

## Framing Pakistan: Cross-Cultural Communication and Geopolitical Narratives in American Cinema

### Abdul Rahim

PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, email address: [abdulrahimlaang@gmail.com](mailto:abdulrahimlaang@gmail.com)

### Shakil Akhtar

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, email address: [shakil.akhtar@iub.edu.pk](mailto:shakil.akhtar@iub.edu.pk)

### Abstract:

*In the context of U.S. foreign policy and international relations, this study looks at how American film shapes narratives about Pakistan. The study challenges popular perceptions of Pakistan and Muslims as being associated with terrorism and radicalization, which support American geopolitical objectives, by using a post-structuralist lens. Even though these films frequently reinforce preconceptions, they also offer chances for intercultural communication and comprehension. Through the use of thematic analysis and a qualitative deductive technique, the study examines nineteen American films and demonstrates how movies can either promote empathy among people or reinforce cultural biases. The necessity of authentic storytelling in bridging cultural gaps and improving Pakistan–US ties is emphasized in the paper’s conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Cross cultural communications, popular culture, American movies, post-structuralism, Pakistan, The United States.

### Introduction:

In the modern world, people are often forced to concentrate deeply on subjects that are both familiar and have a big influence on their life (Walliss, 2011). At the same time, the media is a major source of entertainment and knowledge in today’s cultural environment. People’s perceptions of world events, such as wars, famines, or peace talks, are influenced by the stories and images in the media. But frequently, these portrayals lack objectivity and factual accuracy. Audiences eventually grow accustomed to these representations and accept them as fact. As a result, distinct voices and points of view are undermined and perspectives become more uniform (Craig, 2006).

Conventional films build an idealistic society that addresses its core problems rather than simply reflecting societal realities. Filmmakers utilize sophisticated and strategic techniques to persuade audiences to accept some readings while rejecting others. This deception encourages passive acceptance of the current quo while preventing critical thinking and dissent (Holland, 2016).

Many films have played a pivotal role in linking narratives of radicalization to explicit cultural logics, sustaining their connection within popular culture. Movies often serve as vehicles for cross-cultural communication, reflecting state-driven interests while also presenting alternative narratives that instill skepticism in audiences (Ruby, 2000).

In today’s media-rich environment, dominated by visuals such as television, websites, videos, and images, new technologies have redefined literacy. The 21st-century concept of literacy now includes digital images and sounds, which are as crucial for education and understanding as traditional textual literacy (Serafini, 2012). Against this backdrop, this study focuses on cross-cultural communication through American films, particularly their relevance and significance in Pakistan–U.S. relations. Films often create primary interpretations that serve as independent sources of knowledge, offering reflections on international politics through structured visual arrangements (Van Munster, 2015). Newspapers, television, and movies are examples of visual

media that have developed into effective political communication tools. To influence how people view global concerns, these media mostly rely on striking visuals. The expanding significance of visual representation in international relations is evidenced by the increasing acceptance of films as a medium for explaining world politics (Mitchell, 1995).

The narrative structure of films and their capacity to provoke thoughtful consideration of global issues underscores cinema's influence on international discourse (Kluver, 2002). This paper assesses how American films have influenced Pakistan-U.S. relations and gives a historical review of its use as a cross-cultural communication tool. The significance of this research is highlighted by the long-standing and strategically important relationship between these countries, which dates back to the Cold War and the War on Terror. Since Pakistan's independence, the United States has consistently highlighted its geopolitical relevance, frequently using the country as a backdrop in cinematic storytelling.

Since the United States has made significant investments in using movies for political and informational ends, its cinematic initiatives serve as a standard by which to measure the effectiveness of intercultural communication in international relations (Daya, 2007). This study aims to draw international relations academics' attention to how movies influence interaction between states.

For instance, the 2015 documentary *Among the Believers* examines the growing political and religious turmoil in Pakistan post War on Terror, focusing on the Red Mosque (*Lal Masjid*) and its madrasa network. Similarly, the 2016 film *Army of One* revolves around the mission to capture Osama bin Laden in Pakistan. Films such as *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Bridge of Spies*, and *Four Lions* also feature unfavorable depictions of Pakistan and the Muslim world. Furthermore, *The Line of Freedom* (2013), a political drama banned in Pakistan for its portrayal of security services, sparked nationwide backlash and led to a ban on IMDb. According to Weber (2006), films offer a lens through which audiences can reflect on the intersection of international politics and everyday life. This underscores how cinema interweaves the "popular" with the "political".

