International Relations Reflected Through the Camera Lens The West's representation of the Third World.

Jihan Joseph
CUNY City College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses
Part of the International Relations Commons

Recommended Citation
http://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses/199
International Relations
Reflected Through the Camera Lens
The West’s representation of the Third World.

By Jihan G Joseph

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE IN MASTERS OF ART IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

February 2012
City College

Faculty Advisor Professor Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner
Abstract

In the pursuit of studying international relations often the subject of culture is left out of the conversation. This thesis focuses on the unlikely subject of film to discuss the importance of culture in international relations. It analyzes at Western film’s portrayal of the developing world and explores the connection of film and international relations.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2: Research Design .................................................................................................... 5
  Definitions ............................................................................................................................... 5
  Literature Review ................................................................................................................... 10
  Looking Forward .................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter 3: Africa .................................................................................................................... 20
  African Queen ....................................................................................................................... 23
  Zulu ....................................................................................................................................... 29
  The Last King of Scotland .................................................................................................... 34
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 37

Chapter 4: The Middle East ................................................................................................... 39
  Casablanca ............................................................................................................................ 41
  The Battle of Algiers ............................................................................................................ 45
  Syriana .................................................................................................................................. 53
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 59

Chapter 5: Asia ....................................................................................................................... 60
  Anna and the King of Siam .................................................................................................... 61
  Apocalypse Now ................................................................................................................... 67
  Slumdog Millionaire ............................................................................................................ 71
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 78

Chapter 6: Latin America ..................................................................................................... 80
  The Treasure of Sierra Madre ............................................................................................... 82
  Salvador .................................................................................................................................. 86
  Colombiana .......................................................................................................................... 92
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 98

Chapter 7: Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 100

Work Cited .............................................................................................................................. 106
Chapter 1: Introduction

Western films are recognized worldwide grossing billions of dollars through box office, DVD, and brand sales and producing superstars. With the popularity of western films we can safely say that the message of directors, producers and screenplay writers is being transmitted to millions of viewers in the West and worldwide. Films can be powerful conveyors of information, introducing the audience to events, situations, areas of the world, and events which do not have a direct effect on their daily life and are hard for them to imagine. Films have the potential to broaden our world view. They have the power to create “understandings of particular events, national identities and relations to others.”¹ They give us a sense of who “we” are as well as who the rest of the world or “them” is.

The developing world is often depicted in western films; however, on many occasions the landscape and the people who live in it, become a mere backdrop for the main story that unfolds on the screen. The Indiana Jones series is an example of the western protagonist as the focus of the film while the developing world is just the environment in which he is navigating to get to his goal. Other films focus on events and individuals in the developing world, for example The Last King of Scotland, which is about former Ugandan president Idi Amin. Yet other films about the developing world open up discussions of controversies that need to be addressed such as Blood Diamonds.

The images that filmmakers choose to show and those that filmmakers choose not to show can also convey other underlying meanings. Early twentieth century films included pervasive stereotypes of people in the developing world. These films gave us an insight into what the western world thought about the developing world. For example, during World War II the

Japanese were seen as a threat to the West and were depicted negatively, while the people of China were seen being abused by the Japanese. The mystery series Charlie Chan was created during in 1936 and depicts a non-threatening Chinese character. The character possessed “Asian wisdom.”

China was seen as an ally of the West which led to positive stereotypes being created which was in opposition to other Asian stereotypes like “the yellow peril.”

Traditionally, international relations rarely focused on the importance of cultural elements in answering questions about state interaction. The dominant framework, realism, highlights the systemic level where states operate in a condition of anarchy that promotes self-help. There is no need to look “inside the box” when all states are seen as similar units operating similarly with given knowledge. Furthermore, realists pay only limited attention to nations outside of Europe, the United States and Canada because there is a focus on power.

The topic I will be exploring is the depictions of the developing world in western popular films. Are there particular images intended to depict the people of a particular region and if so what are they? Have these images changed over time? In addition, I wish to investigate the historical accuracy of the films and how they depict the relations of the region with “the West.” I hypothesize that there are indeed particular images and stereotypes in films that change over time. These images reflect, positively or negatively, relations that the regions or countries have at the time with the western states. The historical details tend to be skewed to reflect what these relations are. Of course, the West is not the only place where films are made. There is Nollywood, Bollywood, and a host of other film industries and independent filmmakers around the world. However, Western films are the most widely consumed by the entire world because the industry is better funded, and equipped with bigger studios with the power and the

---

manpower to advertise films to wider audiences and place films in more cinemas worldwide, This means that the images that dominate tend to be western.

In conclusion, this thesis will look “inside the box” to help us understand how policy is reflected through cultural expressions of a state. We can gain an understanding of international relations by not only looking at the system or even at domestic politics but at the culture of states as well. This thesis will help broaden the study of culture and identity in international relations. Films have an international appeal. They give us an insight into what “we” think about the rest of the world. Images in film are reflections of the cultures that produce them. When we look at films we are able to critique how “we” constitute “the other,” our views of the other and who “they” are. For instance, is Africa truly the “dark continent” still wild and untamed? Or have we moved on from that image? Is the Middle East full of terrorists who pose a grave threat to the United States? Is that why we are still fighting a war in Afghanistan? Film cannot answer questions about what policies have or have not been implemented in the developing world. However, it has the ability to help us understand the types of images created by the western world and can help us then look at international relations in a broad sense to compare and contrast what issues are important in the West and what issues are pushed to the background of international discussion.

This work aims to help us understand that what “we” or the West believe about “them” or the developing world does affect foreign policy in the Western world. In order for there to truly be an “international community” or a community of people who are all viewed as equal members of the same planet we must first uncover the biases that exist within our cultures that continue to create tension in international relations.
The next chapter will focus on defining terms such as “the West” and “developing world.” I will also look at the written work of scholars in international relations, as well as anthropology and films that speak about “otherness” and the creation of “otherness.” I will also discuss works on stereotyping in film and media. The subsequent chapters will be divided by region and by time period. I will look at films about Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, and I will end with the Middle East.
Chapter 2
Research Design

Throughout the following chapters I will explore the depiction of the developing world in Western popular film. I hypothesize that there are particular images and stereotypes in films that change over time. These images that are produced will reflect relations that the regions or countries have with the Western states.

I will focus on films that were funded by production companies in the United States and Europe and that were set in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, The Middle East, Asia and South East Asia. I will look at the images of the countries produced on film, and the themes highlighted, as well as the images of the people who live in each region. I will focus on three films depicting each region. I will focus on films produced during the following three time periods to locate changes in images of each region: 1940s-1950s (the end of World War II), 1960s-1980s (the height of independence for Afro-Asia), and 1990s-2000s (Present Day). I will also compare the images to the historical events that were taking place when the film was made in order to determine whether the film accurately depicted or skewed the events for a certain purpose. In addition, I will look at the relations between the country or region and the West to see if the films reflected the tenor of relations at the time. In short the three aspects of the films I will look at are: 1) images of the people; 2) historical accuracy; 3) effect of relations between the West and the region.

Definitions

Before going further, there are a few terms that must be defined. The first two terms that must be defined are “culture” and “identity.” Culture and identity were once studied as biological components of human existence. In social science there was a recasting of the two as social
constructions, which are both fluid and can exist on multiple levels.\(^1\) Anthropologists define culture in different ways. Culture is defined as “traditions and customs, transmitted through learning, that govern the beliefs and behavior of the people exposed to them.”\(^2\) “Cultural structures consist of the stock of interlocking beliefs, ideas, understandings, perceptions, identities or what we simply call ‘knowledge.’”\(^3\) In international relations, culture has been defined as “a broad label” that refers to both a set of evaluative standards (such as norms and values) and a set of cognitive standards (such as rules and models) that define what actors exist in a social system, how they operate, and how they relate to each other.\(^4\)

Identity, like culture, has multiple meanings. Identity is defined by *Webster’s Third International Dictionary* as “sameness in an essential or generic character in a different example or instances.” In addition, the volume defines identity as “selfsameness,” “oneness,” “unity and persistence of personality”\(^5\) or as “the condition of being the same with something described, claimed or assessed.”\(^6\) Identity is defined as the clear distinction between the self and the other in a modern state.\(^7\) Alexander Wendt goes further by naming two separate kinds of identities: corporate identities and social identities. Corporate identity “refers to the intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actor individuality.” For the human being it consists of the physical body, consciousness and ideas. In institutions or organizations this is where individuals

---


\(^6\) Ibid, p. 1123.

Corporate identity motivates states to interact with one another and work together on a higher level in order to achieve like goals; it also has a singular quality. Social identities are “a set of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of the other, that is, as a social object.” Actors usually have multiple social identities which have both individual and social structural properties.

Culture and identity are related but not the same. While culture “typically provides materials needed to delineate identity groups…identity groups do not always constitute separate” cultural artifacts. In addition, culture may change, while “identities frequently persist, precisely because each fulfills different important functions for the individuals or society.” Stereotypical images are produced in cultural artifacts such as in film, and other media because of an understanding of our identity in relation to others.

Postmodernists believe that identity can be deconstructed and is built around interactive methods. In international relations there are two views of how the identity of the other is created. The first view is favored by liberal constructivists; states acquire identities through interaction with other states. In critical constructivism, however, identity is acquired through discourses of international norms and the differences that they create. By creating one’s own identity the state is creating the other by looking at the different norms and rules which the other follows. Critical constructivists draw on the literature of post-structuralism.

---

11 See Lapid, p. 9.
12 See Lapid p. 9.
14 See Rumelili, p. 31.
15 Ibid, p. 33.
Stuart Hall states that identity is “constructed within discourse” and in order for us to understand it we must first look at and understand the histories and the institutions in which they were created. He goes on to say that identities “emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity.” Power plays a role in the creation of the identity of the Other. The self “is constituted within relations of control and is deeply embedded within systems of knowledge and discourse.” The deconstruction of the self can be used to understand how the Other is constructed.

“The West” and “the Third World” are two other terms that need defining. The West most often is used to refer to the continent of Europe as well as the United States and Canada. The West is defined as “regions or countries lying to the west of a specified or implied point of orientation.” Specifically, “during the cold war it was used to define the non-communist countries of Europe and America.” Also it is an adjective to describe people, culture or institutions that are “characteristic of the West.” The West is also studied through the discourse of power. “In the history of the world the West is often presented as a cohesive community, its evolution following a natural progression from ancient times to the future.” The discourse looks at the “West” as modern, forward thinking, and the model of the world, while the rest of the world is backward and in need of guidance. “The West” is seen as superior to the “rest” of the world.

18 See Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, p. 2597
19 Ibid, p. 2597.
20 Ibid, p 2597.
The definition of what is meant by “The West” has changed over time and has evoked “different images in different contexts.”\(^{22}\) “The West” has racial connotations meaning “white” or “European” versus the rest, meaning nonwhite. “For many the West, its practices, institutions and norms form the core of globalization. Others understand the West as a regional, cultural community rather than a global one which is powerful.”\(^{23}\) In this paper “The West” will be used to refer to both a regional construction and an identity. The “West” as a region is defined in this paper as Western Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and North America excluding Mexico. The identity of the “West” draws from a discourse of power through a history of colonialism, a dominance in international institutions, as well as a dominance in international markets.

The “rest” is usually reserved for the rest of the world seen in contrast to the “West.” Today this contrast is called the “Third World,” also referred to as the “Global South” or “Developing World.” The phrase “third world” appeared during the middle of the 1950s in France referring to the decolonized areas of the world. It was a phrase that referred to the divisions of the world between the rich and the poor; the old and the new.\(^{24}\) Edward W. Said speaks about the construction of the “Orient” or the Middle Eastern world as opposed to the “West.” The construction of the east or the “Orient” is a place of difference and inferiority culturally, linguistically, and racially.\(^{25}\) This view of the Orient can be extended to the view of the Third World. There was an “otherness” constructed around the Third World. Said uses the literature of the West on the Middle East to deconstruct the “Orient.”\(^{26}\) The Third World encompasses about “seventy or eighty countries, the number depending on which criteria are

---

\(^{22}\) Ibid, p. 7.
\(^{23}\) Ibid, p. 8.
\(^{26}\) Ibid, pp. 15-27.
employed when assessing country membership of this “hazy world.” Membership of the Third World often depends on point of view. In this paper I will speak of the Third World, Global South, or Developing World as the countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East. It is an identity that is placed on the countries that are not part of the “West.” These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to this identity and geographic area.

### Literature Review

The link between film and international relations is rarely studied. In *International Relations on Film*, Robert Gregg speaks about film as a method that will help enhance learning international relations in the classroom. One example is the film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), which has been used to explain decision making and the security dilemma during the Cold War. There are also some drawbacks to using film as a learning tool. One is that third world film makers have a hard time making and distributing their stories worldwide. The West dominates the film industry and stories are told through a Eurocentric lens.

Stereotypes in film are studied through cognitive perspectives. Charles Berg states that the first step to stereotyping is the brain’s ability to create categories based on gross differences. All human brains do this in order to process, store and recall data about everything we know. This could be a bag, a chair or a desk. The mind creates order from a disorderly world. Our brains also take another step and create value-laden categories, which mean that we assign negative and positive connotations to categories. We assign these connotations to things as well.

---

27 See Lyon, p. 140.
29 S. Kurbick, Columbia Pictures, United States.
30 See Greggs, p. 10.
as groups of people. Berg states that two elements, ethnocentrism and prejudice, help negative connotations to evolve.\textsuperscript{31}

Psychologists use different theses assess stereotypes. Four refer to the characteristics stereotyping of the Other: 1) Stereotypes are applied with rigid logic. There is an assumption that every member of an out-group will behave in the same manner, and have the same characteristics. An example is that all people of African descent know can play sports. 2) Stereotypes may be based on a fact. A trait of one or a few people in an out group may be extended to every one of the out group. 3) Stereotypes are gross oversimplified generalizations that are meant to stand for a group of people. “Stereotypes flatten, homogenize, and generalize individuals within a group, emphasizing sameness and ignoring individual agency and variety.”\textsuperscript{32} They create a view that everyone in a particular group is the same with little to no variation. 5) Stereotypes negate the complex histories, culture, politics and identities of the subjects. A particular stereotype may have a grain of truth but may come from a more complex point in history.

Others refer to the effects of stereotyping: 1) although, stereotypes, of the in-group and out-group are used, the out-group stereotyping of the in-group do not carry the same weight as the reverse. The stereotypes of the out-group are used to disenfranchise them. 2) The in-group stereotypes itself. This is a way to weed out what behavior is not acceptable inside the in-group. 3) Stereotyping “creates its own history” by repetition while “omitting the important historical details.”\textsuperscript{33} 4) Stereotypes are used to predict the Other’s behavior. However they are based on ethnocentrism and prejudice and are therefore not only unfair generalizations but also very poor

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p. 18.
predictors. 5) Stereotypes are repeated in storytelling, in film, on television and in literature. The repetition of stereotypes tends to normalize them and they become “invisible” within the stories. We then expect people of the out group to act in certain ways because the stereotype has been embedded in our minds. One such example is the stereotyping of the African American as gangster. 6) Stereotypes are believed by the in group as well as the Other. This leads to the beliefs that the Other is naturally “bad, unworthy, despicable”. Once beliefs are formed in a person’s mind, they will find evidence in future encounters with the out-group. 7) Stereotypes also reflect an ideological view of power and subordination. They allow the in group to assert the Other’s inferiority and explain why the Other must be dominated. Finally, “The creation and circulation of stereotypes in the media function to maintain the status quo in yet another way: by defining the Other.” Stereotypes ensure that the boundaries between the in-group and the out-group or the status quo are kept intact. 8) Since, stereotypes are a substitute for the lack of knowledge about the Other, with greater knowledge of the Other the stereotypes are exposed and begin to break down.

Cognitive studies have also been applied to international relations to understand decisions made by policymakers. Cognitive studies challenge the assumption that actors are rational. There have been a number of research programs undertaken including those that look at images of enemies. Image theory is an example of cognitive studies where theorists “suggest that ideas about other actors in world affairs are organized into schemas, or images, with well-defined

---

34 Ibid, p. 17.
36 Ibid, p. 22.
cognitive elements.”39 The context of intergroup relations must be understood in order to understand the beliefs and stereotypes that are derived. Structural features, or the way an international actor is evaluated by another, “play an important role in determining the specific images countries have of one another.”40

There are three critical structural features of “perceived international relationships that lead to associated images: (1) goal compatibility; (2) relative power/ capability; (3) relative cultural status or sophistication.”41 The three features are used to assess the threat or opportunity presented by other states, and are used to produce “behavioral tendencies toward the nation and evoke specific cognitive schema, or images of that nation.”42 Countries reproduce certain images about one another: for example, the enemy, the ally, and the barbarian, imperialist, and dependent (colonial) images. Enemy images, which are the images most studied in international relations, result when a state is viewed as “evil, opportunistic, and motivated by self-interest.”43 The enemy state is usually comparable in relative power and cultural status, but has incompatible goals. The Ally image refers to those states that are viewed with trust, and as having altruistic goals. Policymakers will give support to the leaders of the ally state. A state evaluates the ally state as having compatible goals, and power as well as cultural status. Barbarian images refer to states that are viewed as “destructive, intimidating and irrational, led by highly emotional leaders who could obliterate one’s own nation at the slightest provocation.”44 These images are formed when the target state has incompatible goals, and a lower cultural status, but has power that

40 Ibid, p. 27
41 Ibid, p. 29
42 Ibid, p. 29
43 Ibid, p. 29
44 Ibid, p. 31
exceeds the image creators’ own. Dependent images are created when a state has been or is being exploited and results from the target state having incompatible goals, lower status and lower power. The target state is viewed as “vulnerable, disorganized, and generally ineffective, incapable of taking care of itself and in strong need of guidance and direction.” This gives the creators of the images a sense that they are helping the state, and allows them to take advantage of the nation. In turn, the imperialist image is given to nations that are seen to have higher power, cultural superiority, and incompatible goals. This results in the nation being viewed as “controlling, exploitative, and dominating.”

