁶¹ *Come and See*, directed by Elem Klimov (Belarusfilm, 1985).

section; the extreme closeups pioneered in Vertov's documentaries¹⁶²; or the use of an omniscient narrator, product of late Tarkovsky films¹⁶³.

It must also not go unnoticed that the film was set into production mere months after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis had taken place¹⁶⁴. It would not be at all surprising to find out that the Soviet Union had taken the opportunity to release a film which would resonate with Cuban audiences due to the recency of the events.

Regarding the discreditation of the enemy, the film does not leave any ambiguity on its rejection of anything to do with the United States. In María's storyline, the group of wealthy Americans that are frequenting the casino are not portrayed in a sympathetic light, being shown as entitled, sexist, and perverted; rich with money but abundantly lacking in class. The big implication in this scene is that they have let capital take over their lives to the point that their humanity has been corroded. Similar is the portrayal of the Guantánamo Bay soldiers that drunkenly parade the streets of Havana in Enrique's storyline; or the character's distrust of the press when reporting on the death of Fidel Castro, seen by Enrique as deceptive, looking to bring down morale amongst Cuban revolutionaries. This distrust is neither unwarranted nor implausible: the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, which ended with the Revolution of 1959, was openly supported and financed by the United States. Batista was seen by many as little more than a vessel through which the United States could control the island for their own economical and colonial benefit. Thus, to American capitalists, the organised presence of Cuban workers, with Castro at the helm, became a major obstacle to an increasingly efficient and expanding production process¹⁶⁵.

The film does not stop at only demonising Americans: at the end of Pedro's storyline, against the backdrop of Pedro being suffocated by the flames of his own burnt rice plantation the Voice of Cuba asks: "Who will pay for this blood? Who will pay for these tears?". The film is not ambiguous in its answer, with an immediate jarring cut of the Cuban elites dancing and drinking.

The treatment of elites and enablers of the exploitation of the working class is also treated in Enrique's storyline. His hesitance to kill the chief of police comes back to haunt him, being the officer himself responsible for Enrique's demise. The message here is that workers must not share even a bit of sympathy for tyrants, because they will not do the same for them. The subjects of the revolution must take the matters into their own hands, as the system will not inherently become more just.

Like *Battleship Potemkin*, the film does not invest much time in the inner lives of its characters. Though they are more individualised in *I Am Cuba*, they are, in the scheme of the narrative, passive subjects that are affected by their surroundings. The big protagonist in both of these stories is the revolution, in which their characters are involved.

Precisely in its characters' epic representation, which emphasizes the necessity of confrontation and sacrifice, even of one's own life, in order to achieve emancipation, the film

¹⁶² *Man with a Movie Camera*, directed by Dziga Vertov (Vse-Ukrainske Foto Kino Upravlinnia, 1929).

¹⁶³ *Mirror*, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky (Mosfilm, 1975).

¹⁶⁴ Juan Antonio García Borrero. "I Am Cuba": The Filmmakers Who Came In from the Cold". *The Criterion Collection*, 2024. <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/8451-i-am-cuba-the-filmmakers-who-came-in-from-the-cold>. Accessed 17 October 2024.

¹⁶⁵ Morris H. Morley, "The U.S. Imperial State in Cuba 1952-1958: Policymaking and Capitalist Interests." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 14, no. 1 (1982): p. 146. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/155730>.

suggests that the tensions coming to a head within Cuba in the fifties would inevitably be resolved via armed struggle¹⁶⁶.

There are however aspects in which the film might have fallen short as it pertains to being a propaganda export. Notably, the film often crosses the line into stereotype when it comes to the depiction of its Cuban subjects, in particular with René and María, the protagonists of the first story. Both are depicted as rather uncivilised, religious in their private life and chaotic in their approach to work. It is instances like this where the involvement of Soviet production and a Soviet director becomes apparent, being an obvious disconnect with the culture they set out to portray.

The political background of the film's release period might have something to do with this. In her review of the film, Iordanova writes:

“The film was conceived under Khrushchev but released under Brezhnev, and the change in political climate accounted for its lukewarm reception. *I Am Cuba* was intended as a pure propaganda piece, but the excess of artistic innovation led to charges of formalism by the Soviet authorities [...] various filmmakers and critics shared their admiration for the experiment in cinematic form, but noted that excessive attention to the form had led to neglect of character development and the psychological complexity of the protagonists”¹⁶⁷.