American films often construct narratives of moral geography, delineating "us" versus "them" boundaries. These structures strengthen ideological codes associated with American identity while addressing geopolitical uncertainties. Cinema can be used as a tool to navigate the uncertainties of geopolitical relationships, especially those involving the United States, by clearly defining boundaries and threats (Crampton, 2007).

### **Literature Review**

This section of literature presents an in-depth review of the past and present development of the movie industry as one of the most important sources for shaping public ideologies and perceptions. It studies various strategies that the film industries, especially Hollywood, apply to surreptitiously introduce ideological narratives into the public sphere (Scott, 2000). The United States has been at the forefront of this development, not just in advancing cinematic techniques but also in utilizing films as instruments of soft power (Castillo, 2010). These films have often been employed to align public perceptions with US foreign policy goals (Holsti, 2009). Through cinema, the US has sought to influence domestic audiences and international publics, particularly in regions critical to its geopolitical interests (Giroux, 2001). This analysis examines how films function as channels of ideological dissemination, with a specific focus on Pakistan-US relations and the impact of cultural productions on public perception of international relations in this context.

Research on cross-cultural communication through films as contributing factors in Pakistan-US relations is limited. However, even rare studies provide valuable insights into the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions, the power of cinema as a medium, and their influence on diplomatic and public perceptions. By analyzing the available data, existing research sheds light on how films have shaped, challenged, or reinforced perceptions in international relationships, particularly between culturally and politically diverse nations like Pakistan and the United States.

While very few studies have been conducted to examine films in the Pakistan-US relationship, a good deal of research has been carried out on the influence of cinema in shaping public perceptions at the time of major geopolitical events. For example, cinema was an apparatus of propaganda in the process of garnering popular support for the war in World War II. Similarly, during the Cold War, films were quite instrumental in the ideological battle between the US and the Soviet Union (Koppes, 1990). The themes of "good vs. evil," democracy versus communism, and the American way of life opposing Soviet oppression fed into the public view of "the other." This continued even after the Cold War, wherein the new depictions were hailed films representing those emerging geopolitical realities like the theater of wars in the Middle East, terrorism, and complex global diplomacy. As much as Hollywood dominated the global markets, so then were the US narratives popular consumption (Shaw, 2016). These histories thus help in making sense of how cinema alters the perceptions which it sets between the states like between those of Pakistan and the US.

Therefore, these histories aid in understanding how film modifies the impressions it creates between states, such as between Pakistan and the US.

Hollywood, the most powerful organization in the world of film, has ingrained ideals and beliefs that are transmitted globally into the distinctively American culture. Because of this monopoly, the US was able to use movies as soft-power instruments that subtly further certain foreign policy goals while amusing a wider audience (Trumpbour, 2007). Understanding Individualism, Democracy, and Freedom was one of the long-standing themes of Hollywood films through which the US tries to define the global community (Franklin, 2006). However, such dissemination has mostly emphasized American-centrism in world issues, too often detracting from the more nuanced portrayals of other countries- even Pakistan. This research explores how the American movie industry has developed tactics to inject ideologies into the public sphere. Hollywood films, for instance, frequently depict US interventions in Afghanistan and Pakistan through the lens of counterterrorism, influencing audience perceptions of the region (Amara & NECIB, 2020). Well, the US has a broad political and military involvement in South Asia. Such representations, naturally, affect public perceptions in both Afghanistan and Pakistan where they are of significance and impact. These slickly produced, well-marketed products tell stories that are appealing across cultures (Schatz, 2013). These facilitate the penetration of markets as strong as Pakistan even if they boast whole domesticated film industries.

Hollywood films have enjoyed considerable popularity in Pakistan irrespective of the local film industry's extreme highs and lows, usually referred to as Lollywood (Naeem et al., 2020). This raises needs to know what effects American movies have on how Pakistanis view the US, particularly concerning its foreign policy. Do these movies reinforce or reduce stereotypes, present the USA as a world policeman, or proffer a more nuanced perspective on US-Pakistan relations?

This study, while addressing all these issues, also provides insight into how Hollywood narratives have shaped public opinion in Pakistan. This study adopts a qualitative research approach by using thematic analysis to address the research objective.