Creators of images may cast a state with different images throughout history. For example, Jerel A. Rosati highlighted the work of Ole Hosti which focused on Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and the images he held about the Soviet Union. Hosti found that Dulles’ view of the Soviet Union was “extremely hostile” and “rigid and resistant to change regardless of the changes within the Soviet Union.” Hosti believed the prolonged conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union could be explained by the image concept. Similarly, Michele G. Alexander et al use image theory in their work which discusses images that a sample of Lebanese citizens holds about the United States and the possible link it has with US-Lebanese relations. In 2001 the researchers used a sample of one hundred and forty five questionnaires in order to analyze what images people in Lebanon had about the United States. The hypothesis stated that the sample will view the United States as having more power than Lebanon but incompatible

46 Ibid, p. 31.
47 See Rosati, p. 56.
48 Ibid, p. 56.
49 See Alexander et al, p. 36.
goals and a lower cultural status. Their findings showed that the Lebanese image of the United States was barbarian image.\textsuperscript{50}

One way in which images are formed and promoted is through the media. The media have been studied in international relations through the theory of the so called “CNN Effect” which refers to the effect 24 hour news stations have on public opinion and policy making in humanitarian military interventions. Although the CNN Effect deals most directly with television news, it can be connected to how video images of all kinds have an effect on the public. Some government officials, including General Colin Powell, the former U.S. Security of State, have refuted the view that news stories have a direct effect on policy making.\textsuperscript{51} Others, including Anthony Lake, chief foreign policy advisor during President Clinton’s administration, maintain that “public pressures” which are “driven by televised images, increasingly play a role in decision making.\textsuperscript{52} The research on the CNN effect encompasses case studies of military interventions in Haiti, Somalia, Northern Iraq, Kuwait, as well as Kosovo.\textsuperscript{53} The researchers employ different frameworks in order to study this effect, many assuming that news can “make policy.”\textsuperscript{54} Some, however, try to prove the opposite, that it is really the case of the “manufacturing consent” which argues that the “political elites impel news makers to ‘read’ global events in a particular way.”\textsuperscript{55} Two versions exist of this theory. The first is called the “executive version” which “insists that news media reports conform to what is loosely called the official agenda.”\textsuperscript{56} The second is called is the “elite version” which states that “news coverage

\textsuperscript{50} See Alexander et al, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, p. 31
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid p. 302.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, p. 303.
conforms with the interest of the political elites, where elites are defined broadly as members of
the executive, legislative or other politically powerful groups.”

The elite version highlights the
fact that news coverage is only important when there is some kind of conflict within the power
center. The news then becomes an important vehicle on which executives base decisions.

When the images of a humanitarian disaster such as a war or famine are aired on
television, the public’s consciousness is raised. The public begins to rally for something to be
done about the crisis. In democratic states public opinion is an important factor that governments
take into consideration because the policymakers are elected to office for a fixed term. The
opinion of their constituents may determine whether they or their political party are reelected for
another term in office. Feeling pressure from the public the government will act by intervening in
the situation. The 1992 intervention in Somalia, Operation Restore Hope, is often cited as an
example of the CNN Effect. The televised images of people starving in Somalia raised the
consciousness of people living the United States and led to a mobilization of the American
public. Arguably, the pressure from the American people during an election year caused the
Bush Administration to send troops to Somalia. In October 1993, there was a firefight on the
streets of Mogadishu where at least 17 American soldiers were killed. Media pictures of a soldier
being dragged through the streets were aired around the world. Public opinion shifted against
the operation in Somalia and American troops were pulled out of Somalia shortly thereafter.

57 Ibid, p. 304.
58 P.V. Jakobsen, “Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management Is
As for film, scholars maintain that the images on the screen are influenced by what the public believes about a certain group. Robert Brent Toplin discusses the relationship between public opinion and the depiction of disenfranchised groups in the United States in film. Film tends to reflect the views of the American public of a particular out-group in film. He points out that filmmakers do not always have a political or social aim and it may be their own vision shining through. Also production companies focus on what will sell. However, “filmmakers must keep their antennae directed to the changing moods of prospective customers, and rarely do they plan a production without serious consideration of audience appeal.”

Films show what people feel, think and desire. Many of the images in films of disenfranchised groups in the United States reflect what the public opinion about the dominant groups was at the time.

At the same time, film can be used as a consciousness raising tool. The director of Hotel Rwanda, Terry George, wanted to make a film about Western Africa and Central Africa because he believed that the film industry did not “deal with the continent at all.” Hotel Rwanda was a film that called attention to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 where 800,000 people were killed over the course of a few months. It also called attention to the lack of response by Western governments. Films can also seek to expose the untold stories. A film can strive to inform and mobilize the public for a cause. In so doing, the images in film can be used to connect people across cultures.

Looking Forward

The next few chapters are regional case studies intended to address my hypothesis that there are particular images and stereotypes in films that change over time and these images that

---

are produced will reflect relations that the regions or countries have with the Western states.

Chapter 3 will focus on film about Africa from the immediate post-colonial period, to the current era. I will ask: 1) have the images changed and 2) do they reflect relations between Africa and the West. I will analyze the films *African Queen* (1951),\(^{63}\) *Zulu* (1964),\(^{64}\) and *Last King of Scotland* (2006).\(^{65}\)

Chapter 4 will ask the same questions with respect to the Middle East. *Casablanca* (1942)\(^{66}\) will help me identify what images existed during the 1940s. I will also discuss *Battle of Algiers* (1966)\(^{67}\) in regard to the struggle for independence. *Syriana*\(^{68}\) will allow me to discuss relations between the West, particularly the United States, and the Middle East in a post 9/11 world.

Chapter 5 focuses on Asia. I will discuss *Anna and the King of Siam* (1948)\(^{69}\) in regards to the end of World War II. Deconstructing the images of Vietnam *Apocalypse Now* (1979)\(^{70}\) will facilitate the discussion of the Cold War in the Developing World. *Slumdog Millionaire* (2009)\(^{71}\) will help us look at images of economic powerhouses in Asia in connection with the relations with the West.

In Chapter 6 I will focus on Latin America. The *bandito* character has been in the media since the early 1900s during the Mexican Revolution\(^{72}\) and evolved into the gangster of urban

---

\(^{63}\) J. Huston, United Artist, United States.

\(^{64}\) C. Endfield, Paramount Pictures, United Kingdom.

\(^{65}\) K. Macdonald, Fox Searchlight Pictures, United Kingdom.

\(^{66}\) M. Curtiz, Warner Bros., United States.

\(^{67}\) G. Pontecorvo, Rizzoli, Rialto Pictures.

\(^{68}\) S. Gaghan, Warner Bros., United States.

\(^{69}\) J. Cromwell, Twentieth Century Fox, United States.

\(^{70}\) F. Ford Coppola, United Artist, United States.

\(^{71}\) D. Boyle, Warner Bros., United Kingdom.

milieus.\textsuperscript{73} I will analyze \textit{The Treasure of Sierra Madre} (1948), \textit{Salvador} (1986),\textsuperscript{74} and \textit{Colombiana} (2011)\textsuperscript{76} for images of the Latin American region.

In Chapter 7, the conclusion, I will draw on the research to reflect the importance of looking at culture and identity in international relations.

\textsuperscript{73} See Berg, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{74} J. Huston, Warner Bros., United States.
\textsuperscript{75} O. Stone, Hemdale Film Corporation, United States.
\textsuperscript{76} O. Megaton, EuropaCorp, France.
Chapter 3
Africa

Western cinema has often painted Africa as a dangerous wilderness inhabited by primitive people. The films focus on the racial differences that exist between the West and Africa. The images of Africa and Africans used in film came from a process that constructed the Africans as the Other, the difference not only based upon language and culture, but also the color of their skin.

During the era of the slave trade and colonialism, colonizers used racialized ideas of Africans to prove their inferiority.¹ The images produced during colonialism were connected with the ideas of the era. This contrasted with earlier Western thought on Africa. The idea of Africa in antiquity was not based on race but on cultural and religious difference. During the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries European writers portrayed Africa as a “place of, mystery, monstrosity but some of the black inhabitants (notably the Christian Ethiopians) were depicted as possessing great beauty and power.”² Africans that resided in Europe during this time were considered undesirables because of the difference in religion rather than the difference in skin color.³

The theme of Africans as savages is a key theme starting in the sixteenth century.⁴ “While increasingly accurate accounts of the coastal kingdoms along West Africa were being reported in the sixteenth and the seventh centuries in England, the African interior remained a great mystery. Stories of the African interior as a place of danger and monstrosity are common in

---

³ Ibid p. 384.
the literature of this period, and over time a distinction formed between a coastal Africa which Europeans were engaged with, and reliant upon, for access to goods, and the unknown interior, where many of those goods (especially slaves) originated.⁵

The ideas associated with race and inferiority came out of the Atlantic slave trade. The use of Africans as slaves was begun with the Portuguese. The signing of the Treaty of New Utrecht, established Britain’s dominance of the transatlantic slave trade which in turn produced racist norms. Slave traders and the economies that were supported by the slave trade saw Africans as inferior as a rationalization for the cheap labor and the brutal treatment of slaves.⁶ In addition, the Bible was used as a source for justification of the slave trade. Africans were said to descend from Canaan. The story is that Canaan was cursed after his father, Ham, saw his father, Noah naked and did not help cover him up before calling his two brothers. His brothers covered their father and when Noah awoke, he cursed Ham’s son Canaan to be the “servant of servants.”⁷ Africans were said to be descendants of Canaan and therefore inherently slaves. In addition, pseudo-scientific studies were done to “prove” Africans were inferior, thereby justifying slavery.⁸

After years of petitions the Slavery Abolition Act of 1807 abolished the slave trade in Africa, and subsequently the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 abolished slavery throughout the British Empire. With slavery abolished, Africa became an object of conquest and exploration. It was during this time that Africa became known as “the dark continent.” The term was first coined by Henry M. Stanley in his two accounts of travels through Africa, In Darkest Africa and

---

⁵ See Bassil, p. 385.
⁶ Ibid, p. 386.
⁸ See Pieterse, p. 49.
Through the Dark Continent. Those who wrote about Africa painted a picture of it as a strange magical place, so different from Europe, with uncharted, “virgin” lands. Missionaries also became a large part of the colonial presence in Africa. “Churches had significant interest in encouraging missionary activity by promoting the idea of black Africa as a tabula rasa where increased British involvement would lead to the conversion of the ‘natives’ and ultimately to the congregation’s moral and spiritual fulfillment.” Missionaries usually used the term “dark continent” to refer to the lack of Christianity. Africans by the nineteenth century were viewed as being subhuman and comparable to apes and monkeys. A major theme applied to Africans was that they were a people without history. African peoples, histories, legal systems, and social structures were ignored. The governments were viewed as being tribal, ignorant and unenlightened. In the mid-nineteenth century Europe’s mission to dominate the continent was justified as a “civilizing mission.” Africa had already been painted in the imagination of Europeans as “a continent requiring the disciplined and tough guiding hand of a father towards his children.” This notion made it easy to exploit the people and the land during colonialism.

Africa is a diverse continent which encompasses many different cultures, religions and identities across fifty-three countries. In this chapter, I define Africa as sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa will be discussed in Chapter 4 in regards to the Middle East. Although North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa form one continent and there lies a connection between the peoples on both sides, in many disciplines North Africa is taken out of Africa. Geographically speaking,
the two are separated by the Sahara desert. Going further, the two geographical categories also “confer specific identities on the people living within the boundaries.” Sub-Saharan Africans are seen as being more backward than North Africans. People in North Africa are considered “Arab” rather than “African.” North Africa is seen as part of the Mediterranean Basin and “associated with the Near or Middle East by sound historical, linguistic, ethnic and religious ties.” This is the case in many films: North African countries are linked with the Middle East. Moreover, the West has written two different discourses for North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a logical choice to discuss North Africa in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I will focus on three films about Africa: *African Queen* (1952), *Zulu* (1964), and *The Last King of Scotland* (2006).

*African Queen* (1952)

Accuracy of the Film

*Africa Queen* is an American made film, based on C.S. Forrester’s 1935 novel by the same name and set at the beginning of the First World War (WWI), in 1914 in a German colony in East Africa. Germany’s colonies in East Africa included: Burundi, Rwanda and Tanganyika (now part of present day Tanzania) until the end of the WWI. The story centers on Rose (Katherine Hepburn), “a spinster” from Britain who comes to Africa with her missionary brother, and Charlie Allnut (Humphrey Bogart), the Canadian captain of a riverboat named *the African Queen*. WWI begins in Europe and the colonies in Africa are not shielded from the horrors. The village in which Rose and her brother are missionaries is raided by soldiers, who are mostly Africans themselves, operating under the German flag. The people are taken and most of the

---

17 Ibid, p. 27.
18 See Bassil, p. 379.
house is burned to the ground. Shortly after the attack, Rose’s brother comes down with a fever and dies. During WWI, as depicted by this scene in *African Queen*, most Africans that served in WWI were pressed into service, directly or indirectly.\(^{20}\)

In the film, Rose tells Charlie of her brother’s fate when he arrives back in the village. He invites Rose to come with him and hide away so the Germans do not get their hands on the boat. When they do reach a safe place Rose comes up with a plan to blow up a German warship, named the *Louisa*, which would block any British ships from getting up the river and possibly block the British from the war on the African front. The plan would mean passing through dangerous rapids, by a German fort, and going down a waterfall. Thinking that Rose would change her mind and want to turn back, Charlie reluctantly agrees to steer the ship and help Britain win the war against Germany.

Throughout their journey Rose and Charlie bump heads many times, including about Charlie’s drinking. The story turns romantic along the journey down the river. Rose and Charlie finally reach the lake in which the *Louisa* patrols. They make torpedoes out of supplies that Charlie has on the steamboat including explosive paste. They take the *Africa Queen* out on a stormy night. The boat takes on too much water and sinks. Charlie and then Rose are captured by the Germans, who suspect them of being spies for the British government and are sentenced to death by hanging. As they are about to face their demise the *African Queen* rams into the *Louisa* causing it to sink and all the Germans and African deckhands to scatter. The film ends on a bright note as the lake is free for British soldiers to enter.

As *African Queen* depicts, WWI was also fought directly or indirectly on every continent and in every ocean on the planet.\(^{21}\) *African Queen*’s depiction of WWI focuses on Germany’s

---

\(^{20}\) Ibid, p. 7.

forces in Africa. Throughout the film we never see British or French soldiers. As in *African Queen*, the war in Africa was fought mostly by Africans themselves. “In all, somewhere over 2 million Africans served in the First World War as soldiers or laborers and upwards of 200,000 of them died or were killed in action.”\(^\text{22}\) The British and the French often blamed Germany for militarizing Africa during the war with German colonial forces named the *Schutztruppen*.\(^\text{23}\) However, France and Britain also employed Africans in the wars, the majority of them served as porters and carriers.\(^\text{24}\) The white officers on both sides would have seven to nine porters traveling with them. Poor diet and disease often led to the porters falling victim to illness.\(^\text{25}\)

The film uses the events of WWI and builds a totally fictional story around it. Screenwriter James Agee and director, John Huston, kept closely to the story from the novel *African Queen*, including the fictional geography. “In the novel, the river, called the Ulanga at its north end and the Bora at its south, runs into a lake presumably Lake Victoria. (In fact, the rivers of East Africa do not run north-south into the Great lakes but away from them into the sea.)”\(^\text{26}\)

**Images of the Third World: Uncivilized Africa?**

Jeanne Van Eeden discusses the colonial gaze in relation to theme parks in South Africa. The theme parks utilize the imperial myths of Africa as “an exotic receptive, timeless space, a *tabula rasa* waiting to be filled by the imperialist imagination.”\(^\text{27}\) *African Queen* begins with a pan through the jungle accompanied by the sounds of wild animals such as monkeys and birds. Most of the film takes place on the river and there is a sense that there are vast amounts of

\(^{23}\) Ibid, p. 3.
\(^{24}\) Ibid, p. 3.
\(^{25}\) Ibid, p. 4.
untouched land in East Africa. There is a scene on the river that highlights the wildlife living along the river. The audience sees the beauty that lies along the river with a view of the flora and the wildlife. However, the film also gives a glimpse of the dangers, especially the insects and the maze that the river turns into.

Where there are buildings or any kind of structure, there are Europeans in the film. In the beginning of the film, the sounds of the wilderness are broken by the singing of a hymn and the camera pans to the First Methodist Church of Kungdu. This is one of the few times we see any Africans throughout the film. Those who are in the church are singing the hymn discordantly while Rose’s brother leads them and Rose plays the organ. The congregation appears to be disinterested and babbling something close to the words of the hymn. The service is interrupted by the arrival of the African Queen and Charlie, who throws a half smoked cigar on the floor. Some male villagers sitting outside of the church rush to retrieve the cigar and end up in a fight over the cigar. The commotion is enough to break up the church service that the missionary and Rose try so hard to keep together as more and more villagers join the fight or try to break it up.

The images are of a primitive people. The African congregation is unable to even pay attention at church service. Something like a half smoked cigar causes a ruckus in this village. The images are reminiscent of those written by missionaries in the nineteenth century. The missionaries in this film, Rose and her brother are in East Africa to bring Africans into the light. The images in the film show the seemingly impossible job that missionaries had to civilize the uncivilized. A second image of Africans in this film is of those Africans who work on the African Queen. One is playing an instrument while another is serving Charlie and helping light his cigar. On the boat it seems like a tranquil environment and the porters are “well behaved” as opposed to those in the church. The contrast between the two is meant to show that the
civilization of Africans is possible. It is also possible that the film conveys a Eurocentric idea of the subservient place of Africans to the West. The third image is of the Africans as soldiers in the German army. They seem brutal as they follow the German’s orders to burn down the village. More soldiers are shown again as the *African Queen* passes the German fort Shona. As they shoot at the boat they laugh as if they are playing a game. This image is of the dangerous African. Africans in the film are always shown in a group, never as individuals. They are never humanized, and given unique personalities, nor do any black Africans have speaking parts.