To close off the discussion we can mention that *I Am Cuba*, and other Soviet propaganda films like it, can be described as a type of grey propaganda. Though its messages surrounding the importance of the unity of the working class, it is never direct in lauding the Soviet government. The concept that is being appraised is always a more abstract concept, be it the socialist cause, the revolution, or any other idea. Though it is a clear case of propaganda, *I Am Cuba* does not at any point give away who is behind the ideology of the film, even though the ideology itself is not hidden whatsoever.

IV. Dr. Strangelove: laughing through the fear of nuclear terror

While the Soviet film takes a completely solemn approach to the topic of ideological warfare, Kubrick takes a considerably more contentious issue and ridicules it. Nevertheless, the humorous tone of the movie is not to be taken at face value: though hysterical, the film adapts a book with a very serious tone, as well as it touches on a very real sense of apprehension that a lot of Americans felt at the time. Simon explains:

“Kubrick's famous explanation of the film's comic mode – that while attempting a straightforward adaptation of *Red Alert*, he was so struck by the absurdity of the situations he was depicting that satirical hyperbole suggested itself as the only way to do justice to the subject matter – is usually invoked as the key to the film's conception”¹⁶⁸.

The incredibly over the top action of the B52 bombers, or the constant prolonged pauses in the dialogue give a nerve-wracking sense of tension that contrasts with the absurd situations in which the characters find themselves. This is best exemplified by the film's subtitle, '*How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*'. Another production made in the wake of the

¹⁶⁶ García Borrero (2024), *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Dina Iordanova [Film Review of *I Am Cuba*], *The Russian Review* 56, no. 1 (1997): p: 126. <https://doi.org/10.2307/131489>.

¹⁶⁸ William G. Simon, “Dr. Strangelove: Or: The Apparatus of Nuclear Warfare.” In *Camera Obscura, Camera Lucida: Essays in Honor of Annette Michelson*, edited by Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, 215–30. (Amsterdam University Press, 2003.)

Cuban missile crisis, Kubrick leans into the panic of the time to challenge the audience's notion of nuclear warfare. Maland stipulates that *Dr. Strangelove* seeks to dismount the so-called 'Ideology of Liberal Consensus', which maintained "that the structure of American society was basically sound, and that Communism was a clear danger to the survival of the United States and its allies"¹⁶⁹. The film illustrates this point in the excessive focus on decorum that the politicians in the film have. It is an ironic point in the very least, to expect everyone to act civilly in a room that is at the moment being preoccupied with the threat of human annihilation. With regard to the tone of the film, Naremore says:

"The montage of exploding nuclear bombs at the end of *Dr. Strangelove* may not be a grotesque moment, but it works according to a similar principle, so that horror mingles with a sort of detached appreciation of the sublime beauty of sun, sky, and bursting clouds."¹⁷⁰

The films of this era did not only ponder on the potential consequences of nuclear disaster. In France, *Hiroshima mon amour* depicts through flashbacks, one of the first films to use said technique, the trauma left by the aftermath of launching the nuclear bomb on the titular Japanese city¹⁷¹. Unlike *Dr. Strangelove*'s comically perverse ending, though, *Hiroshima* presents a more hopeful outcome, focusing a lot on the theme of reconstruction¹⁷².

As we have seen with Levinson's *Wag the Dog*, political satire often offers a very good display of constructivism in action. Kubrick is able to portray this brilliantly through the dynamic between President Muffley and the Soviet Premier Dimitri Kissov. The multiple conversations had between the two frames their relationship akin to that of a marriage not only makes for great situational comedy, but in a broader sense also illustrates how variables as minuscule as the personal relationship between two heads of state can be transposed to relationships between states and drastically change the direction of their foreign policies. To quote Simon again, "[t]he film's critical analysis resides in the narrative structure's dramatization of the failure of the machinic premise of the nuclear war apparatus"¹⁷³.