**Table 1: Number of American movies considered in this qualitative research study**

Serial No	Movie Name	Year
1	Rambo	1988
2	K.2.	1991
3	Vertical Limit	2000
4	Freddy Got Fingered	2001
5	In this World	2002
6	Workingman's Death	2005
7	The Kite Runner	2007
8	Charlie Wilson's war	2007
9	Four Lions	2010
10	Nanga Parbat	2010
11	Seal Team Six	2012
12	The Reluctant Fundamentalist	2012
13	The Bourne Legacy	2012
14	The Midnight Children	2012
15	Zero Dark thirty	2012
16	G.I. Joe: Retaliation	2013
17	The Lion of Freedom	2013
18	Bridge of Spies	2015
19	Army of the One	2016

Above mentioned films were analyzed through a thematic analysis for dialogue, character development, and visual elements to uncover messages embedded in cross-cultural communication. The emerged themes found recurring depictions of the oscillation between conflict and cooperation, pointing to the medium of cross-cultural communication via American films in the context of Pakistan-US relations. The results show how American films alter the perception of the general public, teach them about international relations, and demonstrate how much popular culture influences intercultural understanding which are described in the following section.

### 1.1 Creation of Popular Culture

In World Politics on Screen: Understanding International Relations through Popular Culture, Mark A. Sachleben examines the intersection of international relations (IR) and popular culture, particularly film and television. According to Sachleben, such media are not merely reflective of public notions about political reality and world situations; they overstep the boundaries of

traditional scholarly discourse. In order to clearly illustrate how popular culture contributes to the creation of global political narratives, this section would depend on Sachleben's study as well as other academic sources.

### **1.1.1 Bridging Popular Culture and International Relations**

This seems to say that film-and-television provide spaces for considering-and teaching-Iran; that it is not merely entertainment, as so remember popular culture. Said's Orientalism drives the hilt towards that (1978): the Western modalities of "the Other" create cultural hegemony and thus delineate political ideologies. In a similar way, Shapiro (2009) posited that movies take the complex ambience of international politics and make them accessible to audiences, while on the other hand, Hall (1997) would contend that media representations create public perceptions of nations and events. To W. Hofstede, as well, "These emotionally moving films affect culture and political opinion."

With this extension of the subject, Kearney (2018) demonstrates how popular media dramatize global issues—climate change, terrorism, and human rights—and how such dramatization ultimately affects public opinion and policy debate. It highlights the very dynamic relationship that is present between media and political discourse, thus emphasizing the importance of engaging with the cultural narratives in IR.

### **1.1.2 World Politics Films and Theoretical Explanations**

Sachleben illustrates the pedagogical potential of popular culture in teaching IR theories such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, and structuralism. Realism, focused on power and security, is depicted in films like *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) and *Thirteen Days* (2000), which portray Cold War tensions (Sachleben, 2014). Liberalism's emphasis on diplomacy and cooperation is evident in *The West Wing* (1999-2006), aligning with Keohane's (1984) argument about institutions mitigating global anarchy. Constructivist themes appear in *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and *Persepolis* (2007), which explore norms, identity, and humanitarian interventions (Finnemore, 1998). Structuralist critiques of global capitalism are dramatized in *The Constant Gardener* (2005), echoing Hardt and Negri's (2000) critique of systemic inequality.

Moreover, documentaries like *Inside Job* (2010) and *The Act of Killing* (2012) contest the dominant narratives, offering the voice of the marginalized and nudging people toward a critical engagement with global issues (Nichols, 2001). Above all, these products mark the ability of popular culture to bring to the fore the complexities of political and economic realities.

### **1.1.3 Conflict and Cooperation in World Politics**

Sachleben explores how films construct narratives of war, diplomacy, and peace. Realist perspectives dominate conflict-focused films like *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001), which depict the inevitability of military engagements in international politics (Sachleben, 2014). Kaldor's (2006) theory of "new wars" is reflected in these films, which highlight asymmetrical warfare and blurred civilian-combatant boundaries. Conversely, *Thirteen Days*

(2000) presents a liberal perspective on crisis resolution through diplomacy, echoing Jervis' (1989) analysis of Cold War deterrence.

Films addressing nuclear weapons, such as *Fail-Safe* (1964) and *The Day After* (1983), reflect academic debates on deterrence and nuclear ethics (Schelling, 1966). Terrorism-focused narratives like *United 93* (2006) and *The Hurt Locker* (2008) evoke emotional responses that shape public perceptions of national security (Patterson, 2014).