*African Queen* came on the heels of a long line of films about Africa with imperial themes. These films “promoted the triumphs of imperial soldiers, imperial administrators and imperial conquerors.”28 Rose’s goal is to make sure that the honor of the empire is upheld by creating a way for the British Empire to enter East Africa by way of the lake which the *Louisa* occupies. Throughout the film she also reminded Charlie that he was also part of the British Empire as a Canadian and should be along for the cause. This is the motivation throughout the film, no matter what danger they face or no matter how bleak the situation is. When they are captured by the German solders Rose makes sure that Germans know that she is fighting on the side of the British Empire.

**International Relations**

*African Queen* was filmed by an American studio, Horizon Pictures and then distributed by an American company, United Artists, in the era that followed the Second World War (WWII). WWII left Europe in a financially dire situation and Europeans could not afford to hold on to the colonies that they had. Decolonization on a mass scale began in the 1950s. The United States’ only interest in decolonization and Africa was due to its strong relationship with Europe. The policy in the United States focused on stabilizing the European economies. “At the

beginning of the 1950s, however, many American policymakers felt that decolonization could at least be postponed if not avoided altogether.” The idea was that Africa had benefited from the many years of colonialism. Also African colonies remained economically and strategically important to the Western nations. The United States also did not want to jeopardize relations with Western Europe by pressing for a more rapid decolonization process. 

At the same time, the Korean War was taking place and the interest in Africa at this time was relatively low on the U.S. policymakers’ list. During this time the United States had little real interest in Africa. Economically, Africa was seen as too underdeveloped for the United States to focus on in terms of investment. Later the issue that became most important was containing Soviet influence and communism. U.S. policymakers felt “that the growing strength of Third World nationalism threatened to unleash social disruption and political upheaval, which, if left unchecked, would facilitate Soviet penetration of the colonial world.” They thought that when the colonial powers recovered they would also regain their power over the colonies. However, nationalism did not go away, but got stronger and more vibrant. The assumptions that policymakers had about decolonization in Africa were based on stereotypes of “black Africans as politically naïve, socially volatile and, consequently, unready to govern themselves.” It was in 1958 that the United States Department of State opened up an African Bureau. Until then, all issues were handled by “the thinly stretched Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs.”

*African Queen* reflects the relationship that Africa and the United States shared after the Second World War. The film focuses little on Africa and Africans, rather on the relationship

---

31 Ibid, p. 50.
32 Ibid, p. 50.
33 See Metz, p. 520.
between Britain and Germany, which the United States had been intimately involved in. The United States had given Britain and Germany billions of dollars so they would be able to rebuild after the war. Africans in the film are represented as childlike, ignorant, and in need of guidance. Africans are seen as unable to rule their own affairs and create a stable government.

**Zulu (1964)**

**Accuracy of the Film**

*Zulu* is a period film based on the Battle of Rorke’s Drift, South Africa that took place in 1879, when the Zulu territory still operated as a kingdom independent from the British Empire. The kingdom had been weakened because of the death of Shaka Zulu, the king who had united the Zulu armies in 1828. It also was fragmented because of losses in battles against Afrikaaners and the British army. The film premiered in 1964, when apartheid began receiving international attention. This film would not be the last portrayal of Zulu nation, films such as *Zulu Dawn* (1979) and the miniseries *Shaka Zulu* (1986) were released after.

*Zulu* focuses on a relatively small band of British soldiers that manage to hold off the Zulu forces numbering in the thousands and at the end of the film both side win their mutual respect. The film begins with the narration of a dispatch telling of a defeat the British soldiers have experienced against the Zulu army after a bloody battle at Isandhlwana. The audience sees Zulu troops moving through the field picking up the rifles of the dead British officers. The following scene is of a mass Zulu wedding ceremony. A Swedish missionary (Jack Hawkins) and his daughter (Ulla Jacobsson) are sitting at the side of King Cetshwayo kaMpende. At that time a Zulu messenger disrupts the ceremony with news that the Zulu are at war with the British, which the audience learns from the missionary as he tells his daughter.

---

34 C. Endfield, Paramount Pictures, United Kingdom.
In the next scene the audience meets the soldiers at Rorke’s Drift. The outpost is unaware that British soldiers just lost a battle against Zulu warriors and are going about their daily activities. There is an army engineer, Lieutenant John Chard (Stanley Baker) who is trying to build a bridge, the commanding officer, Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead (Michael Caine) goes off to hunt, and other soldiers are hardly working or in the infirmary. When the soldiers are told of the impending battle, Lieutenant John Chard takes command of the outpost and creates tension between him and Lieutenant Bromhead. The outpost then must get ready for battle. A Boer settler advises them on the Zulu battle strategies. The rest of the film consists of the battle. The missionary also causes problems by trying to stop the soldiers at the outpost from fighting. He tells them to leave or they will die. Many English and Zulu soldiers die in the battle but the British manage to hold down the outpost with far fewer soldiers then the Zulu Army, all the while adapting to the attack strategies. At the end of the film the Zulu Army shows the British soldiers that they have earned their respect for a battle well fought.

_Zulu_ omits the reason for the mobilization of the Zulu army which makes it seem as if the Zulu army attacked the British soldiers with no good cause. One of the soldiers in the film asks why the Zulu decided to attack their regiment; the other solider answers “because we’re here.” The history of the Zulu-Anglo war is a bit more complex than that. In 1873, King Cetshwayo KaMpende mobilized his troops when faced with an invasion of British troops. The main motivation behind the war was to preserve Zululand. Zulus also had been in a conflict with the Boers over land since the 1830s, as the Boers moved further into Zulu territory in the northwest. In 1877, the British annexed Transvaal which brought the conflict to a head.36 Lord Cararvon, the Colonial Secretary in London, had plans for a federation of African states. The Zulu nation

---

was seen as an obstacle that needed to be conquered. Sir Bartle Frere was sent to South Africa to put this plan into effect. Once there he “began preparing the British government for any future action that he might be forced to take by sending reports to England on how ‘barbaric’ and ‘uncivilized’ the Zulu were, and how they were a threat to the British in Natal.”³⁷ UK Parliamentary Papers presented the Zulu people as well as other black Africans as “ignorant,” “barbaric,” and “childlike.”³⁸ He also appointed a high Commissioner of Native Affairs and a Governor of Cape Colony.

The 1878 border agreement prevented Zulus from entering into Boer territory and vice versa cooling tensions for a little while. However, due to a few isolated incidences that involved Zulu people disregarding the border agreement the border commission came to a decision to wage war against the Zulu nation. In December, an ultimatum was given to the king. Among other demands was for the king to disband the Zulu army.³⁹ British troops then advanced into Zulu territory. During the war Zulu troops were able to hold off British soldiers. However, on July 4, 1897 British troops burned down Zululand’s capital, Ulundi, and Zululand fell under the rule of the British Empire.⁴⁰

**Images of the Third World: Zulu Army**

There are two aspects of the image that *Zulu* creates about black South Africans: what is said about them and what is shown about them. Whenever something stereotypical is said about the South African warriors or the porters who work for the British, another character always counters the stereotype with a reason why the Africans deserve respect. The first example happens during the wedding ceremony when the missionary’s daughter says “it is quite

---

³⁷ Ibid, p. 121.
⁴⁰ See Bowman, p. 347.
wonderful and quite horrible too.” She is speaking in regards to the way young women get married in “droves” to older men “only to be widowed.” The missionary takes the opposing view stating that they are “great people.” He tells her that she will have to accept that if she is going to stay.

Another example occurs when the first officer and army engineer learn that, 1,200 soldiers have died at Isandhlwanat. The first officer makes a comment: “that leaves more cowardly blacks.” The Boer settler responds “they died on your side, didn’t they?” The filmmaker is speaking about the black African soldiers who took part in the Zulu-Anglo War. A third example is when officers in the infirmary make jokes about the Zulu soldiers being savages. A Swedish police officer who is in the infirmary with them tells the soldiers how well trained the Zulu forces are. The idea that they are just savage is wrong when they have a stronger army than the British because they train harder than the British.

Notwithstanding the attempt to give a balanced view of the Zulu soldier there are no attempts to actually show a different side of the Zulu. After the Zulu soldier brings the news that war has begun during the wedding ceremony, it seems as if all the soldiers are happy. One tries to prevent the missionary and his daughter from leaving but is shot with an arrow by a fellow Zulu. The Zulu warriors are also always shown in groups. The way the film portrays the number of soldiers “throws the film back to the cliché of savage horde.”\(^\text{41}\) The only time any Zulu is shown by himself is when he is killed by a British soldier. When Zulu warriors are on screen they almost always look menacing. The other black Africans shown in the film are porters who do manual labor. They are also expected to fight in the impeding battle. When the missionary tells them that they will go to hell if they kill their “brother,” the porters take the opportunity to run, making them seem to be cowards as opposed to the British soldiers who stay and fight.

\(^{41}\) See Cameron, p. 141.
International Relations

South Africa formed an independent state under minority rule in May of 1910, after the Anglo-Boer War. In 1948, apartheid was legalized in South Africa ensuring white domination in the country. Other British as well as French colonies were still waiting to gain independence according to the United Nations calendar. One worry of the West was Pan-Africanism. The worry for one was the “lack of genuine unity,” that could lead to conflict. In addition, there was a fear that the newly independent states would turn to the side of communism.

During the 1960s Britain shared good business relations with South Africa. While other countries called for placing sanctions on South Africa due to apartheid Britain was unwilling to do so. The film can possibly reflect the mixed feeling that existed about apartheid in the international community where the United Kingdom and the United States wanted to keep friendly relations open with South Africa while countries in the Third World objected. Another more possible interpretation of Zulu is that it reflects the anxiety that existed about newly independent states in Africa and the tensions that might arise with the British ally South Africa. The film’s images rely heavily on stereotypes of black Africans throughout the film, who are shown as primitive and dangerous. This reflects the idea of blacks in South Africa and throughout the continent.

The Last King of Scotland (2006)  

Accuracy of the Film

The Last King of Scotland is based on a 1998 novel by the same name by Giles Foden. The film and novel weave together real events and people while focusing on a fictional character, a young doctor Nicholas Garrigan who seeks adventure in Uganda at the beginning Idi Amin’s

---

rule. Dr. Garrigan (James McAvoy) and Idi Amin (Forest Whitaker) meet in the film when Idi Amin hurts his hand. After killing the injured cow that caused the injury to Amin, with Amin’s gun, Dr. Garrigan wins the respect of Amin. Dr. Garrigan becomes Amin’s personal physician and trusted advisor.

The film follows the rule of Amin as he becomes more unpredictable and paranoid. Dr. Garrigan witnesses the violence which the citizens of Uganda have to endure, yet defends the president’s rule over the country. Only after Amin takes his British passport and refuses to let him leave Uganda, is Dr. Garrigan faced with the realities of Amin’s rule. In The Last King of Scotland’s last scene Palestinian hijackers bring a plane full of passengers to the Ugandan airport and Amin gives the hijackers haven. A bodyguard finds out that Dr. Garrigan tried to poison Amin and Amin sentences him to death. With the help of Dr. Junju (David Oyelowo), Amin’s former personal physician, Dr. Garrigan is able to escape.

The director, Kevin MacDonald, said the film was an attempt to show a more human side of Idi Amin. The media called Amin everything from a buffoon, to a barbarian, to a cannibal. He had been accused of eating an archbishop’s liver. During his rule, 1971-1979, at least 300,000 people lost their lives. He also expelled the 50,000 Asians that lived in the country. In addition, Amin was accused of mismanaging the countries budget. Amin seized power after a military coup in 1971. The previous president Milton Obote had also jailed and tortured his enemies.44

The filmmaker strived for “authenticity” by utilizing the help of people who were alive during Amin’s rule.45 In The Making of the Last King of Scotland, people who lived through the rule of Idi Amin tell terrible stories of the climate of fear that Amin created in Uganda. Some had

45 “Kevin Macdonald in the Last king of Scotland”, Inside Out Film, (October 15, 2006), Date Access: 2/2/2012, Available Online: http://www.iofil.co.uk/filmmaking/production/kevinmacdonaldonthelastkingofscotland
lost family members due to his brutality, and people were afraid of the secret police, as well as Amin himself. Some remember Amin as a person who was not afraid to stand up to the West.

Images of the Third World

There is a more human side of Amin that is depicted in the film than was depicted in the media during the 1970s. He is not just a larger than life man who comes across the screen but a man who has weaknesses, and a past. At the end the viewer can still see him as a person although he committed horrible acts.

At the same time the story emphasizes on the idea that there is a cyclical culture of brutal rulers in Africa. In the beginning of the film Dr. Garrigan goes to a rally with his colleague’s wife, Sarah Merritt (Gillian Anderson), where Amin makes an appearance. While Dr. Garrigan is excited by Amin, Sarah remains unimpressed and states that the people cheered the same way for Obote a few years early. The line seems to say the leaders will change but the methods and the conditions have not and will not.

The choice to place a fictional white man in the story of Amin, so that we can understand or try to understand Amin deserves to be mentioned. At the end of the story while Dr. Junju is helping Dr. Garrigan, Dr. Garrigan asks why Dr. Junju is helping him. Dr. Junju replies that if you die you can do nothing. Alive you can tell the world what went on in Uganda and everyone will believe you because you are white. This could be interpreted as commentary on the way the film tells this African story. It is told by people from the West to the West and not by Africans themselves. The story becomes relevant when told by an outsider or someone white. The commentary can be extended to films that came out around the same time The Constant.
Gardener (2005)\textsuperscript{46} and Blood Diamond (2006),\textsuperscript{47} both about conflicts in Africa and whose main characters are white.

**International Relations**

The United Kingdom played a large role in Idi Amin’s coming to power in Uganda. Idi Amin served in the British Army before decolonization and rose through the ranks to become a major general. When Amin came into power the Foreign & Commonwealth Office felt that British interest would be served better with Amin in power then under Obote.\textsuperscript{48} However, during Amin’s rule relations were strained between Uganda and the United Kingdom.

Relations improved after Amin was ousted from power in 1979. The United Kingdom today is a donor country to Uganda giving millions of dollars per year. The United Kingdom has tried to use its power as a donor nation to influence the country’s human rights policies. For example in 2005 $15 million was withheld because the United Kingdom over concerns of rights abuse.\textsuperscript{49} More recently the British Prime Minster James Cameron threatened to withhold aid because of a proposed law that would make homosexuality punishable by death.\textsuperscript{50} Ugandan presidential advisor responded to the threat saying, “I believe it [the proposed law] will die a natural death. But this kind of ex-colonial mentality of saying ‘you do this or I withdraw my aid’ will definitely make people extremely uncomfortable with being treated like children.”\textsuperscript{51}

*Last King of Scotland* may represent the tensions that still exist between the former colonizer and former colonized. Amin’s policies went against human rights norms but he felt that

\textsuperscript{46} F. Meirelles, Focus Features, United Kingdom.
\textsuperscript{47} E. Zwick, Warner Bros., United States.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
he was ensuring his country’s sovereignty through anti-Western sentiment. The West still has a major influence on Uganda through aid. Despite the influence that the UK has on Uganda, policymakers look to create laws for Uganda without outside pressures from the West in their internal affairs.

In addition, the film may also reflect a wider view that Africa is full of corruption disease, and poverty. The *Last King of Scotland* was released the same year as another acclaimed film, *The Constant Gardener*, which focused on a corrupt company that uses Kenyan citizens as unwitting test subjects for a new drug and complicit government officials that allow it to happen. In 2006, *Blood Diamond* was released which was about the civil war in Sierra Leone and the greed for diamonds that enabled the war to rage on. The three films all use the line “this is Africa,” somewhere in the film, signaling the idea that Africa is a place of hardship that relies on the West for help in its internal affairs.

**Conclusion**

“The African continent typically is ignored in mainstream IR studies.”  

52 Africa is not seen as a major power in international relations and is typically studied in relation to the powers of the West. The stories that come out of Africa are those of sadness, poverty, war, corruption and disease. In the media, Africa is sometimes still called “the dark continent.”  

53 The West’s engagement in Africa has mostly been through aid work. Non-governmental organizations help uphold stereotypes of Africa as a place full of disease and poverty because of the competition for funding.  

54 These stereotypes may be to the detriment of Africa. Africa is a place where investors


can expect a good rate of return, yet many investors do not want to risk it because of the perceived danger from war and unstable governments.\(^{55}\)

Africa’s image has evolved, but the images have evolved from the savage lands of Africa to the Africa that is perpetually in need, waiting to be saved from some kind of atrocity. In international relations Africa is viewed as a continent where only bad things happen and that has nothing to contribute to the international arena. This image of Africa could be hindering the continent economically.

---

Chapter 4
The Middle East

Middle Eastern culture\(^1\) is posed as the opposite to Western culture, values and ideals. The Arab identity of the other has played out in literature, film, and news broadcasts over the centuries. In film, the Arab is often portrayed as having “cultural and ethnic traits that are inherently inimical to Western civilization.”\(^2\) As such, Arabs are often portrayed as villains. In Hollywood film, states Tim John Semmerling, there is an “Arab Kit” that makes a character instantly represent evil.\(^3\)

The Middle East is defined in terms of its religious, ethnic and linguistic bonds. Ninety-seven percent of the Middle East population identify as Muslim although they vary as to practice. In addition, people in the Middle East and its diaspora identify as Arab because they speak a dialect of Arabic.\(^4\) Much of the Middle East was under the control of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries. After the First World War the Ottoman Empire was dismantled and European powers stepped in to colonize the area.\(^5\)

Edward Said deconstructed the “knowledge” that was held about the Middle East in the West through the discourse of Orientalism which “expresses and represents that part culturally and even, ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.”\(^6\) The Middle East is represented through the gaze of Western hegemony. The ideas produced about the Middle

---

1. In this section I am not including Israel.
East have been filtered through doctrines of European superiority, various kinds of racism and imperialism. Said demonstrates through various texts and speeches how the West viewed the Middle East and used the knowledge of the Middle East to create the reasoning behind colonial rule. The discourse of Orientalism reinforced the idea that “they” or the Middle East are different from “us” or the West. During the eighteenth century “there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe…” The Middle East is shaped as being fundamentally different from the West.