It seems counterintuitive to include any film that is so critical of the United States war machine in a discussion about propaganda in film. The film is not particularly legitimising of the United States military complex, nor does it look to mobilise the audience against the threat of either the Soviets or of nuclear war. However, as excellently satirical as the film is it does not go all the way in challenging the political complex of Washington: there is a big contrast portrayed in the film between the military officers like Ripper or Turgidson and the President and his cabinet, the former being portrayed as exceedingly paranoid and lunatic, irrational and prone to the belief of conspiracy theories. President Muffley, on the other hand, is portrayed as much more sensible. This contrast in characterisation not only seems to shield the view of the United States executive, but also looks like it is implying that the military and the executive are two fundamentally different institutions, when reality suggests quite the opposite.

Ripper explains this succinctly when he goes against the saying of former French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, in response to the claim that war is "too important to be left to

¹⁶⁹ Charles Maland, "Dr. Strangelove (1964): Nightmare Comedy and the Ideology of Liberal Consensus." *American Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (1979): p. 698. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712432>.

¹⁷⁰ James Naremore, "Stanley Kubrick and the Aesthetics of the Grotesque." *Film Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2006): p. 11. <https://doi.org/10.1525/fq.2006.60.1.4>.

¹⁷¹ *Hiroshima mon amour*, directed by Alain Resnais (Argos Films, 1959).

¹⁷² Godelieve Mercken-Spaas, "Destruction and Reconstruction in 'Hiroshima, Mon Amour.'" *Literature/Film Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1980): p. 246.

¹⁷³ Simon (2003), *op. cit.*, p. 216.

the generals”, Ripper dismisses this by stating that war is too important to be left to the politicians. This is, the military is framed as having the obligation to know what is best to the population regarding armed conflicts, which further incentivises this narrative of separation. A similar sentiment is portrayed in Coppola’s 1979 war epic *Apocalypse Now*¹⁷⁴. A retrospective on the Vietnam War, the film simultaneously portrays the horrors and futility of war while at the same time maintaining the heroism of its American protagonists, which contributed to the cultural trend of de-realising the war and maintaining a simplistic, soap opera-like ideal of the conflict in Southeast Asia¹⁷⁵. According to Childs, “Coppola’s desire to produce a film that was both historical document and mythic parable resulted in a work that has too many inconsistencies to be considered wholly successful”¹⁷⁶.

Dr. Strangelove is also not shy from its lack of sympathy to its Russian characters, specifically to Soviet ambassador Alexei de Sadeski, who is portrayed in a similar fashion to the Soviet agents in *Ninotchka*, a stereotyped ‘Commie buffoon’ who does not know to control himself from indulging in the capitalist lifestyle. However, one cannot fault Kubrick too much for entering this pitfall. Since ideology is often unconscious, there is no avoiding portraying to some extent the beliefs of the Ideological State Apparatuses in even the most critical of media. Other films that are similarly critical of American militarism fall into a similar trap. For example, *Rocky IV*, which attempts to be critical of the USA’s ideology and of the American empire, still depicts in its climax a toe-to-toe between Dolph Lundgren as Ivan Drago, a ruthless boxing athlete enhanced by years of training on steroids. Nevertheless, “Rocky, as a true American champion, after training under the highest pressure, gets the upper hand and defeats Drago to the surprise and appreciation of the Soviet leaders, with one of them oddly resembling Mikhail Gorbachev”¹⁷⁷¹⁷⁸.

For all its effective moments in mocking the hysteria and fear surrounding the threat of total human destruction, *Dr. Strangelove* is no less vulnerable than that which it ridicules. The skintight tension of the Johnson-Brezhnev era still comes through in the unsettling, if nonetheless hilarious tone of the film. No matter how many laughs it may elicit, the creative team behind *Dr. Strangelove* is ultimately as terrified as its intended audience of the catastrophic outcomes that a *faux pas* from its leaders may cause.

V. Come and See: the tragedy of war through the lens of Soviet censorship

The existence of this Soviet antiwar tragedy is interesting in and of itself. The release year of the film coincides with the fortieth anniversary of the Day of Victory, the celebration of Soviet triumph over Europe’s occupation of the Nazis. This year was the same that

¹⁷⁴ *Apocalypse Now*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (Omni-Zoetrope, 1979).

¹⁷⁵ Nguyet Nguyen, “Which Mirror Is ‘Truer’? Portrayal of the Vietnam War in *Apocalypse Now* and *Cánh Đòòng Hoang*.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 22, no. 1 (2015): p. 46. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43898404>.