#### **1.1.4 Challenges in Modern World Politics**

Sachleben highlights global challenges like migration, poverty, and human rights through films. Migration's human dimension is captured in *The Visitor* (2007) and *Sin Nombre* (2009), critiquing systems that marginalize migrants and aligning with critical IR theories (Agnew, 1994). Films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and *City of God* (2002) explore poverty and inequality, echoing dependency theory's critique of global economic structures (Wallerstein, 1974).

Human rights and authoritarianism are central themes in *The Lives of Others* (2006) and *Persepolis* (2007), which align with constructivist theories emphasizing norms' role in shaping global politics (Risse, 1999). Iranian cinema, as in that instance of *A Separation* (2011), contributes significantly to the promotion of human rights through the subtle portrayals of problems at the societal level in which they take a part. This kind of portrayal is an alternative to the Western stereotypes (Malik, 2011).

#### **1.1.5 Media and Cultural Exchange**

The example of American films reflects the impact of culture, globalization, and cultural infiltration into Pakistan. Malik (2011) asserts that while Hollywood affects the cultural norms of its audience, these have meanings for the local audience as they blend American practices with local traditions. Many of Hofstede's cultures have discussed the issue of selected assimilation. Digital platforms enhance the global narrative for cross-cultural dialogue and promote cultural interaction.

Popular culture is the most effective vehicle for international relations and influence upon it on public opinion, political discourse, and cross-cultural understanding. Maintaining a critical eye on the media will improve understanding of how politics and culture function in countries.

### **2.1 Usage of Movies for Particular Agendas**

Many decades ago, international war films were shown to have cultural presentations and political agenda settings. American movies often show the esteem to their country and the moral rightness of the country to serve as an image of virtue. An example of this would be the film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), where Steven Spielberg's portrayal of war teaches the audience about an American soldier sacrifice through violent, bloody chaos, and heroism (Baker, 2010). True to that, British films which emphasized showing resilience and collective effort would be like Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* (2017), truly depicting a nerve-racking and non-linear narration to the dramatic

evacuation of British troops (Dyer, 2019). These depictions resonate with national values of unity during adversity.

The totalitarian character of Soviet cinema represents the Second World War as the "People's War"- collective sacrifice and collective bravery. Elem Klimov depicts collective suffering and horror that defines the lives of civilians on the eastern fronts and illustrates a phenomenal human cost of War in the film *Come and See S* (1985) (Kalinina, 2016). Japanese films, in contrast, lament and highlight the tragedy of war, which weighs so heavily on its victims. Isao Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) features the ordeal of two orphaned siblings as a strong indictment against the glorification of war (Lindsay, 2019). The essay *Cross-Cultural Communications through American Films in Pakistan-US Relations* argues that Hollywood has fostered nuanced perceptions of American culture in Pakistan, dispelling stereotypes and promoting dialogue (Khan, 2021). Similarly, films like *The Kite Runner* (2007) explore Afghan culture and its complexities, fostering empathy through storytelling (Tsereteli, 2018).

In order to employ and to manipulate cinematic propaganda for ideological purposes, states have historically found ways of harnessing the resources of cinema. Examples include *Triumph of the Will* (1935) produced by Leni Riefenstahl in Nazi Germany under the strict control of the Propaganda Ministry, propagating Aryan superiority and nationalist fervor (Baker, 2010; Creeber, 2015). Such an example makes clear how cinema may be wielded to shape public perception and reinforce state narratives. Propaganda often blurs entertainment with political messaging, as noted by Jowett and O'Donnell (2018).

In the post-war era, filmmakers critiqued wartime narratives. For example, Italian neorealism has on such themes-and much more because it has mostly focused on the struggles of ordinary people in a way that directly contradicts idealized war imagery (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013). Along this line, the globalization of cinema has also encouraged cultural exchange with fusions from different strands of traditions in films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) (Harris, 2020).

The stories of World War II highlight the intersections of politics, culture, and representation. Filmmakers use this kind of cinematization to elicit empathy, dismantle agendas, and establish a framework for cross-cultural communication—a series of links for potential future discussions between opposing viewpoints.

## 2.2 American Movies for State Interests

Governments have historically used American films as tools for propaganda and advancing state interests. In the movies depicted during the Second World War, an American hero has always been put against an enemy in a very negative light. Even when no active combat is taking place, there have always been agendas promoted by Hollywood in terms of national security, growth in the economy, and projecting American ideals through soft diplomacy. The American film industry played a significant role in fostering cultural understanding between nations and bringing them closer to the general public during all of America's wars. One such effort was between the United States and Pakistan (Khan, 2021).