The relationship between Europe and the Middle East was set by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798. However, the discourse on the Middle East can be traced back to antiquity. In plays such as The Bacchae, Asia was depicted as the “hostile ‘other’ world beyond the seas.” The Middle East was a representation of the opposite of the West. During the early Middle Ages, Islam appeared in Europe, and did not receive a welcome reception. “Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity.” The fear of Islam was connected to the invasion of Persia, Syria, and Egypt, then Turkey, and North Africa that took place after the death of Mohammed in 632. To Europe, Islam came to “symbolize terror, devastation, and the demonic hordes of hated barbarians.” Modern day news media coverage of fundamentalist groups harps back to these ancient ideas of Islam.

---

7 Ibid, p. 8.
9 Ibid, p.42.
10 Ibid, p. 56.
The “Orientalist fear,” a term coined by Semmerling, refers to “a genre of American popular film that depicts the ‘evil’ Arabs assailing or refuting those American ideological and mythical paradigms that are traditionally used to assert American conceptual discipline over the Arabs, their cultures, and their landscapes and to ensure the stability of American identity.” This fear drives the images that the public has about Arabs living in the West and in the Middle East. The way that Arabs are presented in films creates myths and illusions about the Middle East and the Diaspora. Semmerling speaks about this fear in the context of the 1970s onward.

For this chapter I have chosen three films which aim to show the complexity of the evolution of images of the Middle East: *Casablanca* (1942), *Battle of Algiers* (1966), and *Syriana* (2005).

**Casablanca (1942)14**

**Accuracy of the Film: WWII and Morocco**

In June 1940, France surrendered to Germany and was occupied. It was split into two zones; the first fell under direct control of the Nazi government and the other fell under the control of the Vichy government which was under German influence. The occupation was felt throughout the francophone colonies. On November 8th, 1942 the allied forces launched the successful Operation Torch in Algeria and Morocco by sea. *Casablanca* premiered on Thanksgiving Day in 1942.

The main character Rick (Humphrey Bogart), the owner of a nightclub, is asked to watch over stolen transit passes that would allow passage out of Casablanca into the United States, by a shady black market dealer, Signor Ugarte (Peter Lorre), who is arrested on the same night. A

---

Czech underground leader who escaped from a German concentration camp, Victor Lazlo (Paul Henreid) and his wife, Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman), Rick’s ex-lover, come to Casablanca en route to America to get away from the Nazi government that is chasing them. They go to Rick’s Café to purchase the transit passes. Under pressure as they are from the police in Casablanca, Rick is the couple’s only hope to get out of Casablanca to safety in the United States.

Images of the Third World: An Othering Place

There are very few images of Moroccans in this film. Only three native Moroccans have speaking parts throughout the entire film: one is an employee of Rick’s Café; the other two are marketplace salesmen. The waiter character is a servant, reinforcing the colonial population’s place in the service of the colonial master. Another negative image of people of North Africa in the film is that of street vendor who is trying to overcharge Ilsa for a garment. After Rick exposes the vendor as a cheat, the vendor lowers his price to fair market value. The images help to set up the idea of who “they” are as opposed to who “we” or the Europeans are. The North Africans are flat characters with underdeveloped personalities and occupations. The viewer is left with the two images at the end of the film, coupled with negative descriptions of Casablanca. All other natives of Morocco stay in the background of the film as extras. The city is shown as being full of Europeans who are looking to escape the war and when they arrive in Casablanca they are eager to escape the city as well.

The film paints the city as a place of danger. Some of the danger is because Morocco is under the influence of the Nazi government and there is desperation brought on by the war. The viewer gets a sense of this desperation in the opening scene which shows a pickpocket who warns a couple to watch their backs in the city. He then proceeds to steal the husband’s wallet. In a later scene, Victor Laszlo and Ilsa go to the police station at the request of Captain Louis
Renault (Claude Rains), the captain of police in Casablanca, and Major Heinrich Strasser (Conrad Veidt), a member of the Nazi army who is in Casablanca, Captain Renault warns Laszlo about the power that the Nazi government has in Morocco by telling them the fate of Signor Ugarte. Even though Morocco is unoccupied, the public officials are still under the influence of the Nazi regime. They have the power to say who leaves Casablanca and who stays. In some cases they have the power to say who lives and who dies. Early in that same scene Captain Renault asks Laszlo how he slept. Lazlo replies that he slept “very well.” Captain Renault says “that’s funny, no one is supposed to sleep well in Casablanca,” calling attention to the atmosphere of fear and discomfort in the city. In a later scene Major Strasser tells Ilsa, “My dear, perhaps you have already observed in Casablanca human life is cheap.” This is another warning so that she will persuade Laszlo to give up the names of resistance leaders.

Edward Said coined the term “imaginative geography” which refers to the boundaries that separate the land of the “civilized” from “the land of the barbarians.”\textsuperscript{16} In Casablanca, the milieu is constructed as that of the other. Casablanca is an uncomfortable place where bad things happen and people wait there in order to get to safety or the United States. This also calls to mind the difference between what is the West and the Third World and the imaginative boundaries drawn. While in the West there is a rule of law and an appreciation of life, in the Third World there are different rules one must play by.

At the same time, Casablanca is about the West and about Westerners. It just happens to take place in the Third World. The war has driven people from the West to seek safe haven wherever they can find it. The storyline has been interpreted as anti-Vichy in that Rick represents the United States government’s relations with the Vichy government of France. At the end Renault helps Rick by misleading the police after Rick kills Strasser. Renault throws the Vichy

\textsuperscript{16} See Said, p. 54.
water into the garbage which has been argued to symbolize Renault embracing Free France. At the very end Rick says, “This could be the start of a beautiful friendship.” Some have argued that this represents the opinion that the United States should begin to work with the Free French.  

**International Relations**

During WWII the countries of North Africa were under the influence of the French Vichy regime and could easily be viewed as an extension of Europe. The North African countries were directly affected by blockades set up by Allied nations to stop the Vichy supplies from reaching German armies. The Muslim population was severely impoverished due to food and energy shortages.

The United States had established diplomatic relations with the Vichy government in January 1941. The United States policymakers wanted to prevent the German penetration of North Africa and keep the information about the Vichy government flowing. However, on Germany’s request, the Vichy government severed ties with the United States after the Allied Troops landed in North Africa in November 1942 during Operation TORCH. The United States did not recognize the Free French as the official French government until October 23, 1944.

The distribution of *Casablanca* in North Africa was blocked by the Office of War Information (OWI), which had absorbed the Motion Picture Bureau. The OWI was afraid that it would alienate Vichy officials. Eighty to ninety percent of French citizens supported the Free French headed by Charles de Gaulle and based in Britain. Moreover U.S. public opinion was

---

20 Ibid, p. 156.
21 See Sennett, p. 6.
22 See Raskin, pp. 155-156
strongly against the Vichy government. Thus *Casablanca* expresses public opinion about the United States relations with the Vichy government.

The film is about a European war that happened to affect the Third World. The colonies of France are seen as an extension of France and therefore are Europe. The story is about the people of Europe and not about the people of the Third World; that is why the city is full of Europeans. The characters that are used to represent Moroccans in *Casablanca* are part of the background to the setting of the city rather than a part of the narrative. *Casablanca* represents North Africa as colonies of Europe and an extension of the battlefield. The narrative can also be connected with U.S. policy toward France. Morocco as a colony was seen as part of France. The United States recognized the Vichy government as the official government, while the Free France government operated out of Britain to win France’s independence once again.

*The Battle of Algiers* (1966)

Accuracy of film: Events of the Algerian-French War

Prior to independence in 1967, Algeria was colonized by France for 130 years. From 1830-1871, the country resisted the colonization of the French through a series of unsuccessful rebellions. Algeria was then incorporated into France in 1848. In addition, there were two major waves of French settlement in 1848 and 1881. Colonists were nicknamed the *colons* or *pied noirs* and they mostly settled in the big cities of Algeria, such as Algiers, Olan, Bourigie, Philippeville, and Bone. At the time of the War of Independence there were approximately one million European French living in Algeria and it would prove hard for France to give up a colony.

---

23 See Sennett, p. 6.
26 Ibid, p. 45.
which was so closely connected to it.\textsuperscript{27} On the other hand the majority of the people living in Algeria were Algerian Muslims who were not afforded the same rights as the French colonists. There was segregation in Algeria and a sense of two different countries: the European and the Arab and Muslim.

After the Second World War there was growing discontent on the part of the Muslim majority in the Maghreb who were dealing with severe poverty and racial inequality. France had been significantly weakened due to the war but was aiming to rebuild the French Empire. France also aimed to provide financial assistance to its colonies in North Africa to avert any subversive actions.\textsuperscript{28} In Algeria in 1945, France was able to repress an uprising. In 1952, first in Tunisia, then in Morocco violence broke out.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{The Battle of Algiers} takes place in Algiers during the 1950s and focuses on the Algerian struggle for independence from the French. The film follows the organization of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) in Algiers, Algeria. The film begins with Ali La Point as he is chased by police for gambling on the street. He is captured by police after being tripped by a \textit{pied noir}. When he is in prison he witnesses the execution of an FLN member by beheading. After his release he joins the group. His first task is to “clean up the street” by eliminating drugs, prostitution, and alcohol use. In one scene Ali La Point kills a brothel owner.

The FLN then focuses its energy on killing police officers in Algiers. To enforce the rule of law, the police first set up check points in and out of Casbah. However, when the killing continues a few police officers bomb a building in the Casbah which kills dozens of people. The FLN retaliates by bombing public places such as airport terminals and cafés in the European


\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p. 217.
quarter of Algiers. Paratroopers are brought in to stop the organization’s activities. Their plan is to cut off the communication between FLN members and to capture high ranking members.

The struggle for independence becomes an issue in the UN Security Council. The FLN calls a strike to show solidarity in Algiers. Men stay home from work, people of the Casbah take in the homeless and all shops remain closed. The FLN suspends all bombing activity. During this time the French military command starts Operation Champagne. They force people back to work, and force men out of their homes in order to interrogate them using methods of torture. The paratroopers also use propaganda, setting up loud speakers in the Casbah urging people to go back to work and to shed their loyalty to the FLN. Slowly they begin to close in on FLN members until they catch all the leaders. At the end of the film, Ali La Pointe and three other FLN members are cornered in their hiding place. They refuse to come out and paratroopers blow up the building they are in, killing them. The next scene is the capture of Saadi Yacef, the military commander of the FLN in the Casbah, who had organized the bombing campaigns.

The last scenes are of demonstrations that took place in 1960. The film ends with images of people dancing with the Algerian flag during the demonstrations even while being pushed back by police. Words scroll at the end of the film describing how Algeria received its independence in 1962.

Director Gillo Pontecorvo recreates the events in the Battle of Algiers in a documentary style. He goes to great lengths to create an authentic look for the film by using telephoto lenses, black and white film stock, and some scenes shot with a handheld camera. He employs a shaky camera technique in some scenes. Pontecorvo uses the same locations where the events took

place and untrained Algerian actors play roles in the film. The film is based on *Souvenirs de la Bataille d’Alger* by Saadi Yacef, who plays himself.

*Battle of Algiers* has been criticized for its omissions of some people and events. Algerian critic Mostefa Lacheraf called out Yacef for obscuring “the essential truth about certain characters.” He also criticized the film for not representing Algeria as a whole. In an interview, Yacef said that there were so many stories in the war that it was impossible to include all of them.

The phrase “Battle of Algiers” is the most commonly used name for the conflict, which actually comes from slang used in the French barrack room. “Few historians use the phrase ‘Battle of Algiers’ without inverted commas and some avoid the phase entirely, presumably in order to avoid the risk of misrepresentation and misplaced glorification.” The importance of the event is also debated among historians who use the term.

The FLN tactics have generally been criticized because, although their activities helped draw some Algerians to the FLN cause, they also drew all Algerian people into the violence that took the lives of many civilians. The FLN eliminated the opposition in Algeria and became the dominant group in the resistance. The tactics also helped place the issue on the international stage. While the United Nations debated Algerian Independence, the strike organized by the FLN was taking place.

Although the FLN was criticized by many, they did draw some support from France. They were financed by Algerians living and working in France. There was also a small number

---

34 Ibid, p. 397.
of French who helped the organization from France. “What they were involved in was illegal, clandestine work, hiding FLN members, transporting money that the FLN received from Algerian workers, ‘passing’ Algerians across frontiers.”

Yacef said the importance of the “Battle of Algiers” was that France at the time had not had a victory in a long time, including the failure at Dien Bien Phu, the losses in Morocco and Tunisia, and the Suez Canal Crisis. He states: “they needed to create the conditions that would allow them to take power, and win at least one battle.” This was a battle they indeed won.

There are several elements of the film that are fictionalized. Colonial Mathieu is a composite of real officers who played a role in the war, General Jacque Massu, Colonel Marcel Bigeard, Colonel Yves Godard and Colonel Roger Trinquier. He is the only character in the film to be fictionalized in this way. He is used to represent the military leaders and the French goals in the battle. As depicted in the film, torture was used on the Casbah population. It was more widespread than depicted in the film. Thirty to forty percent of the Casbah population, including men and women, were detained and all were subjected to torture while in custody. These methods were not only used to weed out FLN members but also to “humiliate and terrorize the population.” At times the tortures would end in deaths which were covered up as suicides.

Images of the Third World: Algerians vs. pied noirs

Although the Battle of Algiers starts and ends with Ali La Pointe, there is no real main character. The main character is the FLN movement and the Algerian people. The film focuses

38 See Harrison, p. 392.
on their struggle in their own words. The film points out the unequal treatment of the people of Algiers by the Europeans. The film also depicts the violent methods used by the FLN against the pied noir population as well as those against the Islamic population. One scene shows a group of children attacking a drunken man by dragging him down the stairs for no other reason than that he was drunk. During one of the bombing scenes there is a young boy who is eating ice cream in the French café, highlighting the fact that the FLN methods were waged against French civilians by choosing to bomb public places rather than government buildings.

There are several scenes showing the European population using racial slurs to taunt the Muslim population of the Casbah. The European commander is focused on keeping Algeria part of France. During a news conference, when asked about the methods being employed, seemingly with no remorse the commander tells the press that if they want to keep France together then they must expect the consequences. “The figure of the colonial also depicts the anxiety and insecurity of France in the postwar period as it desperately tries to hold on to the last vestiges of great power status.” Torture and other methods were a necessary evil to the French military command. In the film the last bombing by the FLN takes place at a racetrack. After the bomb goes off, the Europeans at the track seek revenge against a young Arab boy who is selling cigarettes. The crowd beats him until he is taken away lifeless by a police officer.

**International Relations**

*The Battle of Algiers* premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 1966, where it was awarded the Golden Lion, to the dismay of many French journalists and film critics who in their reporting questioned “whether or not the film was ‘anti-French’.” There was no distributor to

---


release the film in France until 1970. The *pied noir* community and war veterans protested the film’s release. The film was then criticized for its lack of political analysis. In the United States it was nominated for Best Foreign Film in 1966 and in 1968 Best Screenplay and Best Director.\(^{43}\) The reception of the film varied depending on the particular Western power and its relations with Algeria.

The United States was reluctant at first to get involved in the anti-colonist movements in North Africa. Policymakers did not want to alienate the French allies. At the same time policymakers feared that if they did not get involved these countries would come under the influence of the Soviet Union and communism.\(^ {44}\) The United States tried to straddle both sides so that it would not lose either side strategically. The United States became involved in Morocco and Tunisia, which led France to believe that the United States wanted to take over the region. However, the United States presence was represented through “the American population, the media, the business community, and labor organizations, and not from the U.S. government.”\(^ {45}\) Although the American people supported the anti-colonial movement, the government did not want to risk losing any allies in Europe.

At the same time the United States supported France when such issues were debated before the United Nations.\(^ {46}\) In Algeria, the United States government provided France with needed equipment for the missions. The French asked for assistance through NATO. But “American backing for the French was tacit rather than overt; an attitude which once again


\(^{45}\) Ibid, p. 63.

\(^{46}\) Ibid, p. 63.
elicited French suspicions regarding U.S. intentions in the region.” 47 The United States had also formed amicable relations with Morocco and Tunisia which increased those suspicions of the French. 48 The United States viewed the war in Algeria as a threat to its national security. The war would drain the French and NATO resources and could damage relations with other postcolonial nations. As a result relations between France and the United States cooled. France’s view was that the United States was playing “double games in the Maghreb.”49 Indeed, the United States sought to distance itself from the conflict in Algeria. However, it still helped both sides, the French with military equipment and the FLN and Algerian people with food relief through the United Nations. Then, when Charles De Gaulle agreed to negotiate, the United States along with the Soviet Union, which had been critical of France, threw their support behind the French which caused the United States to lose credibility in the eyes of the Algerians.

The way Battle of Algiers was received reflects the relations between Algeria and France and between Algeria and the United States. When the film was released, relations between France and Algeria were still cold. The film brought up memories of the Algerian-French War that left the French and the pieds noirs who had returned to France bitter. After Algeria received independence from France the United States began formal relations. Friendly relations lasted for five years until June 1967 when Algeria and other nations broke off relations with the United States following the Arab-Israeli War. Notwithstanding, Algeria being considered a radical nation, U.S. private industry was still involved in the country. 50 In 1968, the United States and Algeria discovered that they had mutual interests in oil and gas development. 51

48 Ibid, p. 67.
49 Ibid, p. 68.
51 Ibid, p. 111.
Battle of Algiers was made in collaboration with an Italian filmmaker who worked with Algerians who were involved in or alive during the war. As a result the film seeks to accurately depict both sides of the story. The film tends not to rely on stereotypes to get its point across. The film seeks a balance to recounting the story of the “Battle of Algiers.” However, the way the film was received by France and the United States, which was involved in Algeria during the Algerian War, depended on the relations between Algeria and these countries.