¹⁷⁶ Jeffrey Childs. “Apocalypse Now, Vietnam, and the Rhetoric of Influence”. *Matlit: Materialidades Da Literatura* 1, no. 2 (2014): p. 23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40395865>.

¹⁷⁷ Roman Kusaiko, “The Evolution of Soviets’ and Russians’ Film Portrayals: From Foes to Partners and Back to Foes Again.” *Modern Diplomacy*, 2024. <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2024/03/29/the-evolution-of-soviets-and-russians-film-portrayals-from-foes-to-partners-and-back-to-foes-again/>

Accessed 19 Oct 2024.

¹⁷⁸ *Rocky IV*, directed by Silvester Stallone (United Artists, 1985).

Gorbachev came into power as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Both events were in any case celebrated with little fanfare¹⁷⁹.

The film sticks out when contrasted to other films released around this time period: only five years prior, Mosfilm had released *Moskva slezam ne verit* ('*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*')¹⁸⁰, and *Ironiya sud'by, ili S lyohkim parom* ('*The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!*') four years before that¹⁸¹, which both perfectly illustrate the turnaway from serious filmmaking to the dewy sentimentality of 1980s Soviet cinema¹⁸². Instead, the film's message falls much more in line with the war films of the Khrushchev era like *Balada o soldate* ('*Ballad of a Soldier*') or *Letyat zhuravli* ('*The Cranes are Flying*') which, because of the recency of the subject matter, had a significantly more serious tone and played up a much less romantic version of war¹⁸³¹⁸⁴.

The film is loosely based on the Khatyn massacre, which screenwriter Ales Adamovich lived through¹⁸⁵. Klimov spent over eight years attempting to get the film made. Many accounts, including of the director himself speak about censorship playing a significant part in the ehgreatly supported by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus Pyotr Masherov. Unfortunately, Masherov fell ill at that time and went to Moscow for treatment¹⁸⁶. And then a quiet attack on the script from party officials began: propaganda of the aesthetics of dirt", "naturalism", "where is the scope of the partisan movement, why did they allow the village to be burned down?"¹⁸⁷. In the director's notes, Klimov said:

"The 40th anniversary of the Great Victory was approaching. The management had to be given something topical. I had been reading and rereading the book *I Am from the Fiery Village*, which consisted of the first-hand accounts of people who miraculously survived the horrors of the fascist genocide in Belorussia. Many of them were still alive then, and Belorussians managed to record some of their memories onto film. I will never forget the face and eyes of one peasant, and his quiet recollection about how his whole village had been herded into a church, and how just before they were about to be burned, an officer gave them the offer: "Whoever has no children can leave" [...] And then I thought: the world doesn't know about Khatyn! They know about Katyn, about the massacre of the Polish officers there. But they don't know about Belorussia. Even though more than 600 villages were burned there!"¹⁸⁸.

Also worth discussing in this context is the meaning of the film's title: originally, the film was set to be title *Kill Hitler*, in reference to the final scene in the film, a title to which censors did not respond positively¹⁸⁹. Klimov and Adamovich thus turned to the New

¹⁷⁹ Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005* (La Vergne: University Press of Kansas, 2007): p. 193.

¹⁸⁰ *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears*, directed by Vladimir Menshov (Mosfilm, 1980).

¹⁸¹ *The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!*, directed by Eldar Ryazanov (Mosfilm, 1976).

¹⁸² Youngblood (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁸³ *Ballad of a Soldier*, directed by Grigory Chukhrai, (Mosfilm, 1959).

¹⁸⁴ *The Cranes are Flying*, directed by Mikhail Kalatozov (Mosfilm, 1957).

¹⁸⁵ Ron Holloway. "Interview with Elem Klimov". Interview. *Kinema*, 2008. <https://openjournals.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/kinema/article/view/1191/1472> Accessed 21 October 2024.

¹⁸⁶ Nathan Dunne, "Atrocity exhibition: is Come and See Russia's greatest ever war film?" *New East Digital Archive* (2016), accessed 20 Oct 2024. <https://www.new-east-archive.org/articles/show/6415/come-and-see-elem-klimov-war-film-bastards-star-brest-fortress>.

¹⁸⁷ Marina Murzina, "'Idi i smotri': S'yomki prevratilis' dlya Elema Klimova v bor'bu s tsenzuroy", *Argumenty i Fakty*. 2010. Accessed 19 Oct 2024.

