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**Changing Agendas and Changing Concepts in the U.S cinema  
Case Study: *Rambo III* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008).**

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To our Families, friends and relatives.

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## Abstract

*This piece of research deals with the changing agendas and changing concepts in the US cinema, as illustrated by the two American movies Rambo III (1988) and Body of Lies (2008). Our dissertation, unlike previous works, aims at examining the illustration of the ongoing representation and construction of foreign partners in the US cinema, according to whether they are perceived as enemies or allies. The portrayal of the Soviets in Rambo III (1988) and the Muslims in Body of Lies (2008) show how concepts evolve to fit the US interests. It purports to examine the role of Cinema in reinforcing American agendas. The importance of this dissertation is to raise the reader's awareness on how the US gets constantly to change allies and enemies according to its changing interests, also, the way the US cinema affects this change and the way cinema is affected by this change too. In addition, it inspects the way the negative portrayals of the US enemies affect the people of these rival nations. To achieve our purpose, we chose to read the two movies through three different theories. We have relied on Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) to shed light on the misrepresentation of the Other in the two movies namely Soviets in Rambo III (1988) and Muslims in Body of Lies (2008). We have drawn upon the concept of The Just War Theory in order to show how the United States justified its intervention in other countries, and how it shifts from an enemy to another according to its interests. In addition, Language and Power by Fairclough (1989) helps us to examine how language is used by the US in its cinema to establish a power status to itself and an inferior status for its rivals. Our research paper has led us to the conclusion that, both Rambo III and Body of Lies have the purpose to strengthen the negative depiction of the US enemies, and reinforce the image of the US as the leader of the world and as the guardian of peace worldwide. In addition, these two movies are used as propaganda tools, the first in the Cold War period against Soviets and the second after the September 11, 2001 attacks against Muslims.*

# Contents

	Pages
Acknowledgements .....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Review of the Literature.....	4
Issues and Working Hypothesis.....	5
Endnotes .....	6
<b>II. Materials and Methods.....</b>	<b>8</b>
A. Materials.....	8
a. Presentation of Peter MacDonald's Rambo III (1988).....	8
b. Presentation of Riddley Scott's Body of Lies (2008).....	9
B. Methods.....	12
C. Methodological Outline.....	14
Endnotes.....	15
<b>III. Results .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>IV. Discussion .....</b>	<b>17</b>
A. Chapter I: The USSR as the Rival of the USA .....	17
a. USA and USSR: War Allies .....	17
b. The US and the USSR: the Cold War Period .....	18
c. The Representations of Soviets in Rambo III (1988).....	23
d. The Effects of This Bad Representation on Public Opinion.....	28
Endnotes .....	30
B. Chapter II: Muslims as the Enemy of the US .....	32
a. The Representations of Muslims in Body Of Lies (2008).....	32
b. The Reasons behind the Bad Depiction of Muslims in the US Cinema.....	37

1. The Gulf War.....	38
2. The 9/11.....	38
3. The Bush Administration and the Aftermath of the 9/11 Attacks.....	39
c. The Impacts of the Negative Portrayal of Muslims in Cinema....	44
Endnotes.....	45
<b>C. Chapter III: The US Cinema and Changing Agendas .....</b>	<b>47</b>
a. The US's Constant Changing Agendas.....	47
b. The Changing Agendas in the US Cinema.....	50
c. Changing Concepts According to Changing Agendas in the Cinema.....	53
d. The US in the Middle East: Hidden interests.....	56
Endnotes .....	57
<b>V. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>VI. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>60</b>

## **I. Introduction**

From the beginning of times, people have always dreamt of an ideal world where civilization, peace and freedom would reign. This dream started to materialize with the discovery of America in 1492. British citizens fled Britain to America that is regarded as the “Promised Land”<sup>1</sup>, aspiring to establish a new nation on these ideals that they consider as crucial to their lives.

However, after the discovery of America, it took almost half a century before the first English colony was established “Virginia” -named after the Virgin Queen-, and the other thirteen colonies followed later. However, these new colonies and European settlements were not independent and were always under the rule of England, and the “Mayflower Compact” signed by the pilgrims that founded the “Plymouth Plantation” was the most obvious proof for it.<sup>2</sup>

When these colonies gained independence from Britain in 1776 after a long struggle, the settlements became more populated, because of the big numbers of immigrants that kept pouring from all over Europe. Therefore, the settlers needed more land; the thing that drove them to expand westward and southward through purchasing Louisiana from the French and making it the 18<sup>th</sup> State, in addition to the annexation of New Mexico and California.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the Americans considered themselves as the Chosen People to spread those values their nation was founded on, all over the world. This belief is mainly called “Manifest Destiny”<sup>4</sup>, which is the claim that it is the mission of Americans to spread their civilization over North America. This expansion would not only be geographical but also moral, political, ideological, and technological as well.<sup>5</sup>

“Manifest Destiny” was and is still used by the US as a pretext to justify its cause and ends to the rest of the world whenever it waged a war against a nation or a group of people,

even if this war was not just and served only its interests. The Manifest Destiny was used at different periods of the US history that had witnessed a remarkable shift in the part Americans regarded as “the Enemy”, or what Edward said refers to as “the Other”, depending on the changing of the US interests, to gain public support and validity to their cause.