**Syriana (2005)**

**Accuracy of the Film: Post 9/11**

On September 11, 2001 the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon seemingly changed the course of U.S. foreign policy. President George W. Bush declared a “war on terror” that would take the United States into Afghanistan and then was used as a rationale for going into Iraq to look for weapons of mass destruction. The war in Iraq has also been called a war for oil by critics. In the middle of this *Syriana*, a geopolitical thriller debuted in 2005. It was the first major film to deal with the Middle East after the invasion of Iraq. *Syriana* is loosely based on former CIA case officer Robert Baer’s memoirs *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in CIA’s War on Terror*, which formed the basis for the fictionalized story line for CIA agent Bob Baines (George Clooney). The film is based on a conspiracy theory about United States involvement in the Middle East. It follows interconnected story lines which include the merger of two large oil companies and an investigation into corruption by an attorney, Bennett Holiday (Jeffery Wright). The film looks at the politics of oil and the United States involvement in the Middle East. The title of the film alludes to the term “Pax Syriana” which director, Stephen Gaghan heard at a think tank conference referring to “a hypothetical redrawing

---

of the boundaries in the Middle East.”54 The poster tagline for Syriana is “everything is connected.” Gaghan wanted to illustrate that the policies that the United States makes can touch everyone in the globe.

The United States has had a history of intervention in the Middle East. The intervention into the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973 is one such case, undertaken after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed an oil embargo on the West. United States oil companies have also been operating in the Middle East since the 1920s.55 The film tries to show the importance of oil to the United States government. The United States has depended on the Middle East for much of its oil since the end of WWII. In his January 31, 2006 State of the Union speech, President George W. Bush admitted that the United States has an addiction to oil. He stated that the United States needed to find a way to gain greater energy independence. In 2005, the U.S. gross petroleum imports were 12.2 million barrels per day (b/d) and are projected rise to 29.2 million b/d by 2025.56 The film stresses the interest of U.S. companies in the oil industry. The film ties oil and international intervention in the Middle East to terrorism.

Images of the Middle East

The image of the Arabs as terrorists and rich oil Sheiks is nothing new in film. There are countless films that depict Arabs as villains. Films such as True Lies57 and The Siege58 depict immigrants of Arab descent as terrorists bent on destroying America.59 The theme of the terrorist

---

57 J. Cameron, 20th Century Fox, United States, (1994)
has been a theme in Hollywood film dating back to World War II. At that time the focal point was the Terrorist Nazi. During the 1960s-1980s we see the image of the terrorist change to that of the Russian Communist. By the 1980s the image of the Middle East terrorist was a major storyline and the genre was strong in the 1990s as well.

The Bush administration often linked terrorists with “evil” Islamic fundamentalists from the Middle East. The war on terror became a war that was fought in the Middle East and against “them.” In the media terrorists are depicted as “mad men” who hate the United States. “They” are people who want to destroy “our” way of life and take away “our” freedoms. In the American media the Middle East is “classified as undesired space of barbarism and tyranny.”

The Other is painted as the opposite of the West.

_Syriana_ seeks to balance the images of the Other. The film begins in Tehran at a party where techno music is being played. Women who are clad in short dresses and heels change their appearance and cover their heads to exit into the street. Barnes walks into the party where the host and guests are doing drugs. We learn that Barnes is there to sell them two missiles and then assassinate the purchaser with a car bomb. However, one missile ends up going to an Egyptian fundamentalist, who escape with the bomb. The Iranian missile buyers are the first image of the Other that is presented in the film. They are presented not as religious fundamentalists but as enjoying many western vices such as partying, drinking, and drugs. The film challenges the

---

64 Ibid, p. 347.
assumptions about what people are like in the Middle East by showing a connection to Western culture.

The film spends time on the story of the terrorist characters, Wasim Ahmed Khanare (Mazhar Munir) and Farooq (Sonnell Dadral), who commit an act of terrorism in the film. They are not inherently evil; they are immigrant workers from Pakistan working in Kazakhstan’s oil fields and are laid off because drilling rights have been taken over by a Chinese company. Wasim is planning to send for his mother in Pakistan. Not being able to find a job, he seeks a meal at a Madrassa where he befriends a teacher, the Egyptian fundamentalist the audience meets at the beginning of the film, and he slowly is recruited into the world of terrorism. At the end of the film we are left with an image of Wasim and Farooq with a weapon that had been purchased from Barnes in the beginning of the film, heading to blow up an oil tanker in the gulf coast.

In another storyline, the eldest prince of an undisclosed Arab nation, Nasir Al-Subaai (Alexander Siddig), is presented as an eloquent, generous man who wants his country to do better. He wants to limit the intervention of the United States in his country’s affairs. In addition, his mission is to bring up the standard of living and make investments that will allow his country to be less dependent on oil in the future. With the advice of his Geneva-based financial advisor (Matt Damon) he decides to sell oil to China. He is also in competition with his brother, who is willing to work with the United States companies, for the title of emir. His ambitions are seen as a threat to the oil industry and the United States, a threat that needs to be eliminated. The assassination of the prince is cross cut with the terrorists blowing up the oil tanker. The audience is left with the idea that the two events are connected. The idea is planted that United States intervention has brought about the actions of these terrorists and can lead to more such actions.
The depictions are indeed more balanced than in many other films such as *Delta Force One*. However, there are a few images that are still similar. The police of the Middle East country mistreat the Pakistani immigrants because they do not speak Arabic. They are depicted as xenophobic and brutal as they assault the young immigrants for speaking their minds. In addition, the Egyptian fundamentalist’s “mission” is never flushed out. The audience never really understands the reason behind his recruitment of Wasim and Farooq.

**International Relations**

Relations between the United States and the Middle East have been marred by tensions. Since the 19\textsuperscript{th} century there has been a succession of intrusions into the Middle East by the West. The West divided up the territory of the Middle East during colonialism, “drawing boundaries that frequently ignored history, traditional kinship and ethnic loyalties.”\textsuperscript{66} The United States did not support French and British colonialism, as reflected in its pressure on these counties to leave the Suez Canal in 1956. Since then, relations have been tense because of U.S. relations with Israel. In 2004, Osama bin Laden noted that one reason for the terrorist attacks was the continued Western intervention in the Middle East as well as U.S. policy favoring Israel. Bin Laden criticized the Bush Administration for playing on the dichotomies of East and West, good and evil and yet ignoring the reasoning behind his organization.\textsuperscript{67}

The rationale used to engage in “Operation Iraq,” besides the search for weapons of mass destruction, was to save the people of Iraq from a tyrannical government and bring democracy to them. Iraq was presented in the larger context of the war on terror.\textsuperscript{68} Because it disregarded

\textsuperscript{67} O. bin Laden, “Speech to the American People” *Conflict After the Cold War*, ed. R Betts, Pearson Education Inc, New York, pp. 541-545.
Security Council Resolution 1441 under which claims of weapons of mass destruction were to be further investigated through United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection, the U.S. intervention in Iraq was deemed illegal. While allies such as Britain worked with the United States in Iraq, international public opinion was against the U.S. intervention. In the United States, although some saw the intervention in Iraq as a way to increase the security of the United States, others stood firmly against it and the so called “War on Terror.” In 2004, the United States came under fire again when images of soldiers abusing prisoners in Abu Ghraib were released. Public opinion was also split over the issue of torture. In 2005, in a *Newsweek* poll 44 percent polled felt that torture was sometimes justified; 58 percent supported torture if it would help fight terrorism.\(^6^9\)

Over the years, the United States deepened its relationship with certain countries in the Middle East such as Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, the Bush administration was criticized for not applying the same rhetoric of democracy to Jordan, where freedom of speech was limited, and Egypt where at the time Hosni Mubarak was reelected in a landside vote after his opponent was jailed.\(^7^0\) However, U.S. policy still heavily favored Israel.

*Syriana* received mostly positive reviews from critics. The film was critical of United States oil policy but the viewer is led to connect United States intervention and interests in the region with terrorism. The film was released when the United States public was debating the war in the region as well as the methods used. The images of the Third World are closely related to


the climate in the United States. The country was worried about terrorism; at the same time there were those who were critical of the government’s policies.

**Conclusion**

The images of the Middle East have been connected with a negative view of Islam in many cases. The Middle East has also been viewed through the colonial lens in films like *Casablanca* which paints the Third World as a part of Europe but yet, still turns the Third World into “the other.” Films that try to create a balanced view of the Middle East still tend to stereotype the Third World. *Battle of Algiers* illustrates that images will be more balanced when filmmakers from the West collaborate with people from the Third World. The relationship between the West and the Third World is also important to how films will be received as in the case of *Battle of Algiers*. In France the *Battle of Algiers* was received poorly while in the United States the film was nominated for awards. On the other hand, *Syriana* was uniformly well received.

Relations between the West and the Middle East have changed over time. The images in *Casablanca* were connected to Morocco being a colonial territory. It was seen as part of France and therefore Europe, but still different from Europe. *Battle of Algiers* also uses place to depict the unfair treatment of the Muslim population in Algeria. The film seeks a balanced view of the Algerian-French War. *Syriana* is critical of the opportunistic relations the United States enjoys with the Middle East and seeks to balance the image of the Middle East during the “war on terror.” Although the film is more balanced than many post-Cold War films that came before it, there are still areas that may be viewed as stereotypical.
Chapter 5

Asia

India and China have become two main competitors in the developing world that are said to be in a position to overtake the United States as superpowers. They have become major players in industry as well as major foreign investors around the world. The time may be coming when the West is no longer the dominant force in the world.

However, the West was a dominant force in trade with Asia beginning at the end of the 15th century; Europeans were motivated to find a route to Asia in order to corner the spice trade market. In 1497 Vasco da Gama, under the Portuguese flag, made his voyage from Lisbon, Portugal around the Cape of Good Hope to find a new spice route and forge good relations with the rulers of India.¹ The Portuguese went on to establish the port city of Goa in 1510.² The Dutch, the French, the Spanish and the British also etched a place for themselves in the Asian trade competition. In 1898, the United States also entered Asia as an imperial power after the pacification of the Philippines.

The representation of Asia in film, art, and literature drew on several different stereotypes of the continent. East Asia, for example, was depicted through the stereotype of the “yellow peril.” The term refers to the fear beginning in the 19th century that the West would be overwhelmed with immigrants from East Asia. The thought was that Asians would not be able to be assimilated into Western culture.³ In films like *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, Chinese men were portrayed as “kind but effeminate males, or sinister, vicious devils.”⁴

The character of Dr. Fu Manchu was introduced in novels written by British author Sax Rohmer and became a stock character in popular culture for almost fifty years. The Doctor’s character embodied evil, and was always scheming for world domination. The character reflected the West’s fear of the migration patterns of people from East Asia.

Asia encompasses many different cultures and histories. The continent has been divided into West Asia, also known as the Middle East, which I have discussed in chapter 3; Central Asia which according to United Nations maps, refers to the area between the Caspian Sea and China; South Asia and South East Asia and East Asia. The concept of these separate regions came from the West. Within the regions there exists a diversity of language and ethnicities. Southeast Asia, for example, was a regional concept constructed during the age of European imperialism. Colonies became linked by the colonial power and by the powers’ interests in trade. Countries within these regions have since made efforts to create a sense of shared identity through regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This section will focus on films that depict Southeast and South Asia, specifically Anna and the King of Siam (1948), Apocalypse Now (1979), and Slumdog Millionaire (2008).

Anna and the King of Siam (1948)

Accuracy of the Film

The film, Anna and the King of Siam, is based on the 1944 novel by Margaret Landon. The book was based on two memoirs, The English Governess at the Siamese Court and Romance

---

8 Ibid, p. 62.
9 J. Cromwell, Twentieth Century Fox, United States, (1946).
of the Harem by Anna Leoneans who was hired by the King of Siam (modern-day Thailand) to teach English to the royal children in the early 1860s. The book, *Anna and the King of Siam*, spawned three films and a stage play; the depiction of the book has changed from director to director and screenwriter to screenwriter.

At the beginning of King Mongkuts reign,\(^{10}\) France and Great Britain began to colonize neighboring states. Great Britain was already in Burma and Malaya, and France was in Annam and Cochin-China which were combined into modern-day Vietnam.\(^{11}\) Thailand had escaped colonization by the West although some, including Hong Lysa, have argued that Thailand was actually a semi-colony because of the Bowring Treaty of 1855 which opened Thailand up to free trade for the first time. There are two clauses in the treaty that “mark Siam as a semi-colony: the loss of the state’s right to determine its import and export duties, and the conceding of extraterritorial rights to the subjects of the treaty power.”\(^{12}\) Lysa argued that the interactions among British residents in Siam, Thai elites, and the Thai lower classes give insight into what is meant by a semi-colony. The British residents were served by the Thai lower class in their homes and offices. The Thai elites also took to learning English as a way to “modernize” the country. Thai elites also became concerned about their image in the West and took steps to change the image so that they would be more acceptable to the West.\(^{13}\) In addition, Great Britain and France seized land from Thailand in the nineteen century, which would become an area of contention during WWII.\(^{14}\)

---

\(^{10}\) Also called Rama IV.


\(^{13}\) Ibid, p. 330.

In *Anna and the King of Siam*, King Mongkut (Rex Harrison) is focused on changing the West’s image of Siam as a backward and barbaric country. In his efforts to modernize his country he hires Anna Owens (Irene Dunne) to teach the royal children and King Mongkut’s favorite wives English. Anna Owens’ duties in the film extend beyond teaching to advising King Mongkut and his son the Prince, whom she takes under her wing to teach Western values.

Susan Kepner’s research shows that Anna Leonowens embellished, and even “reimagined,” her time in the King’s court.\(^\text{15}\) Leonowens may not have been as much of an integral part of the king’s court as she made herself out to be. Kepner found that “Leonowens saw the king occasionally, and the few mentions of her in court documents suggest that she was seen as something of a prig and a nuisance.”\(^\text{16}\) The portrayal of King Mongkut is mostly negative in Leonowens’ memoirs, in particular with respect to the treatment of women in the court. On the contrary, says Kepner, the king had set up many reforms dealing with women’s rights in Thailand which are not mentioned in the book.\(^\text{17}\) Writer Margaret Landon took Leonowens’ two books and wrote her fictionalized tale of what working in Siam was like. This in turn influenced the screenplay of *Anna and the King of Siam*.

**Images of the Third World**

*Anna and the King of Siam* presents Anna as the holder of English values and knowledge which are represented as superior to those of Siam. The Siamese way is presented as backward and barbaric and something to move away from. From the beginning of *Anna and the King of Siam* an emphasis is placed on the cultural differences between Siam and England. Siam is

---


\(^\text{17}\) Ibid, p. 13.
othered, and placed in the inferior position. In the opening scene after the credits the text that is shown states that Siam is a “half-barbaric country.”

The king not delivering on the promise of giving Anna a house of her own is another example of the film highlighting cultural differences. Before she is appointed to her post as a teacher in the royal court King Mongkut promises her a house of her own. When she arrives in Siam, she learns she has to live in the harem. She is warned by the king’s foreign advisor, the Kralahome (Lee J. Cobb), not to anger the King with small matters. It becomes Anna’s job to teach King Mongkut a lesson in keeping promises. Anna tailors her lessons around reminding the King about the house she was promised.

Anna is also reminded by people in the court that she is the one person who will be able to assist the king in creating a better Siam. This is illustrated throughout the film. Anna becomes the only person who is able to question the king’s decisions. In one scene, after she has a heated discussion with the King, the Kralahome tells her outside the king’s office that the king is trying hard to be a “modern man” and the King needs her help. She becomes the person who represents the contemporary modernity while the King is struggling not to get left behind.

The film also focuses on the position of women in Siam as lower class citizens so much so that mothers have no positive influence over their sons. This is highlighted in a scene that takes place after the execution of the king’s youngest wife, Lady Tuptim (Linda Darnell). Anna comes to say goodbye to Lady Thiang (Gale Sondergaard), the king’s first wife. Lady Thiang shows Anna her wall art which is a representation of Lady Thiang’s life and her relationship with King Mongkut. She believes that although the king tries hard, he will never create a modern Siam. Her son, the prince, who is in line to take the throne, has the potential but she is unable to show him the way. Lady Thiang tells Anna that she can teach her son how to create a better
Siam. Lady Thiang’s disappointment over Anna’s departure gives Anna something to consider about her importance in Siam.

In addition, King Mongkut relies on Anna. She becomes his cultural advisor as well as his friend. There are many scenes in which King Mongkut calls on Anna in the late hours of the night to ask her opinion on various subjects and to write letters for the King. At the end of the film there is a montage of Anna teaching her royal student, helping King Mongkut, and various European embassies being established; which gives the impression that without Anna the country would not have been able to move forward.

King Mongkut, in real life and in the film, was a learned man who spent twenty-seven years as a Buddhist monk before he look the throne. After he did so, he taught himself English and Latin. There are many times in the film when we see him studying Western culture. Throughout the film King Mongkut tries to prove his country is “modern” to avoid the fate of Siam’s neighboring countries. Although he is scholarly and seeks to improve Siam, the film often creates the image of King Mongkut as backward, illustrated in two scenes in particular. Anna Owens suggests that the King hold a reception for the English as well as other Western representatives. The reception would include a Western style dinner, and the Thai women who are in attendance would dress in Western style. The king puts Anna in charge of the event planning and orders craftsmen to make forks, spoons and napkins. During the dinner the napkins are not ready and are presented after the dinner is already over. Even after Anna protests, stating that the giving out of napkins after dinner would not be appropriate, King Mongkut still insists on giving them out to guests. He shows that he is unfamiliar with Western culture and even though the dinner goes well, the scene places King Mongkut in the category of the Other. He is pretending to be what he is not and he shows that in that instance.
Another instance is the fate of Lady Tuptim who runs away because of her unhappiness in the palace. She is caught posing as a man and living in a Buddhist temple where there is a monk who was Lady Tuptim’s betrothed before she was sent to live in the palace. The council finds Lady Tuptim and the monk guilty of adultery and sentences them to be burned alive without listening to all the evidence. Anna protests the sentence to King Mongkut. She uses the king’s goals to make his country a modern country as an argument for Lady Tuptim not being burned alive, arguing that this would be barbaric and he would lose any progress he had made for his country. King Mongkut refuses to hear Anna’s pleas for young unhappy Lady Tuptim and sets up the punishment so that Anna can witness his power over his country. This scene paints him as brutal and backward.