¹⁸⁸ Holloway (2008), *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁹ "Elem Klimov about Come and See", Interview, *Youtube*, (2010)

Testament for what would be the definitive title of the picture. In the original Belarusian, the title of the film, *'Idi i hliadzi'*, is in reference to the Belarusian translation of the Book of Revelation 6, English receiving the title from the same phrase in the King James Version, which is repeated several times throughout the chapter¹⁹⁰. The phrase invites to look upon the destruction that has been caused by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Particularly relevant to the film are the verses 6:7-8, which say:

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth”¹⁹¹.

The film thus asks to look at the events of a catastrophic nature that have lead our protagonist to become so irreversibly hopeless, an element which is also depicted visually through his rapid aging. The film thus asks its audience to confront the glamourised idea that many films of the time exhibited; that the War that so much of the Soviet, especially Russian populus as a point of national pride was an indescribably traumatising experience for so many.

The view of the partisans in the film can also not go unnoticed. Klimov's depiction of the Belarusian rebels is humbling at best, humiliating at worst. The soldiers that surround Flyora are ruthless and negligent, ignoring the human suffering around them in favour of their armed struggle. A subtle, though revealing scene in this regard comes when Glasha turns her head on the cart when leaving Flyora's town, to discover a sickening pile of dead bodies piled up behind the hut where the main character once lived.

The film is drenched in the aesthetics of Soviet realism, from its naturalistic colour palette to the intercalation of close-ups and the unsparing details of burnt flesh and bloody corpses. But there is also an element of what Youngblood describes as Slavic humanism which cannot be understated¹⁹². When shooting at the picture of Hitler, Flyora stops at the image of the Führer as a child. He refuses to shoot the baby because unlike the Germans, he has not lost his humanity and understands the moral implications of his actions.

Yet despite this less than favourable depiction, there is still a reason why a film that does not in the slightest romanticise the victory of the Soviets over the Nazis was allowed to see the light of day: at the end of the day, nothing in the film makes the Soviet government or its army responsible of the suffering that the Third Reich inflicted on its population; on the contrary, to the unassuming viewer it might even suggest that it blames the Belarusian partisans for their own failure to save themselves. One thing, though, is clear: the enemy was not the Russians, and the Soviet Union was not the one who directly caused the suffering of the people of Khatyn and other villages like it. The film subverts the narrative long established that the Soviet Union was, somehow, a hero of the Second World War; in *Come and See*, the Soviet Union is just another victim of the Nazi imperialist project.

It would be decidedly senseless to call *Idi i Smotri* a propaganda piece. As much as the film leans into Soviet war film tropes, it also subverts them. It would thus be highly nonsensical to call *Come and See* a piece of propaganda. The film is grim and unrelenting; and absent is the sense of victory that it so hard tries to celebrate. If there is any film that *Come and See* can

¹⁹⁰ Revelation 6:1-8 (KJV).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6:8.

¹⁹² Youngblood (2005), *op. cit.*, p. 197.

artistically be compared to is not to other vapid, cheerful films of the early *glasnost*, or not even the earlier mentioned war films released during the Thaw. Instead, the films that most come to mind are the like of Lanzmann's *Shoah*¹⁹³ and Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, films made by Jewish filmmakers as commentaries on the loss of humanity that went on during the extermination of the Jews in Europe. Even Spielberg's film, which centres a heroic protagonist, closes the film acknowledging the hopelessness of the tragedy, and that not even small acts of good could stop the unravelling of the biggest mass murder in modern history¹⁹⁴.

VI. Closing remarks

Film has been a tool of ideological warfare between the USA and the USSR since long before the Cold War started, with films such as *Battleship Potemkin* and *Ninotchka* already showing with various degrees of intensity, how the nations sought to both legitimize their ideology and discredit their opponent's.

The three films discussed show us different portrayals of how its subjects perceive as a threat: in *I Am Cuba*, that other is the United States and the oppression of the ruling class; for *Dr. Strangelove* it is nuclear annihilation, and for *Come and See* it is the human cost of war.

I Am Cuba is very explicit in its propagandistic intents showing a highly romantic view of the Cuban Revolution, legitimising the struggle of Fidel Castro and the Cuban rebels, as well as mobilising the population in joining the revolutionary spirit, as well as seeking to discredit multiple ideas about the ethos of the United States.