Such Hollywood-produced movies accurately depict this plan. For instance, the 1986 film *Top Gun*, which produced along with the assistance of the US Navy, reportedly was an awesome morale booster and recruit earner by featuring Navy troops in a positive light. *American Sniper* (2014) revered Navy SEAL Chris Kyle with glamorous views of his services but further polarized people with its seemingly pro-war attitudes. *Black Panther* (2018) earned acclaim for highlighting African culture, fostering soft diplomacy with African nations (Lindsay, 2019).

Not all Hollywood films are state-driven, but many have historically served political purposes. Between 1939 and 1945, over 2,000 American films shaped global markets, often serving as tools for U.S. foreign policy and public escapism from wartime realities (Segrave, 2004). Post-WWII, U.S. films dominated foreign markets, generating profits and solidifying cultural influence (Jarvie, 1992).

The 9/11 assaults changed the course of cinematic narratives. *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), secretly screened for Pentagon employees in 2003, explored the allegorical basis of America's invasion of Iraq by French experiences in Algeria with counterterrorism in mind (Kaufman, 2003). Such instances are testaments to cinema's wider role in understanding political and social challenges.

Film, as per makers like Millett (1947) and O'Meara (1976), has always been in the transformation of teaching, specifically political science, and has paved the way for Cinematic IR. Today, popular culture continues to give meaning to international relations, thus further reflecting that which moves public opinion (Holden, 2006; Engert, 2009). Hollywood is becoming a potent instrument for advancing national interests or global influence, according to this.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This part talks about how American popular culture, especially movies, has helped in foreign policy in general and accomplishing the national interests of the United States. Hollywood serves as a major soft power into which irresistible narratives are created that influence international perceptions. American films frequently have a tendency to stereotype Pakistan as a nation linked to terrorism, instability, or extremism by influencing cultural choices and projecting ideologies. It promotes these myths and portrays Pakistan as a fighting zone in order to better align public opinion with US geopolitical goals.

These portrayals have gone beyond mere entertainment and now subtly sow cultural misperceptions and socio-political support to shaping global policies. Framing Pakistan as a 'threat', American cinema creates a worldview consonant with U.S. security policies. This kind of strategic storytelling is similar to diplomatic acts, which can coerce public opinion in the short term and mold it into societal perception in the long run. At the end, it is the Hollywood story that proves how cinema can be a critical tool for the advancement of the U.S. foreign policy agenda. American cinema works as a very effective tool to impose perception in the minds of people, especially in the case of Pakistan, so as to align the public alongside U.S. foreign policy. Typical images of Pakistan are associated with terrorism, thus it goes ahead calling this 'Muslim terrorist state' (Jabeen, 2020). Public opinion builds and shapes an image global. These cinematic narratives act as tools of soft power, subtly shaping cultural perceptions globally, including within Pakistan



itself (Nelson, 2013). The U.S. uses popular culture, especially films, as a means of cultural diplomacy and soft power (Lodhi, 2009). Poststructuralist critiques of these narratives expose how American movies normalize power hierarchies and reinforce hegemonic discourses (Vivier, 2010; Lams, 2018). By restricting Pakistan to narrow portrayals, such as its association with terrorism, these films perpetuate stereotypes and Orientalist perspectives, shaping Pakistan's identity in international relations (Jabeen, 2019). American cinema is almost always a contested site in the speaking of the cultural and political realities within which it operates (Kraidy, 2002). It has been led by films like *Zero Dark Thirty* and *Charlie Wilson's War* to configure narratives about Pakistan's role in geopolitics as not merely counterterrorism but also global alliances (Sulter, 2016). For example, films such as *GI Joe: Retaliation* and *Four Lions* have Pakistan as a context in creating entertainment fused with political commentary. These representations, however, are oversimplified to the larger complexities of geopolitical realities, portraying stereotypes and granting primacy to Western understandings (Buzan, 2009; Salmaoui, 2023).