**International Relations**

Although *Anna and the King of Siam* is about an English woman in Siam, it was produced in the United States by an American director, John Cromwell. The film can be linked to relations between the United States and Thailand. *Anna and the King of Siam* premiered almost a year after the Second World War had ended. During the war Thailand’s government officially allied with Japan and declared war on the United States and the United Kingdom even though Thailand wanted to remain neutral in WWII. Japan gave Thailand an ultimatum after three days of fighting. In order for Thailand to maintain its sovereignty, on December 11, 1941 Thailand’s prime minster signed a military cooperation agreement with Japan. The government of Thailand used irredentist claims to territories in Malaya, Laos, and Cambodia to declare war on France and Britain. The Free Thai movement, the underground resistance in Thailand,

---

19 Ibid, p. 106.
opposed the influence of Japan in Thailand and supported the Allied powers in the war. Due to this movement after the war Thailand was able to get off with minimal punishment and won the support of the United States.

Thailand allied with the United States against communism after World War II. American businesses also took advantage of the favorable relations in Thailand after the war and saw Thailand as a new frontier. Anna and the King of Siam shows embassies opening in Bangkok at the end of the film. The west opened itself up to Thailand in the film and began to understand the importance of a relationship with the country although it is shown to be “barbaric.” Thailand had been an enemy state during the war; however it was able to redeem itself and become a valuable ally after the war in trade as well as in the fight against communism. The relationship between Anna and the king can be interpreted as a reflection of the relationship between the United States and Thailand, where the two learn to work with each other and see the importance of friendly relations.

Apocalypse Now (1979)

Accuracy of the Film

Prior to Ho Chi Minh’s declaration of independence on September 2, 1945, Vietnam had been a colony of France for eighty years. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was formed under mostly Communist leadership. The United States had doubts about the revolution in Vietnam and had plans to make the country a U.N. trusteeship, believing that the Vietnamese were not ready to run their own government.

21 Ibid, p. 105.
22 Ibid, p. 104.
26 Ibid, p. 93.
The Ho Chi Minh government had less of an influence over southern Vietnam.\textsuperscript{27} Vietnam entered into a war with the French over their independence. The battle of Dien Bien Phu brought the war to an end with the surrender of the French on May 7, 1954.\textsuperscript{28} Subsequently, Vietnam was partitioned under the Geneva accords in 1956 with the north controlled by Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South under the control of the Bao Dai authority. However, Ngo Dinh Diem, whom the United States backed, consolidated his power in the South between 1954 and 1955 and became the leading authority after a rigged vote.\textsuperscript{29} In 1955, South Vietnam declared itself the Republic of Vietnam independent of the North, and a communist insurgency grew in the south after that. In December 1960, The National Liberation Front (NLF), more widely known as Viet Cong, was established in South Vietnam.

Until 1964, the United States army in Vietnam operated in an advisory position. President Diem was assassinated in 1963 and the United States entered the war officially in 1964. The United States fought the Viet Cong until the end of 1973 when United States troops pulled out of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{30}

In the aftermath of the war \textit{Apocalypse Now} (1979) was released. The film is a fictional account of the war. Loosely based on the colonial novella \textit{Heart of Darkness} by Joseph Conrad, the film follows U.S. special operations Captain Benjamin L. Willard (Martin Sheen) on a secret mission to assassinate a Special Forces Colonel Walter E. Kurtz (Marlon Brando). Kurtz has decided to fight the war his own way and U.S. Army officials have decided that he has gone mad and needs to be taken out of commission. Willard is taken down the Nung River by a Navy crew

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p. 115
into Cambodia. During the war the United States public did not know that the Vietnam War had spilled over the border into Cambodia. Along the way the horrors of war are seen all around as soldiers seem to melt down into madness. As Willard gets closer to Kurtz he finds himself questioning the war like many Americans.

**Images of the Third World**

*Apocalypse Now* focuses on the madness that exists in war. Even though this is Willard’s second tour of duty, as the audience’s eyes are opened to the effects of the war so are Willard’s. Francis Ford Coppola, the director, said he was not only trying to capture the essence of the Vietnam War but create a film that would show the Vietnam War’s reality.31

The film focuses on the American soldiers. Brian J. Woodman argues that the Vietnamese story is missing in the film which enables the Vietnamese to be marginalized. The Vietnamese soldier is used as a contrast to the American soldier, as an unstoppable enemy who fights without remorse or fear. The Vietnamese solider does not need creature comforts and can operate without food or rest. The Viet Cong soldier will fight to the death for of his cause.32 Kurtz speaks to Willard about the seemingly invincible Viet Cong soldier and his desire for American soldiers to be more like the Viet Cong. The war would become winnable if this was the case. Woodman argues that the images of the Viet Cong are based on the yellow peril stereotype.33

The use of the stereotype then enables the director to criticize the Vietnam War as a war that was unwinnable because the U.S. soldiers were up against an unbeatable army and therefore it was madness to use the traditional rules. The opening scene of *Apocalypse Now* is of napalm

---


33 Ibid, p. 46.
being dropped on a forest. The scene shows napalm wreaking devastation throughout the forest it destroys while the Door’s 1967 song “The End” plays in the background. The subject of napalm returns in a later scene when the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment is escorting the boat that Willard is traveling on so they can reach the river. Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore (Robert Duvall), eager to surf, takes the more dangerous route. When the Cavalry arrives on the beach he orders the tree lines napalmed. After they are he tells Willard he loves “the smell of napalm in the morning… It smells like victory.” The reference can be interpreted as a critique of the war; the use of napalm did not lead to a U.S. victory in Vietnam. The famous line alludes to the false hope that existed about winning an unwinnable war. The methods that were used would not amount to a victory fighting “them” or the Viet Cong.

International Relations

The Vietnam War was another attempt by the United States to counter-balance the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1973. In 1975 Saigon fell to Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Vietnam was reunited. The Vietnam War was one of the most costly wars fought by the United States. In addition, more than two million Vietnamese and fifty thousand U.S. died and countless more were wounded.  

By 1968, Gallup polls found that the majority of Americans felt that the U.S. entry into Vietnam was a mistake.  

Apocalypse Now’s criticism of the war echoes that of the American people who believed the war was unwinnable and the United States should have pulled out sooner than they did.

United States-Vietnam relations were not normalized until 1995. During the Cold War Vietnam received economic aid from the Soviet Union and participated in trade with Eastern

---


bloc countries.\textsuperscript{36} The alliance of Vietnam and the Soviet Union was seen as a threat to the United States during this time.

Despite the poor relations between the two countries, \textit{Apocalypse Now} is not overtly critical of the Viet Cong or the Vietnamese government. The film is a criticism of the way the United States government handled the war. However, the film still relies on negative stereotypes of Viet Cong soldiers that allow them to be othered.

\textit{Slumdog Millionaire (2008)}\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Accuracy of the Film}

The 2008 breakout film, \textit{Slumdog Millionaire (SM)} was adapted by British screenplay writer, Simon Beaufoy from the 2005 novel \textit{Q \& A} written by Indian writer and diplomat Vikas Swarup. The film is a fictional rags to riches story about Jamal, an orphan growing up in the slums of India, who manages to get on the Indian version of \textit{Who Wants to be a Millionaire} and ends up winning big. His story of survival with his elder brother Salim is told through flashbacks as he tries to prove to police that he is not cheating and knows all the answers on the game show through his life experience. Jamal’s motivation throughout the film is his love for his childhood friend Latika.

India has become one of the world’s leading economies, particularly in the service sector. India has been heavily involved in the computer service and medical-care industries. Although the recent global economic crisis has slowed India’s growth somewhat, on average India has grown eight percent per year from 2002 to 2008.\textsuperscript{38} Economic growth has fueled urbanization. In


\textsuperscript{37} D. Boyle and L. Tandan, Fox Searchlight Pictures, United States, (2008).

Mumbai for example, in the 2011 census the population was 12,478,447, over half of whom were living in 65 “slums.” Thousands of Indians leave villages all over the country every year to follow their dreams to the big city. Many end up on the streets, as beggars or prostitutes.”

With the vast percentage of the population living in tenements and squatter communities Mumbai has been designated “the global capital of slum dwelling.” SM is based in Mumbai’s largest slum Dharavi.

Since the 1990s, India has used mixed methods to combat poverty. In addition Mumbai is “participating in a major urban overhaul that would upgrade the city’s crumbling infrastructure, create new housing, and initiate ‘beautification’ projects.” One of the scenes in SM is set in a high-rise that is being constructed, funded by a crime boss Javed (Mahesh Manjrekar). Due to the boom in various industries in India, such as services and technology, people of the lower class have a chance to pull themselves out of poverty. However, even though poverty rates have decreased, inequalities between the rich and the poor have widened.

Images of the Third World

Srividya Ramasuramanian’s research on the depiction of India by the West notes the common representations of India in film. Traditionally, India has been portrayed by the West as a place of backward ideas and people, “where Western characters ‘saved’ India from ancient...
religious practices such as voodoo and sorcery, natural disasters such as floods and epidemics, as well as social injustices such as sati and poverty." India has also been portrayed as a place outside of reality “in a dream-like, utopian manner where India is often represented as the land of milk and honey where overindulgence, excesses, and vices are an integral part of the culture.”

The people of India have traditionally taken on two roles as either “child-like or demonic.” SM was released in 2008 with Western money. In contrast to traditional Western films about India, it had an all Indian cast; in early scenes characters even speak Punjabi instead of English. British director Danny Boyle aimed to capture the authenticity of India in the film.

In the West, SM won critical praise as a “feel-good” film. It was described as having an “upbeat pitch” and having a “dazzling, intoxicating” storyline. Ann Hornaday of the Washington Post described the film as a “crowd pleaser” and as a “fairy tale.” The film swept Western award shows such as the Academy Awards, winning eight Oscars including one for the soundtrack composed by Indian composer, songwriter and artist, A.R Rahman.

SM was also criticized for its representation of Indian slums. Alice Miles, columnist for the London Times, called SM “poverty porn” because it showcases the suffering of children and “invites you, the Westerner, to enjoy it, too.” In the film Jamal (Ayush Mahesh Khedekar), Salim (Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail), and Latika (Rubina Ali) are tricked by Maman (Ankur Vikal) into joining a child beggar ring. The most gruesome part is the fact that Maman blinds

---

50 A. Miles, “Shocked by Slumdog’s poverty porn; Danny Boyle’s film is sweeping up awards, but it’s wrong to revel in the misery of India’s children,” The Times (London), (January 14, 2009), p. 26.
54 See Miles, p. 26.
young boys so that they will be more effective beggars because, as Salim explains, blind beggars receive “double.” On the other hand, Matthias Williams criticized the use of the term “poverty porn.” Just because the main characters are growing up in poverty did not mean the film was showcasing poverty.\(^5\)

In India, \(S\)\(M\) sparked protests from residents of slums who were offended by the word “dog” in the film’s title.\(^6\) During the opening of the film in January 2009, 40 people protested outside the home of Anil Kapoor, who plays Prem, the game show host in the film. In addition, a defamation case was filed against composer A.R. Rahman and Kapoor. The film was accused of being “an insult to the people living in slum areas.”\(^7\) During the scene when Jamal’s mother is killed during an anti-Muslim protest, a little boy is dressed as the Hindu god Rama. A Hindu activist group also took issue with this portrayal.

The other critique of the film is that the film helps to “replicate Orientalist images of India- as an intensely poverty-stricken and corrupt country where impoverished but resilient locals fight for their lives among the corruption and the squalor.”\(^8\) As Dennis Lim put it, SM “traffics in some of the oldest stereotypes of the eroticized other: the streetwise urchin in the teeming Oriental city.”\(^9\) The scenes of the children of the syndicate begging are reminiscent of scenes from \(E\)\(at, Pray, Love\) (2010),\(^10\) when Julia Roberts’ character first arrives in India and is greeted by an abundance of beggars who include children.

---

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) “Poor show, so rubbishes millionaire us down in the dumps,” \textit{Herald Sun}, (January 27, 2009), p. 40.
Roger Ebert agrees with the claim that SM presents the audience with the “real India.” In one scene, teenager Jamal (Tanay Chheda) parades as a tour guide and takes an American couple and their driver to an area where he is aware their car will be stripped for parts. The driver assaults Jamal and after the couple intervenes Jamal tells the couple “you wanted to see the real India, well here it is,” as he holds his eye. The couple then gives him a one hundred dollar bill.

What is the “real India” Jamal was talking about? “The real India” is one where people show a lack of care for one another and the personal property of others; the one where there is corruption and violence all around. Jamal, throughout the film, is ill-treated by almost everyone he comes in contact with. In the first scene he is being brutalized by the corrupt detectives who are convinced that a person from the slum could not possibly know all the answers to the game show. As a child he is almost blinded by Maman, who acts as if he has his best interest at heart. On several occasions Salim, the person who was supposed to raise him, puts selfish greed in front of his family. In one scene Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan visits Salim and Jamal’s town. Salim locks Jamal in an outhouse to prevent him from getting a chance to meet the star. Determined to meet Amitabh Bachchan, Jamal jumps into human excrement and runs to meet him favorite star to obtain an autograph which Salim then steals and sells for a small amount of money. In another scene after Salim and Jamal rescue Latika from a life of prostitution and Salim kills Maman, Salim then kicks Jamal out of the room so that he can rape Latika.

The British media has had a history of portraying India as a backward country. “J.K. Galbraith once described India as a functioning anarchy.”61 As India has moved forward the English media has focused on one side of the Indian story, as is also played out in SM. Even the world around the main characters is pictured as unforgiving. The slums are pictured as “tattered

tarpaulin-covered roofs of flimsy shacks, dingy alleyways, opened drains, pools of excrement, and mounds and mounds of garbage. Jamal and other slum children are seen playing, working and even sleeping in the all-encompassing filth.”62 There seems to be little hope in the slums for a child or an adult.

The slums are busy with illicit activity. Mitu Sengupta states that in the slum depicted in SM “no-one seems engaged in any meaningful, productive work, other than a handful of scrawny rag-pickers, who drift through a few, fleeting frames towards the start of the film.”63 Salim also finds his way into the illicit economy of the slums by becoming Javad’s errand boy. Latika becomes a kept woman in Javad’s care who is subject to his moods.

The film neglects to show the slums as a place where entrepreneurial activity is alive. In addition, there is no mention of the grassroots organizations that also exist in Dharavi. In contrast with SM, in real life the government is not completely absent from the area. Although the slums are considered illegal territory the residents are provided with resources. The major argument is that Dharavi and the people who live there are misrepresented by SM by leaving the above elements completely out. While the film represents a part of the slums it certainly does not encompass the story of the slums completely.64

**International Relations**

India and the United Kingdom have a long history, which started off with the competition for trade in Asian products by the West. After France was defeated in 1793, the British Empire became dominant in India. India received its independence from Britain in 1947. The two countries maintain bilateral relations through the Commonwealth.

---

64 Ibid, pp. 604-605.
Currently, India and Britain have strong economic ties. India is Britain’s largest investor after the United States. Britain is seeking to deepen its relationship with India by doubling “bilateral trade by 2015…” and cooperating “in a host of other areas including research and innovation.” India and Britain also share cultural elements in common, such as cricket, one of India’s most popular sports. In Britain, Indians make up the biggest ethnic group, bringing to the UK their cultural dress and food.

Despite the friendly relations shared between the UK and India, the film focuses on India’s short comings and the people who have been left behind with India’s rise in the international market. The film is not completely wrong in its depiction of India’s inequality because the gap between the rich and the poor has risen as India’s economy has risen. The slums of India and corruption do exist in India but there is more to India than just hopelessness which the film never shows.

Stephen Byers had listed possible challenges to the relationship that India and the UK were building by 2006. Listed as possible challenges for India’s economy and the relationship with the UK were poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS in India which is a taboo topic in many quarters, environmental damage, and the question of how secure India’s democracy is. India would need to tackle the list of challenges in order to strengthen the democratic system there. India has taken steps to fight poverty. “Most international development agencies agree that India has partially achieved many of its development goals. For example, between 2003 and 2009,

more children in India went to school, and diseases such as leprosy, polio, and tuberculosis, together with the spread of HIV/ AIDS, have been kept under control.” 69

The film depicts India in a one-sided manner. SM shows one challenge which is presented in the relationship between India and the UK. The film shows how stereotypes of India still persist. The filmmaker allows stereotypes of India to persist by omitting adults in the slum who are not involved in corruption and by painting the slums as a place where hope is lacking.

Conclusion

Asia shares a history with many third world regions of being colonized by the West. Today many countries of Asia have begun economic development programs that may overtake the West. This does not mean that the region is stereotyped any less.

In the 1940s Thailand was shown as a barbaric country. The idea was connected with Thailand fighting on the Axis side of World War II. The idea was also used to show how much Asian countries needed the West in their development. Many other countries in Asia including India and Vietnam had begun to fight for their independence against their colonizers.

Apocalypse Now depicted the United States public’s fatigue with the Vietnam War. It showed the effects that war had on the soldiers of the United States. At the same time the film stereotyped the Viet Cong soldier by making them into almost superhuman entities that the United States was fighting against and could not win against. The Vietnamese are constructed to be fundamentally different from Americans and are therefore othered. The filmmakers use this image in order to critique the United States government’s engagement to the Vietnam War.

The film Slumdog Millionaire seeks to show the “real India.” However the film ends up giving the audience a one-sided view of poverty in India. The film allows the idea of India’s poor

as victims to persist in the West. Even though good relations exist between the West and India the stereotypes of India are alive and well in this and many other films.