Dr. Strangelove depicts this threat in a satirical way, playing up the paranoia of the Washington establishment against the threat of an all-out nuclear war with Moscow. A good example of how to view cinema through a constructivist lens, the Kubrick comedy is nevertheless quite fearful of what the real-life outcome could be, if such a scenario were to play out in real life.

The antiwar drama *Come and See* has a highly more contrasted vision, depicting a vision of hopelessness and despair in the face of human destruction. The film faced a hard battle with censorship, which shows in the final product, namely in the film's title and in its depiction of the enemy. The film merits comparison with the likes of other antiwar pictures of the end of the century, similar in their depictions of genocide during World War II.

¹⁹³ *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (New Yorker Films, 1985).

¹⁹⁴ *Schindler's List*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (Universal Pictures, 1993).

CONCLUSIONS

With this investigation, it becomes abundantly clear that neither realism nor classical liberalism are complete enough tools to analyse the dynamics of power in international politics. The Cold War has shown us how volatile the international order is to ideology. Constructivism, on the other hand, with a perspective that focuses more on the different elements of ideation and human bias is a factor that cannot be avoided when understanding international politics. Film in particular is a good medium with which constructivism can be analysed. The ideational factors that influence international politics are in no small part shaped by narratives in culture, and these narratives come largely from film. These narratives in turn form the ideology that is present in both state governments, and the general public opinion. As it pertains to the period that is object of this study, concepts such as militarism, class war and the arms race are all narratives that were ubiquitous in the film productions at the time.

Soft power, propaganda and nationalism prove that states have more than sufficient tools to prove that, just because there is a *status quo* in international society it does not mean that said *status quo* is permanent and unchangeable. Soft power in particular gives nations a potent tool to influence public opinion, attract allies and control the narrative surrounding a nation's image. It is for this reason that we believe that a constructivist approach is more suitable and necessary to understand the contemporary dynamics of relations between nation-states.

Cinema played a not unimportant role in moulding ideology in the spheres of influence of both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, evidenced by significant state involvement in the countries' respective film industries. Though evidently not all films released during the Cold War were propagandistic in nature, the screenplays and aesthetic sensibilities of many were inevitably tainted with the ideology that was present in the public consensus of the time. That, however, is not to say that cinema was essential in furthering ideology. Cinema as an ideological tool has certainly not been without its limitations, which is evidenced both in time-specific examples such as Cuban anti-Americanism, and in present day examples like the overwhelmingly negative view of the Polish public towards Russia. Simply put, though cinema was not a hinderance in the dissemination of ideology, it was far from the only tool that both superpowers had at their disposition for attracting both allies and non-allies.

Regarding the success of the United States's film industry as propaganda compared to the Soviet Union, a couple of things can be said. Firstly, there is no doubt that the U.S. put a substantial amount of economic and even military resources into its film industry in order to create a weapon of ideological warfare. Secondly, regardless of the effectiveness of the message in the films, the United States' propagandistic efforts were distinctly more covert, romanticising United States institutions, particularly the military, but in many instances without so much as depicting them directly. The success of militaristic films such as *Apocalypse Now*, *Rocky IV* and *Rambo* at both the domestic and international box office are good indicators of this. The Soviet Union on the other hand, was much more direct in portraying the vitality of the socialist cause, the danger that the ruling class posed, and the necessity of revolution, as we can see in films such as *Battleship Potemkin* or *I Am Cuba*. This subtlety, or at least the attempt to be subtle, has contributed to the success of United States propaganda efforts, even though films like *Dr. Strangelove* also show limitations of this.

Propaganda, as we have seen, is a highly relevant concept as it pertains to discussing the dynamics of power in international relations and politics. The creators of propaganda will often

use their knowledge of human psychology in their advantage to create a product that will trigger a specific way of thinking in its targets. When it comes to ideology, propaganda brings to the surface what the Ideological State Apparatuses usually keep implicit. We have also discussed how ideology has a strong emotional effect on the masses, as individuals often want to be seen as belonging to a group, and displays of dissent, or of thinking against the current can often times result in condemnation and exclusion.