There has been a lot of influence regarding American cinema in the cultural and social orientations of the people of Pakistan (Mahmood, 2022). Thus, through the international power structures, this cinema is slanted toward Western representations, which strengthen the hegemonic position of the United States in the global cultural economy (Khan, 2020). The themes and representations in American films shape discourses on identity and belonging while marginalizing local perspectives by portraying them as aspirational Western lifestyles (Duffy, 2016). However, the more nuanced portrayal like *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* gives richer insights into the meaning of Pakistani identity, as experienced by individuals grappling with complexities (Kour, 2018). Movies such as *Workingman's Death* and *In This World* humanize laborers and refugees, fostering empathy and highlighting resilience amid adversity (Ward, 2010). American films play a pivotal role in helping to interpret Pakistan and its relations with the U.S., in addition to various other issues like popular identity, global narratives, popular opinion, and policy orientations (Ahmad, 2017). An already conceived idea about Pakistan through films influences the rest of the world, maybe just to reinforce stereotypes or add to their comprehension (Seib, 2008). An intense part of war films might help further stir or aggravate ill feelings between Pakistan and the U.S., affecting diplomatic efforts and the popular attitude. In contrast, subtlety, as evident in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, showcases the vast diversity within Pakistan and promotes intercultural understanding (Kanu, 2005). Positive depictions of Pakistan can attract tourists and investors, while negative portrayals deter them (Tripathi, 2017; Alam et al., 2013). Post-9/11, Pakistan was framed as a "failed state," which constructed its international identity via external portrayal rather than reflecting its true reality (Idrees, 2023).

American popular culture in Pakistan and its influence through cinema create a synergy of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and global scape. Measuring a state's ideological or cultural power is difficult, yet it has a significant impact on international affairs. Soft power, on the other hand, uses the power of culture and values to shape preferences and perceptions; it introduces norms that are unfamiliar to many societies and may disturb a society's fabric (Bari & Jabeen, 2020; Kiyani et al., 2017). U.S. cultural exports, especially films, have long been strategic tools for advancing American foreign policy objectives in Pakistan. American films influence Pakistan-U.S. relations by serving as both bridges and barriers to cross-cultural communication. Different activities bring people together and move them to different places. This particular activity would bring Pakistani males to America and seal the identities of dead or dying people. Under that, it would also involve many themes such as identity, suspicion, and misunderstanding. The speaking of mutual

understanding would be a wonderful idea on the one hand but on the other, there is the risk of accentuating mutual stereotypes which complicate the situation even further in international relations (Greene, 2014). Hollywood pictures are bound with such kind of geopolitical issues, such as the creation of Pakistan's strategic role in the contemporary world. As cinema is naturalized into and legitimized, so Lacy (2003) observes, the idea of what becomes acceptable for the behavior of states. Charlie Wilson's War is an illustration of how Pakistan participated in some of the Cold War conflicts as well as into some other shadowy operations thereby reflecting into importance into its geopolitical position. Such portrayals shape public understanding of international relations, reinforcing dominant Western narratives (Dodds, 2008; Williams, 2010). Cultural identity and stereotypes are central to U.S. films about Pakistan. For example, Four Lions satirizes the radicalization of British Muslims of Pakistani descent, challenging stereotypes while exploring identity crises and alienation within diasporic communities (Moazzam, 2023). Similarly, In This World examines refugee experiences, critiquing fixed notions of identity and national borders, and highlighting the fluidity of identity amid global upheavals (Bertellini, 2013; Attfield, 2020). Themes of terrorism and radicalization dominate Hollywood's representation of Pakistan. Films like The Reluctant Fundamentalist delve into the socio-political dynamics influencing radicalization, humanizing the individuals behind global terrorism narratives (Akhtar et al., 2021). Conversely, Four Lions employs satire to critique simplistic explanations of terrorism, presenting a nuanced view of identity and belonging (Noureen, 2018). Such portrayals encourage dialogue on the root causes of radicalization, such as political oppression and economic disparities, while challenging reductionist depictions of Pakistan. Stereotypes and misrepresentations also surface in films like G.I. Joe: Retaliation, where Pakistan is depicted through a lens of conflict and instability. These portrayals often end up dimming the lighting across the diverse cultural and richly historical nation. Even in so crass a comedy as Freddy Got Fingered, foreign elements can influence the culture as a whole. Media such as this have the power to create historical narratives (Zimbardo, 2014). Another continuous theme deals with women's experiences within Pakistani cultural norms. Women struggle with social expectations tied to honor and autonomy as represented in films such as Izzat. As such, the stories tend to illustrate the current tensions that exist between tradition and individual aspirations, thus condemning gender inequality and further calling for advancement of cultures towards gender equity (Ahmad, 2016). Other geopolitical realities are captured in films such as Zero Dark Thirty and The Kite Runner, wherein Pakistan serves as a stage for broader international conflict. These then humanize the Pakistani characters, offering low-brow geopolitical narratives toward effective cultural-understanding. American film has a big say in how people view Pakistan because of these themes, and it uses its soft power to support or contradict political and cultural narratives. By tackling issues of identity, geopolitics, and prejudices, these movies have the potential to either reinforce false information or advance a more complex and compassionate international conversation.