Despite the changes in relations from an imperial relationship to a trading partnership between the West and Asia, there are stereotypes that still exist in the media today. The West now sees the possibilities that exist in positive relations with Asia, as Asian countries seek to develop industry and business. Films show a one-sided look at Asian countries, which is only half of what is happening with the nations and the people within them. For example, although there is abject poverty in India, there are also many people who seek to create a better life for themselves. By neglecting to show positive images along with the negative images, Western audiences are left with a negative view of Asia, which allows stereotypes to survive.
Chapter 6
Latin America

The history of Latin America is one of conquest and imperialism. Christopher Columbus and his armada landed in the “New World” in October 1492 on behalf of Spain. They had set off in search of a faster route to India and ended up in the Caribbean and the Americas. On his first voyage Columbus “discovered” the islands of the Bahamas, Hispaniola, and Cuba. On his second voyage he “discovered” Puerto Rico and Jamaica. It is on his third voyage that he saw the mainland of South America and “discovered” Trinidad.¹ His goals on the voyages were to bring back wealth for himself and the crown of Spain which had put up the capital to finance his trip. Columbus wrote in his journal as he first set foot on the island of Hispaniola: “my desire was not to pass any island without taking possession so that one having been taken the same may be said for all.”²

Columbus’ “discovery” opened the door for exploration of the “New World” by conquistadors like Vasco Nunez Balboa, Hernan Cortes, and Francisco Pizarrio. In addition, the door was opened for the exploitation of the resources and the people who had already established a civilization of their own. Christopher Columbus’ journal quoted his admiral in reference to first contact with the indigenous population, “they be good servants and intelligent …and I believe they easily be made Christian as it appears to me that they have no religion.”³ Christopher Columbus enslaved the indigenous population who were made to mine for gold ore. During Columbus’ governorship in Hispaniola 500,000 indigenous people died within months. In the Caribbean, South and Central America native populations were separated and native languages and culture were erased.

³ Ibid, p. 38.
In the 16th century Spain and Portugal (which had colonized Brazil) abandoned the enslavement of the aboriginal population for economic, political and religious reasons. With population growth in Europe, the demand grew for Latin American and Caribbean products. The colonists wanted cheap labor to boost the production of goods and during this time low wage aboriginal labor was used. However, there was not enough to fulfill the demand for gold and spices, so African slaves were introduced. Slavery introduced another cultural element throughout Latin America.

From 1810 to the 1820s Latin American countries received their independence from Spain and Portugal. The United States began to influence the region after the Monroe Doctrine was enunciated in 1823. The doctrine began as a policy of isolationism which was opposed to intervention from Europe in the affairs of the Americas. “However, as the United States became more powerful, it was amended through various corollaries and interpretations to authorize Washington to engage in the unilateral use of force to deal with a myriad of situations in Latin America and the Caribbean region.” Furthermore, during his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt saw “the United States waving the ‘Big Stick’ to police the Americas in the common interest of ‘civilization’, rather than as a tool for hegemony.” However, he also used the United States power to promote the growth of American businesses worldwide.

Throughout this chapter I will be discussing Latin America. However, the term Latin America can be problematic. Dictionaries, geographers and scholars define Latin America differently. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, for example, defines it as “1. Spanish America

---

7 Ibid, p. 37.
& Brazil,”8 which would exclude the countries of Belize and Guyana whose population speak English. Latin America is also defined as “2. all of the Americas south of the United States,”9 which would also include the islands in the Caribbean, and Spanish English and Dutch speaking countries.10 In addition, many organizations treat Latin America and the Caribbean as one entity even though the needs, culture and languages are different. In this chapter I will focus on the Spanish speaking countries south of the United States, specifically Mexico in The Treasure of Sierra Madre, El Salvador in Salvador, and Colombia in Colombiana.

**The Treasure of Sierra Madre (1948)**

**Accuracy of the Film:**

The Mexican Revolution started in 1910 and ended in 1920. The people of Mexico were fighting against the inequities of the system that made some rich from foreign investment while others remained very poor. “For a time, in many localities, power had shifted into the hands of popular leaders, the bushwhacker and guerrilleros who had fought first for Diaz, then Huerta.”12 During the decade-long war the United States intervened by purchasing weapons for some revolutionary groups whose actions would benefit U.S. interests. The groups that would not benefit the United States had weapons embargos placed on them.13 U.S. policymakers also tried to persuade Mexican President Manuel Huerta to step down. Meanwhile, the Mexican government’s army received support from Germany.14

---

9 Ibid
11 J. Huston, Warner Bros, United States, (1948).
In 1923, the United States and Mexico restored diplomatic relations with the signing of the Treaty of Bucareli, which exempted U.S. companies or citizens in Mexico from many of the provisions of the 1917 Constitution.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Treasure of Sierra Madre} is based on a novel by the same name written by B. Tavern in 1927. The story takes place in the 1920s in Mexico after the Mexican revolution. The film begins in the town of Tampico, where Fred C. Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart), an American down on his luck, makes a living begging for change from other Americans. He meets up with Bob Curtin (Tim Holt), a fellow American who is also down on his luck. They both end up working in an oil field for a man who promises them and the other workers a lot of money. When they get back to Tampico they are not paid a dime and the man who hired them is nowhere to be found. They discover from a bartender that they are not the first people who have been scammed into working for free. When they do manage to catch up with the man who hired them and finally get the money they are owed, they spend it quickly. They end up at a cheap motel where an old prospector, Howard (Walter Huston), is speaking about the money that can be made in gold mining. Dobbs and Curtin decide to go into prospecting in the mountains. The pair enlists Howard for his expertise and he accepts their proposition and they are off to Sierra Madre.

\textbf{Images of the Third World:}

Cartoons of a sombrero-wearing Mexican bandit became popular during the Mexican Revolution. Mark C. Anderson identified three themes in the caricatures: 1) “backwardness, encompassing retrograde thinking and material conditions, punctuated with childishness and violence”; 2) “racial limitations, displaying the Mexican’s presumed genetic inferiority, highlighted by obtuseness and physically engendered hedonism as well as a propensity toward barbarism”; 3) “moral decrepitude, highlighted by Mexican dishonesty, a love of excessive

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p. 207.
(often gratuitous) violence, inherent cruelty, and an inclination for theft.” 16 The content of the caricatures during this time stemmed from popular belief that Mexicans represented the opposite of everything that Americans stood for, a view which derived from anti-Spanish and anti-indigenous sentiments. 17 Mexico became a place of the other and the ideas played out in the media through the caricatured representations of Mexicans.

In The Treasure of Sierra Madre, the depiction of the Mexican bandit is an image throughout the film. The bandits are depicted as dirty, dangerous, lying, thieves who are hunted down by the federales. We are introduced to the Mexican bandits in the beginning as a few are led into town by federales to the cemetery to dig their own graves and to be executed as punishment for their crimes. Mexican bandits are depicted as valuing weapons more than anything, even gold. In another scene Gold Hat (Alfonso Bedoya) and his gang come to the mountain where the characters are mining for gold to steal the guns and ammunition. Gold Hat spots Dobbs and identifies himself and his gang as federales. When Dobbs asks to see his badge, he replies angrily with one of the most famous lines in film history, “Badges? We ain’t got no badges. We don’t need no badge s. I don’t have to show you any stinkin’ badges.” A shoot out ensues. In a later scene Gold Hat and his gang meet up with Dobbs again after he shoots and abandons his partner. After Gold Hat and his gang recognize Dobbs, they end up killing Dobbs and taking his horse, guns and his ammunition after they cut open the bags of gold flecks mistaking the contents for sand. They head for Tampico to try to sell the horse back to the same man who rented it to Dobbs, Curtin and Howard. They are captured by federales and their fate is sealed.

---

Although the film uses the stereotypical images of the *bandido*, it “depicts a fairly broad sampling of Mexican society, from village administrators to indigenous peoples of Mexico, most of them played by Mexicans who speak Spanish to one another.”\(^\text{18}\) One such image is of the *federales*. The film depicts them as mystical heroes of sorts. The *federales* are also shown in groups and never shown as individuals but they show up to save the day during the shootout that the prospectors are engaged in with the bandits.

The film is critical of U.S. imperialism in Mexico, which is depicted through the mistreatment of Dobbs, Curtin and the other workers who work in the oil fields for promised wages but remain unpaid.\(^\text{19}\) It also “becomes a cautionary tale condemning North American greed for Mexico’s natural resources.”\(^\text{20}\) The Dobbs character lets greed get the better of him and it becomes his downfall, leading to madness and vulnerability.

**International Relations**

The Good Neighbor Policy, which lasted from 1933-1945, was designed to cultivate positive relations between Latin America and the United States. The United States would stay out of the internal affairs of the Latin American countries. As a result the United States withdrew its military from Caribbean countries.\(^\text{21}\) For example, the Platt Amendment, which ensured that the United States would maintain naval bases in Cuba and allowed United States intervention in Cuban affairs, was reworked so that the United States has less influence in Cuba.\(^\text{22}\) The Good Neighbor Policy allowed Panama to have a greater role in running the Panama Canal.\(^\text{23}\) However, the United States would still occupy the Panama Canal until 1999.

---

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid, p. 86.
\(^\text{20}\) Ibid, p. 86.
\(^\text{23}\) See Stuart, p. 213.
Doctrine that had caused such discontent among the Latin American and the Caribbean nations was reworked to allow mutual cooperation among the states of the Americas. Under the Office of Inter-American Affairs, which was created to ensure better relations between the United States and Latin America, the Motion Picture Division created the production code. The production code regulated moral content in motion pictures as well as images of Latin America and the people of Latin America in film. A Latin American specialist was appointed for this task.24

*The Treasure of Sierra Madre* presents elements of the Good Neighbor policy that regulated the image of Latin America. The film shows some balance in presenting Mexicans. Indeed the film is critical of the American presence in Mexico. However, the film relies on the familiar *bandido* stereotype to tell the story of American greed. In using the image of the *bandido* the filmmaker promotes the identity of Mexicans as the other.

*Salvador (1986)*25

**Accuracy of the Film:**

*Salvador* is based on Richard Boyle’s accounts as a journalist covering the civil war in El Salvador, which started in 1979. The civil war brought international attention to the region of Central America.26 From 1932-1980, El Salvador was under military rule. Although the government allowed opposition parties to participate openly in government during the 1960s and 1970s, the government kept a strong hold on power.27 In addition only two parties were allowed to participate in politics: the far right and the moderate right. Leftist political protests were organized after unfair elections in 1972. The government then organized paramilitary known as

---

24 Ibid, p.72.
25 O. Stone, Hemdale Films, United Kingdom and the United States (1986).
“death squads,” in opposition to protesters.\footnote{Ibid p. 1179.} In 1982, a civilian government was elected to power but the military had firm control over them.\footnote{P.D. Almeida, “Social Movements, Political Parties, and Electoral Triumph in El Salvador,”\textit{ NACLA Report on the Americas}, 42:6 (Nov/Dec 2009), p. 17.} The government began preparing for war. Five guerrilla organizations joined forces in 1980 forming the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).\footnote{See de Zeeuw, p. 1179.}

The film starts in San Francisco in the apartment of the washed up journalist Richard Boyle. He and his family are on the verge of being evicted from his apartment and he is unable to get work with newspapers he used to work for so that he can get down to El Salvador to cover the civil war. When he gets arrested, his friend Doctor Rock (James Belushi), an unemployed disc jockey, bails him out of jail. Boyle tricks Doctor Rock into driving down to El Salvador with him so that he can cover the story.

While there he is able to cover both sides of the story of the civil war and also helps get information about the FMLN’s capabilities for United States intelligence at the United States Embassy. The United States was supporting the Salvadorian government and was willing to believe that the FMLN guerrillas were better equipped than they really were. The film depicts the brutality of the government of El Salvador as people who oppose the government or are not in possession of their identification documents are killed in cold blood. The film also depicts the mass graves where many victims of the militias and the paramilitary ended up. The film also depicts the murders of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the rape and murder of four American nuns which caused the United States to temporarily cut off military aid to El Salvador in 1980.
The Salvadorian military stopped killing civilians in 1984 but the torture and murder of political opponents or those who were suspected to be occurred throughout the war.\textsuperscript{31} By the end of the 12-year war the United States government had given the Salvadorian military more than $16 billion, “while ignoring and downplaying the abuses.”\textsuperscript{32}

**Images of the Third World:**

*Salvador* focuses on the character Richard Boyle, a white American, and through his travels in El Salvador the audience gets information about what is happening in the country. El Salvador is perceived by us through his lens. The film depicts the military of El Salvador as cold blooded killers. In *Salvador*, after arriving in El Salvador, Richard Boyle and Doctor Rock meet up with the military and are escorted into the city. While with the military, they witness the murder of a college student at a university for not having his identification papers on him. The only reasoning behind the madness is to hold on to power.

Another scene shows a table with about seven men seated and Major Maximiliano Casanova (Tony Plana) plotting the assassination of Archbishop Romero, who had spoken out against the war and the government. Casanova asks who will step forward to kill the bishop and then chooses the assassin from the table. Later a Nationalist Republican Alliance (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* or ARENA) member kills the archbishop. The film connects the military and the far right political party ARENA with the murder, which has never been solved.

In another scene, Richard Boyle is part of a group of journalists whom FLMN guerillas host at their camp so the other side of the civil war story can be written. At the camp men and women work together for the FLMN cause in contrast with the right-wing militias who only include a few men making decisions for the many. The images of the children that live in the

camp are also captured, and the idea that the guerillas are more “peaceful” then the Salvadorian government is presented. When the images of the FMLN and the right are compared, the FMLN appears to be more inclusive and to be fighting for the rights of the people.

However, the image of the “peaceful” FMLN guerilla is changed in a follow-up scene. Boyle and his journalist friend John Cassidy (John Savage) go to a town where there is a fierce gun battle between FMLN guerillas and the government army. As the FMLN guerillas move in to take the town they are filmed as heroes riding in on horses. Cassidy smiles at Boyle as he moves in to get a shot of them. The FMLN guerillas take Salvadorian soldiers hostage, and here the image that has been painted of them begins to change. The town is then over run again by troops from the Salvadorian army. An FMLN guerilla stands over the army officers and begins to shoot them in the head. Boyle screams out “No,” to the FMLN guerilla to stop her from shooting the soldiers. The guerilla replies, “This must be done,” as she shoots another soldier in the head. As Boyle and Cassidy move away from the FMLN guerillas to search for cover from the planes that are shooting from above, Boyle yells: “you’re just like them!” Both sides in the civil war appear to be brutal and they are both responsible for horrible acts.

Later in the film while speaking to Doctor Rock, who is trying to stay in the country with his new girlfriend, Boyle wonders how he can stay in the country with “these gangsters.” The war is now connected with a familiar stereotype of the male Latino immigrant urban gangster. Charles Ramirez Berg states that the Mexican bandit image has been modified in modern films and media. The two popular images are Latin American gangster/drug runner and the inner city gang member. The violence of gangsters is usually mindless. The statement reduces the civil war to the mindless violence of a gang war.

33 See Berg, p. 68.
In addition, the film is critical of the United States involvement in El Salvador. Ambassador Thomas Kelly (Michael Murphy) is given bad information by the military attaché, Colonel Bentley Hyde (Will Macmillan) and State Department Analyst, Jack Morgan (Colby Chester), which makes him give Washington the go ahead to fund the Salvadorian military once again. The United States’ major motivation in the film is always to keep the leftist FLMN at bay.

In addition, the film is critical of United States immigration policy. The film ends as Richard Boyle, his girlfriend Maria (Elpidia Carrillo) and her two children enter the United States through Mexico. They get on a bus headed to California. The bus is stopped by border patrol during a random check. The officers ask the passengers who “look” Hispanic to see their passport. When the officers get to Boyle and Maria, Boyle tries to answer the questions for her but the officers ask her questions in English which she can not understand. Maria and her two children are taken into a police car. Boyle protests the action and tries to explain that she will be killed if she is sent back to El Salvador. The officers do not listen and he is arrested for his protest. At the end of the film words scroll explaining that at the time of the film Boyle was still looking for Maria who had been living in a refugee camp in Guatemala.

**International Relations**

Throughout the civil war in El Salvador the United States supported the right wing government. The government received billions in military aid and assistance and the United States ignored the human rights violations of which the government was guilty. The United States’ decision to back the El Salvador government stemmed from Cold War politics and the need to balance power against the Soviet Union. Central America became another place where the Cold War was played out. Even though there was no evidence linking the Soviets to the
FLAN guerillas, U.S. media painted the FLAN as a Soviet-backed organization and as the United States’ rationale for getting involved in a civil war. In the White Papers produced by the Reagan administration in 1981, the FLAN was said to be acting through Cuba and other communist countries to take over the Salvadorian government. The White Papers also argue that countries in the communist bloc were arming the FLAN. The relations between the two governments reflected the politics of the Cold War.

There was limited public awareness of the issues that were taking place in El Salvador as well as Nicaragua where the United States backed rebels seeking to overthrow the government. Of those Americans who were aware of the issues in Central America during the 1980s the majority polled felt that a pro-communist government in Central America would be a threat to the United States. However, the majority polled disapproved of the large amount of military aid being given by the United States during the conflicts in Central America. In May 1983, 80 percent of Americans polled opposed sending U.S. troops to El Salvador.

Although Salvador reflects the experiences of a journalist who went down to El Salvador to capture the story, it also reflects the opinion of people living in the United States who were critical of the U.S. government’s military support of repressive governments in Central America. The film does not align itself with either side of the civil war; instead the film is critical of all sides of the war. Still, by referring to both sides of the civil war as “thugs,” Salvador relies on stereotypes to call attention to the war in El Salvador.