Nationalism plays a strong part in the use of propaganda as well, as propaganda is one of the main and most explicit mediums in which the ideology of the state is instrumentalised, as well as promoted both inside and outside the borders of a nation. Nationalism creates, and often fabricates a national identity that the people within a nation can see themselves in. This image can eventually become weaponised by states looking to expand their influence by portraying the nation as something worth defending, an argument that propaganda communicates rather effectively.

The examples shown in the chapters of this discussion, like music, sports, or the space race, prove to show that there was a strong cultural component to the Cold War that both the United States and Soviet governments utilized to their advantage, in many instances hijacking the cultural narratives to disseminate their ideology and values through them. As to cinema specifically, one can say with certainty that it was able to succeed above other media as an instrument for the dissemination for ideology and propaganda. While there are elements in other mediums that have certainly remained memorable, such as the space race as an exhibitor for scientific and technological advances; or the Moscow and Los Angeles Summer Olympics in sports; few media have been able to leave such a lasting impact in the collective mythos of present-day United States and Russia.

The Cold War was a time defined by extremely elevated tensions between the two superpowers. The accumulation of nuclear weapons on both ends caused a fear on both sides, as well as on the rest of the international panorama, that assured that any kind of direct physical warfare could result in catastrophe. Therefore, it was obvious to both the United States and the USSR that they would have to look for alternative ways to battle for influence on the international stage, which was unambiguously displayed in film. But at the same time, it would be a mistake to insinuate that all film that came out of the Cold War was a cynical propaganda instrument. The films of Kubrick, Tarkovsky, Coppola and Klimov prove that there were works of undeniable artistic merit that came out of this ideological conflict. Cinema hence towed a line during this time between the furtherance of ideology and allowing for creative freedom and artistic ideology. At the same time, there is no denying that censorship has influenced creativity in certain ways, especially as it applies to systemic critique of the governments in power, or of the states' war machines.

The films selected for our case studies are a good showcase of a lot of the points stated above. Though not all of them are overt pieces of ideological propaganda, the implicit messaging is relatively similar. While *I Am Cuba* established a clear dichotomy between good and evil in its internal ideology, *Dr. Strangelove* and *Come and See* blur the lines a bit more, particularly regarding the morality of their protagonists, whether we are talking about the inclusion of a former Nazi scientist as a top government advisor in the United States, or the ruthlessness of the Belarusian partisans in the face of the genocide of their own people. Regardless, ideology still persists in all three films, propaganda or not. In all films, the threatening force that the characters are up against is seen as evil and undesirable, thus looking

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to discredit it. Though the films might be critical of the political *status quo*, they are nonetheless vested in their ideology to some extent, and this comes through in the film's messages, whether this choice is deliberate or unconscious.

This study can ultimately serve as a snapshot of the inner workings of cultural diplomacy during the 20th century. Although limited in its scope, we can extract that, even though soft power is a relatively new concept in the study of international relations, it has been indisputably present since long before Joseph Nye's concept of the term. One can even argue that the Cold War was the time where soft power took off as a strategy for foreign policy. This project can also serve as a model to study the employment of cinema as an instrument soft power in other countries at different points in history, as well as to investigate the use of soft power through different media, such as television, sport or music. Soft power has nevertheless changed since the beginning of the new millennium: the advances in technology, as well as the increment in social media have especially had big influence over this, but there has also been a shift in more traditional media: phenomena like the K-pop genre in music, or the film industries of countries such as India, China and Nigeria give the current landscape of soft power a very different sensibility than that of what it was over three decades ago.

We must also, however, state the limitations of our study, particularly insofar as it surrounds the last section. Since as stated, film has often been neglected as an object in the field of international relations, there is a relative lack of literature on the topic from an international relations perspective specifically. As such, a lot of the research has been done through the study of film in other areas such as sociology or political science. Furthermore, a part of the research relied on the author's own critical analysis of the film and the reception of both film critics and the general population of the studied films.

All in all, we believe that film facilitates a fascinating look into both the human psyche and the broader web of social relations that connect us all, and the impact of this medium is clearly present in international relations as well. Just as interesting is the way in which film serves to bridge a gap between the population and states through ideological dissemination informing the way that everyday citizens see the states and governments that rule over them, and vice versa, which the selected films show case. It is for this reason that we advocate for more thorough research into film in international relations, as it is an undeniably helpful tool in understanding the ideational factors that shape our international society.

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