## Conclusion

At the heart of this study was the analysis of how American cinema has been shaping the narratives around Pakistan as a medium for soft power and cultural diplomacy in the complex relations between Pakistan and the United States. One element of research on American films focused on the major recurring images of Pakistan, all stereotypically associated with terrorism, instability, or radicalization, which conform to American geo-political interests. This not only strengthens

stereotypes and ideological rifts, but it provides opportunities for better exchanges and understanding. The most pessimistic conclusion to draw from this research is that cinema can either reinforce cultural discourses or act as a bridge across cultural divides. It called for increased genuine storytelling that could serve to topple stereotyped ideas and instead foster understanding and empathy for Pakistan-US relations. Hollywood's massive preponderance in global media allows it to determine and shape global ideas as well, therefore it is important to engage critically with its narratives.

## References

- Walliss, J., & Aston, J. (2011). Domsday America: The pessimistic turn of post-9/11 apocalyptic cinema. *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 23(1), 53-64.
- Craig, D. (2006). *The ethics of the story: Using narrative techniques responsibly in journalism*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Holland, J. (2016). Visual literacy in international relations: Teaching critical evaluative skills through fictional television. *International Studies Perspectives*, 17(2), p.175.
- Ruby, J. (2000). *Picturing culture: Explorations of film and anthropology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Serafini, F. (2012). Reading multimodal texts in the 21st century. *Research in the Schools*, 19(1).
- Van Munster, R., & Sylvest, C. (2015). Documenting international relations: Documentary film and the creative arrangement of perceptibility. *International Studies Perspectives*, 16(3), p.2.
- Mitchell, W. T. (1995). *Picture theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kluver, A. R. (2002). *The logic of new media in international affairs. new media & society*, 4(4), p.500.
- Scott, I. (2000). *American politics in Hollywood film*. Psychology Press.
- Castillo, G. (2010). *Cold War on the home front: the soft power of midcentury design*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Holsti, O. R. (2009). *Public opinion and American foreign policy*. University of Michigan Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001). Breaking into the movies: Pedagogy and the politics of film. *jac*, 583-598.
- Koppes, C. R., & Black, G. D. (1990). *Hollywood goes to war: How politics, profits and propaganda shaped World War II movies*. University of California Press.
- Shaw, T. (2016). Cinema and the cold war: an international perspective. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Warfare* (pp. 365-382). Routledge.
- Trumpbour, J. (2007). *Selling Hollywood to the world: US and European struggles for mastery of the global film industry, 1920-1950*. Cambridge University Press.
- Franklin, D. P. (2006). *Politics and film: The political culture of film in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Amara, F., & NECIB, F. S. (2020). The US Politics and the Film Industry: The Role of Hollywood in Bush's "War on Terror" (Doctoral dissertation, *تبسة التبيسي العربي جامعة*).
- Schatz, T. (2013). *The New Hollywood. In Movie blockbusters* (pp. 15-44). Routledge.
- Naeem, T., Khan, M. H., & Khaliq, F. A. (2020). Cultural imperialism through Hollywood cinematic media on Pakistani youth. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, 5(1), 90-102.
- Brown, K. W., Cozby, P. C., Kee, D. W., & Worden, P. E. (1999). *Research Methods in Human Development*: Mayfield Pub.