---

35 Ibid, p. 82.
37 Ibid, p. 117.
38 Ibid, p. 118.
Colombiana (2011)\textsuperscript{39}

Accuracy of the Film:

Colombiana comes out of a long line of Latin American gangster and drug films including Scarface, Romancing the Stone and Blow. Colombia has become synonymous with the illicit drug trade for Americans since the 1980s. In 2004 Colombia contributed 67 percent of the world’s supply of cocaine. Since then the numbers have been on a steady decline.\textsuperscript{40} According to the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONCE), in 2001 Colombia produced 700 metric tons of potential pure cocaine. The number fell to 195 metric tons in 2011, a decline of 72 percent.\textsuperscript{41} However, during the 1970s and 1980s the illicit drug trade was booming; in part because the drug can only be produced in a few places in United States and cannot be produced in Europe due to the climate.\textsuperscript{42}

Colombiana is about Catalina Restrepo’s (Zoe Saldana) revenge against a drug crime family for killing her parents in front of her. Before his death, her father gave her evidence that she takes to the United States embassy in Colombia. The evidence ensures that she will get a visa to the United States. She goes to Chicago where she is trained by her Uncle Emilio (Cliff Curtis) as a gun for hire. She uses her training to exact her revenge on the members of the cartel until she is able to get to Don Luis Sandoval (Beta Benita’s), the man who ordered her parents to be killed.

The film uses the common idea of the Colombian cartel as a brutal entity as the basis of the storyline. Drug production has been led by non-state actors such as cartels, guerillas, and

\textsuperscript{39} O. Megaton, Stage 6 Films, France and United States (2011).
paramilitary groups in Colombia. Cocaine production gave way to a more complex way of doing business in Colombia, the formulation of cartels and export syndicates which took hold and quickly spread. The cartels set up networks in order to ship the coca paste, refine it and ship it to the United States and other markets. The extremely high profits to be earned from the cocaine business induced Colombians to participate in all stages of the cocaine industry. These stages included distribution in the United States, where there were a large number of Colombian immigrants who facilitated the establishment of distribution networks. The large profits generated led to the development of the money-laundering industry as well.43

The illegal industry consisted of chemists, peasants, and various types of suppliers, purchasers and intermediaries, pilots, lawyers, financial advisors, enforcers, body guards, front men and smugglers who helped launder profits. There were people tied to the cartels on different levels including police officers and politicians.44 Cartels often promoted the use of violence.45

**Images of the Third World**

During *Colombiana*’s release, PorColombia, a Colombian heritage group consisting of college students and professionals, led a campaign against the film. The group felt that the images were the same old stereotypical images that have been used in Hollywood entertainment to depict Colombia full of violence and drugs. The opening scene of the film is a montage of the drug industry and gun trade in Colombia. The images seem to recall familiar images of Colombia as a hotbed for drugs and guns. Looking more closely at the film, the filmmaker may have used these images as commentary on how the film industry represents Colombia as a place of violence and Colombians as gangsters and drug dealers.

43 Ibid. p. 111.
44 Ibid. p. 112.
On the surface the film recalls the storylines that depict Latinos as gangsters and drug dealers. After the montage the film begins in a mansion with Cataleya’s father, Fabio, and Don Luis Sandoval saying goodbye to each other because Fabio is leaving the cartel. After he leaves the mansion, Don Luis orders that Fabio and everyone in his home be killed. As Fabio arrives home he tries to prepare his family to leave knowing that Don Luis has already ordered his murder. The cartel members get to Fabio’s home before they leave and kill the guards at the door. Fabio and Cataleya’s mother (Cynthia Addai-Robinson) are gunned down in front of ten-year-old Cataleya (Amandla Stenberg). These scenes focus on the senseless violence that cartels employ. The only way to get out of these drug gangs is to die. This part of the film brings to mind images of the gangster in other films about Colombia.

Cataleya is spared by Marco (Jordi Morlla), who does not want to kill a little girl. He asks her for information about a chip which Fabio had given to Cataleya. Cataleya at ten years old is able to outsmart and outrun adult men who are on foot and in cars, to get to the United States Embassy. When she gets to the United States she outsmarts her handler in Miami and heads to her family in Chicago. Her Uncle Emilio agrees to train her to be a killer but he insists that she must go to school as well. He tells her that being a killer is easy but you need brains not to get caught. Despite her obsession with getting revenge on Don Luis and his cartel, she proves herself to be a mindful, intelligent and creative woman. She is able to avoid being captured by the police even when they are hot on her trail. She uses her cunning to enlist the help of the FBI agent who is tracking her, Special Agent James Ross (Lennie James), even though he is unwilling. She is also able to get her revenge on Don Luis and his cohorts who killed her parents at the end of the film.
The character of Cataleya presents a contrast to stereotypical Latin American characters in film. Typically, Latina characters are presented as harlots, clowns, or “the dark ladies,” who are described as “virginal, inscrutable, aristocratic and erotically appealing precisely because of these characteristics.” Luc Besson, the screenplay writer, gave the Cataleya’s character depth unlike the usually stock characters that are presented. The audience is able to understand why she decides to kill these men and able to feel her pain as she loses everything because of her decisions.

**International Relations**

The United States has had a drug program focused on Latin America and the Caribbean - since the mid-1970s. The focus has been on eradicating the illicit crop and strengthening law enforcement capabilities. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy oversees the overall strategy related to the U.S. drug control efforts both domestically and internationally. The U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Defense fund counter-drug assistance programs in the region. The major components of the United States’ strategy have been crop eradication, interdiction of cocaine and support for alternative development.

In 1989, former President Bush started the Andean Initiative which called for a major increase in the United States military assistance to the governments of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia to fight against drug trafficking. This was a month after President Galán of Colombia was assassinated. The goal of the initiative was to fight the Medellin Cartel. U.S. assistance increased during this time and U.S. officials worked closely with Colombian law enforcement to take down the Medellin cartel. However, after two years it was seen as mostly unsuccessful and

---

46 See Berg, pp. 70-76.
the Colombian president struck a deal with Pablo Escobar, head of the Medellin Cartel, for him to go to prison. In 1993, Pablo Escobar was killed after his escape.48 The next government of Ernesto Samper Pizno went after the Cali cartel.49

Mark Pecency and Michael Durnan state that the policies focused on the cartels in the 1990s eventually weakened and eliminated them but aided in the rise of the FARC. They state that after the demise of the Cali cartel there was a void left. The FARC was able to fill that void.50 During the 1990s the United States began to intensify its aerial spraying. However, during this time coca cultivation provided thousands of jobs. The intense spraying of pesticides causes damage to the environment and the livelihoods of the peasant workers.51 This caused conflict and increased peasant support for the FARC.52

Plan Colombia was unveiled in 1999 to fight drug trafficking and terrorism, to promote human rights and the rule of law, and foster economic development. Former President Uribe promoted Plan Colombia which evolved into his “integrated action,” a sequenced approach applied in contest zones where poverty, violence and the illicit crop cultivation converge.53 The plan was criticized for its overreliance on aerial spraying. In addition, the plan did not include measures to promote economic development and left peasant planters out of work and reliant on the FARC.54

In 2002, the international drug trade was linked to the fight against terrorism. The United States’ assistance to Colombia was made flexible so that it could be used for both endeavors. The

50 See Peceny, p. 107.
51 See Thoumi, p. 106.
52 See Penceny, p. 109.
54 See Peceny, p. 110.
United States has always had a strong military relationship with Colombia. In 2008 the United States worked out an agreement with the Colombian government to upgrade many of the United States bases to counter threats to the United States in South America, ranging from “poverty and natural disasters to terrorism.”

At the 2012 Summit of the Americas, Latin American leaders planned to use the meeting “to rethink U.S.-orchestrated policies that criminalize drug use and relies on troops to fight drug traffickers.” The leaders wanted to assess alternatives to the current war on drugs. Some leaders, such as President Otto Perez Molina of Guatemala, favored legalization of drugs. Juan Manuel Santos, president of Colombia, in 2011 said he would be willing to legalize marijuana so that “international efforts to deal with harder drugs such as cocaine and heroin” can be improved.

Images in *Colombiana* differ from images of Colombia somewhat. The main character is Colombian and the screenplay writers took the time for her to be more than just a stereotype. Although the film itself is based on a clichéd storyline of drug cartels that we have become so familiar with, it makes an effort to create a more complex image of Colombia. Since the 1970s the United States has had a deep military relationship with Colombia that has been based on the “war on drugs.” The film draws from the “war on drugs” to create the background of the story but is able to create a different image of Colombians in the process.

---

Conclusion

During the George W. Bush administration relations between the United States and Latin America seemed to be at a low point because the United States was more engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. Latin America was strengthening its ties with countries such as China and Russia. Countries like Iran were welcomed by governments such as Venezuela’s. When President Obama took office his administration was urged to refocus United States relations with Latin America. At the 2012 Summit of the Americas another issue that was discussed was the inclusion of Cuba in events like the summit the Organization of the American States. The Latin American countries are willing to include Cuba but the United States insists that Cuba needs to become more democratic before relations can participate. Latin American countries are members of organizations that exclude the United States. This may mean that the United States will less have influence on the region.

During the era of the Good Neighbor policy (1933-1945) the images of Latin America in film directly reflected U.S. policy. The aim was to show Latin America in a positive light. The policy did not stop all stereotypical images from appearing on screen but the aim was to show more balanced images of Latin America and Latinos. *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* is an example of films during this era and how policy affecting film.

During the Cold War in the 1980s, public opinion was critical of the United States becoming involved in civil wars in Latin America because of the money that was being spent by the United States. The people of the United States also did not want to get entangled in another Vietnam. *Salvador* reflects this opinion. The films during this time relied heavily on stereotyping Latin America and its people.

---

59 Cuba 1962 suspension in the OAS was lifted in 2009 but in order for them to participate the Cuban government must become more democratic. The Cuban government has not rejoined the OAS.
Films made today about Latin America have made an effort to create more complex characters but some still rely on the *clichéd storyline of drugs and guns*. Relations between Latin America and the United States have changed. The United States seems to have less influence in Latin America, as the countries are trying to have more control over their internal affairs. However, most countries still remain friendly with the United States. The images of the films have become less dependent on stereotypes as the countries have become more independent of the United States.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

Throughout my thesis I have looked inside “the box,” making an effort to tie international relations and culture together by looking at film. In chapter 2, I hypothesized that there are particular images and stereotypes in films which change over time. I also hypothesized that these images reflect relations that the Third World countries share with the Western states which produced the films. I have explored the depictions of the developing world in western popular films and showed that images do change somewhat depending on the relations between countries. I have also determined that although the images in many cases change, films set in the Third World still contain many stereotypes. I have determined that films tend to reflect the relations of the West and the Third World country location. There are times when the audience’s reaction to the film in the West alludes to what the relations are between the Third World nation and the Western nation. There are also examples where the film does not reflect the relations of the country at all but are based on the public opinion of the people within the nation.

Relations between the so called Third World and the West have indeed changed since the end of the Second World War. The Third World has sought to become more self-sufficient in areas that affect their economy and politics. China for example seeks to build a better industrial infrastructure that will help its economy grow far beyond the United States’. China has also become a leader on the international stage and begun to use soft power to influence the Asian region as well as countries all over the world, notably in Africa.

At the end of the Second World War many countries in the third world began to gain their independence from Western European countries. The films that were deconstructed, *African Queen*, and *Casablanca*, both reflect the colonial relationship that existed during WWII. In both
films the countries were extended battlefields of wars that were taking place in the West. The settings and people are background for stories about the West. In *African Queen*, Africans are rarely shown throughout the film. When the people of the East African colony are shown they are depicted as childlike or barbaric. This reflected the belief that African nations were unable to govern themselves. The focus is on the two Western characters in the film. Likewise, in *Casablanca*, the Moroccan city is depicted as being full of Westerners anxious to leave for the United States. The two Moroccans that are shown are a dishonest salesman and a waiter in Rick’s Café. The milieu of Morocco is depicted as savage and dangerous for two reasons: it is not Europe and the country is controlled by the Vichy government. The images create the identity of the “other” and the Other’s place in society as opposed to who the “us” is.

In *Anna and the King of Siam*, Thailand is depicted as a barbaric country with outdated customs. At the same time, Thailand is depicted as a country that is helpful to the West. In part, the depiction reflected Thailand’s position in the Second World War as it allied with Japan and other axis powers. However, after the war the United States maintained positive relations with Thailand because it was seen as an asset in the fight against communism as well as in business.

Through the Good Neighbor policy, the United States policymakers made an effort to create better relations between Latin America and the United States. Under the Motion Picture division, images of Latin America were regulated and more positive images were created in order to comply with the production codes. This is demonstrated in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*. The filmmaker attempts to create a balanced array of Mexican characters. The story is also critical of U.S. companies’ greed in Mexico. However, the familiar *bandito* character, used in media since the 1910s, is the central villain in the film. The use of the character helps recreate the negative stereotypes that existed about Mexicans.
During the Cold War the United States was interested in keeping a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union by gaining allies in the Third World. There were a number of proxy wars that were directly or indirectly funded by the United States. *Apocalypse Now* and *Salvador* depict public opinion during Vietnam War and Central American wars. The majority of the American public had become more critical of the Vietnam War toward the end and most Americans favored withdrawal. In Central America during the 1990s the majority of the public in the United States that were aware of the wars did not support the United States government assistance. *Salvador* was also able to shed light on the civil war that was taking place in El Salvador. Both *Apocalypse Now* and *Salvador* are critical of U.S. involvement in the wars. The films still manage to stereotype the Third World, showing the difference between “them” or the Viet Cong and the Salvadorians, and “us” or the people of the United States.

During the 1960s former colonies were still aiming for independence from England and France which could no longer afford to keep colonies. In this paper I also focused on how the reaction to a film can depict the relations between nations. It is important to note that *Battle of Algiers* was an Italian made film but was a collaborative effort between Italian director Gillo Pontcorvo and Algerians who had been part of the resistance at the time of the Algerian-French war. In France critics and the public in general were opposed to the film because the Algerian War for independence directly affected the French. During the 1960s when the film debuted, Algeria and France did not share friendly relations. In contrast the U.S. and Algeria shared positive relations until 1967 during the Arab-Israeli War when Algeria severed ties with the United States.

*Zulu* also was released during the height of independence in Africa. The images of the Africans in the film seem to reflect the fears of African states obtaining their independence and
the danger they could pose to Britain and the British ally of South Africa. The film may also reflect the way the rest of the international community stood in opposition to apartheid while the British and the United States through trade continued positive relations with South Africa.

Stereotyping has changed in present-day film but still exists in many cases. In the case of Africa, in many films produced in the West, the African story is usually told by a Westerner. Africans are main characters in the story but stories are not told by them; rather a Western character is used to convey the story to Western audiences. One can say that the films that are set in Africa are still about Westerners rather than about Africans. In *The Last King of Scotland* a fictional Scottish character, Dr. Nicolas Garrigan, was used to tell the story of Idi Amin. The character is an integral part of the story of the reign of Idi Amin. Interestingly, the directors try to search for the true Idi Amin beyond the myth. However, Idi Amin does not tell his story, Dr. Nicolas Garrigan does. At the same time the film focuses on the story of Africa rather than Africa just being a setting of Western conquest and domination.

Many films that I have not spoken about in this thesis still show Africa as a continent full of despair and hopelessness. They show the people as savage and war mongering harping back to the images of *African Queen* and other films throughout the decades. The news and other media add to these images by focusing on all that is wrong in the continent and create a sense that all that exists is disorganization, corruption and violence.

As for Asia, I focused on *Slumdog Millionaire* which featured an all Indian cast; some characters even spoke in Hindu. Although it is a Western-made film, its aim is to tell a story about Indians in a post-colonial world. Despite the filmmaker’s ambitions, the film caused an uproar because of some of the film’s content and the title itself. Some audiences argued that the film caste a real light on poverty in India. Other argued that *Slumdog Millionaire* is degrading to
those who live in such conditions, while yet others argued that although the conditions depicted in the film exist the filmmakers only showed adult characters who operated in some realm of corruption, thus reaffirming the image of India and the Third World as a place where the corrupt prosper and the weak have no agency. In addition, in painting India as a place where there is no government intervention of any kind, the image upholds the notion of the difference between “us” and “them.” Poverty and crime exist in India. However that is all that audiences, some who have never been to India, see when they watch the film. This goes against the image that India would like to be known for as a powerhouse in the world through trade and industry.

The image of Latin America has become more balanced, with films showing the people as complex individuals rather than all being the same stereotypes that have played over and over in films. Drugs still are a major concern in the region and the clichéd storyline of drugs and violence still exists and is rewritten. This is the case of Colombiana (2011), where the main character tries to enact her revenge on a drug cartel that murdered her family. Although Latin America has been a U.S. ally the countries are becoming more vocal on issues that affect them including how to handle the illegal drug trade. There are signs that the United States is losing the influence it once had over Latin America, which can be seen in the formation of the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean States (CELAC) which excludes the United States and Canada.

The media has portrayed the Middle Eastern terrorist since the 1980s. The September 11, 2001 attack polarized views of the Middle East across cultures and countries. The film Syriana offers a more balanced look at the Middle East while still integrating the story of the terrorist and what contributes to the making of a terrorist. The story argues that these are more than just “mad men” bent on destroying the United States; rather they are created by some U.S. policies. While
the war has ended in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan still continues. The Arab Spring has also become a topic of interest as the world looks on to see what direction Arab countries are moving in.

Although I chose a small sample of films set in the Third World compared with the vast array available, they all offer an insight into what influences the filmmaker came into contact with during the making of each film. Through the story and through stereotypes the films give an insight into policy as well as the public’s opinion of the Third World. More broadly, they show that culture cannot be separated from international relations. A policymaker resides in a culture and the way he or she thinks and act are formed through their cultural surroundings. Film is a form of cultural expression that portrays who the West or “us” is and who the Third World or “they” are. It also helps us look at the possible biases that exist in policymaking from one country to the next. When biases are exposed, this challenges policymakers to try to eliminate them in order to create a truly international community.
Works Cited


Anna and the King of Siam. Directed by John Cromwell. Twentieth Century Fox, 1946.


de Zeeuw, Jeroen. "'Sons of war': parties and party systems in post-war El Salvador and Cambodia." Democratization 17, no. 6 (December 2010): 1176-1201.


Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1964.


George, Terry, interview by Reel 13. Interview: Terry George, Director of "Hotel Rwanda" PBS. April 4, 2009.


*Herald Sun*. "Poor show, so rubbishes millionaire us down in the dumps." January 27, 2009: 40.

Hirchi, Mohammed. *Media representations of the Middle East*. n.d.