- Sachleben, M. A. (2014). *World politics on screen: Understanding international relations through popular culture*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Said, E. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. Vintage.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage.
- Kearney, R. (2018). *The global politics of popular culture: Film, media, and international relations*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sachleben, M. A. (2014). *World politics on screen: Understanding international relations through popular culture*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Patterson, T. E. (2014). *The American democracy*. Cengage Learning.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Academic Press.
- Malik, F. (2011). *Cross-cultural communications through American films in Pakistan– US relations*. Asian Profile Press.
- Baker, C. (2010). *The representation of war in cinema*. New York: Routledge
- Dyer, R. (2019). *Dunkirk: The British Home Front in World War II*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Kalinina, E. (2016). Come and See: A study of the Soviet war film. *Journal of Film and Video*, 68(1), 18-31.
- Lindsay, S. (2019). The representation of war in Japanese animation. *Journal of Media Studies*, 15(3), 102-118.
- Khan, S. (2021). Cross-Cultural Communications through American Films in Pakistan-US Relations. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 14(2), 45-62.
- Tsereteli, E. (2018). Cinematic representations of Afghanistan in Western film. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(4), 345-360.
- Creeber, G. (2015). *The Television Genre Book*. London: British Film Institute.
- Harris, A. (2020). *Globalization and Cinema: A New Approach*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2013). *Film Art: An Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Segrave, K. (2004). *Product placement in Hollywood films: A history*. McFarland.
- Jarvie, I. C., & Jarvie, I. (1992). *Hollywood's overseas campaign: The North Atlantic movie trade, 1920-1950*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kaufman, M. T. (2003). *The World: Film Studies; What Does the Pentagon See in 'Battle of Algiers'*. New York Times, 7.
- Holden, G. (2006). Cinematic IR, the Sublime, and the Indistinctness of Art. *Millennium*, 34(3), 793-818.
- Engert, S., & Spencer, A. (2009). International Relations at the Movies: Teaching and Learning about International Politics through Film. Perspectives: *Central European Review of International Affairs*, 17(1).
- Bari, S., & Jabeen, R. (2020). Soft power: An invasion to Pakistani culture. *Al Tafseer-Biannual Journal*, 35(1).
- Lodhi, M. (2009). *The Future of Pakistan-US Relations: Opportunities and Challenges* (p.7). Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University.
- Vivier, P. W. (2010). *The Postmodern Aspects Reflected in the Qatsi Trilogy* (Doctoral dissertation, Tshwane University of Technology).

- Lams, L. (2018). Examining strategic narratives in Chinese official discourse under Xi Jinping. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 23(3), 387-411.
- Jabeen, F. (2019). *The Rhetoric of Neo-Orientalism: The Perpetuation of Ideological Entanglements for Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University).
- Kraidy, M. M. (2002). Hybridity in cultural globalization. *Communication theory*, 12(3), 316-339.
- Sulter, P. (2016). "We've Tamed the World by Framing It": Islam, 'Justifiable Warfare,' and Situational Responses to the War on Terror in Selected Post-9/11 Novels, Films and Television (Doctoral dissertation, Master's thesis, Rhodes University).
- Buzan, B. (2009). *Non-Western international relations theory* (pp. 11-35). A. Acharya (Ed.). Taylor & Francis.
- Salam-Salmaoui, R., & Salam, S. (2023). Hollywood comes to Pakistan: Churails' appropriation of Hollywood detective genre. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 13(4).
- Mahmood, R., Saleem, A., & Ahmad, H. (2022). Appropriation of Western Culture in South-Asian Media and Its Socio-Cultural Impact on ESL Learners. *Multicultural Education*, 8(11).
- Duffy, B. E. (2016). The romance of work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries. *International journal of cultural studies*, 19(4), 441-457.
- Kour, J. (2018). From Silence to Speech: Women in Anees Jung's *Beyond the Courtyard*. *Literary Voice*, 69.
- Khan, A., Ahmad, A., & Dadda, A. A. (2017). Pak-US Relations: Understanding of the Misunderstandings. *Global Social Science Review*, 2(2), 1-23.
- Yousaf, S. (2017). Quantification of country images as stereotypes and their role in developing a nation brand: The case of Pakistan. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 13, 81-95.
- Idrees, M., & Khan, M. (2023). Defending Pakistan's National Identity in post 9/11 Era: The Role of the US and India. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences.*, 2(4), 1464-1481.
- Attfield, S., & Attfield, S. (2020). Immigration and Diaspora. *Class on Screen: The Global Working Class in Contemporary Cinema*, 89-122.
- Bertellini, G. (2013). *Film, national cinema, and migration*. The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration.
- Akhtar, S., Qureshi, A. H., Hassan, M. U., & Tanveer, B. (2021). Deconstructing issues of identity in "the reluctant fundamentalist" by Mohsin. Hamid. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 5(4), 343-348.
- Noureen, A., & Paracha, S. A. (2018). Pictures in Hollywood: A Momentous influence of Films after 9/11. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition*, 11(2).
- Zimbaro, Z. M. (2014). Thinking twice: Uses of comedy to challenge Islamophobic stereotypes. *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*, 4(2), 220-240.
- Ahmad, S. (2016). Sexualised objects and the embodiment of honour: Rape in Pakistani films. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 39(2), 386-400.