There are various illustrations of these changes. As an example, when the first Europeans went to settle in America, they started a war against the Native Indians who were living there. The European settlers claimed this land as theirs, and pretended that they were predestined to bring civilization to these primitive people. In the WWI, the United States of America at first declared its neutrality, but later on allied with Britain against Germany, and so was the case in WWII. The United States of America preferred to remain neutral until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, so the US joined the Allies among whom there is the USSR against Germany.<sup>6</sup> Later on; in the Cold War, “the Enemy” according to USA had shifted from Nazism to Communism. The two opposing poles were involved in an ideological struggle in which both were racing to spread their hegemony as wide as possible. The United States of America adopted what Henry Truman called “the Policy of Containment” to limit the spread of Communism. This policy incited America to intervene in foreign countries in order to create a sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup> currently, after the events of the 9/11; “The Enemy” had shifted from “Soviets” to “Muslims”. The latter are viewed as terrorists that represent a threat and a danger to the West and to the world in general. The United States of America, being the country that guards world peace, intervenes in eastern countries’ policies and internal affairs and even in military matters. These interventions were conducted under the cover of the UN and the other human rights organizations.

As the Seventh Art, we suggest that cinema plays an outstanding role in shaping and setting the political and social agendas. Cinema as an ideological weapon, not only decides what people think about, but how to think of it as well. Therefore, cinema since its growth,



was exploited as a powerful medium of influence, and been used as an instrument by whoever wishes to manipulate the masses.

As the United States of America is aware of the extent to which cinema can be influential, the US aimed at using Cinema in the pursuit of its political, social, geographical, and economic purposes. Whenever the US wanted to spread a given idea, to reach a particular goal, the US diffuses it in a movie and promotes the idea so as it becomes easily accepted and popular. Accordingly, America in its movies constructs a positive image of itself as the representative of 'Good', and, constructs a negative image of its enemies as representatives of 'Evil'.

Since its beginnings, Hollywood has produced films that misrepresented America's enemies, beginning from Native American Indians that were depicted as villains, simple-minded, savages, uncivilized, primitive, and superstitious people. Although there are numerous Indian tribes all over America, each with its different history and traditions, all were reduced to one stereotypical ambiguous culture in American films, because the Native American Indians were the enemy of the US at the time. The US by this misrepresentation tried to justify its extermination of them. Later on, in the period of the First and the Second World Wars, as the main enemy of the US was Germany; many films were produced in Hollywood that misrepresented Germans, and portrayed them as cruel dictators, and bloody criminals. Afterwards; in the period of the Cold War, Hollywood shifted attention to the new 'Enemy' that is the Communist USSR. The latter was portrayed as a dangerous threat to the world in general and to America in particular. However; after the end of the Cold War that ended by the victory of the US over Soviet Russia; the United States of America needed another "enemy" to shed light on as a justification to its imperialist deeds. So, this time, Muslims were the new target, especially after the 9/11 events. Hollywood started producing films that depict Muslims as dangerous terrorists, cold-blooded murderers, extremists,

fundamentalists and harmful villains that aim to undermine the foundations of the Free World.

An example of these movies produced by Hollywood that misrepresented the US enemies in two different periods of the US history, namely; the Cold War and the Aftermath of the 9/11 are *Rambo III* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008) that we chose to use to examine the adjustment of cinema to the changing Agendas of the United States.

We conducted our study which consists of analyzing two Hollywood Movies, *Rambo III* (1989) and *Body of Lies* (2008), relying on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Norman Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989), and the concept of the Just War Theory to better understand how the US gets to change its enemies constantly, according to its changing interests. Also, to better understand the role of Cinema in changing Agendas, specifically in the period of the Cold War on.

Through our present dissertation we aim to examine the changing agendas and concepts in the US cinema in *RamboIII* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008).

## **Review of the Literature**

The changing agendas of the US, regarding allies and adversaries have raised influential debates among different critics all over the world. The debates about the American depiction of their enemies that change according to its interest, and the US self construction through the construction of others involve a set of arguments by which each author attempts to measure and question this changing of agendas.

Charles A. Kupchan in his article "Enemies Into Friends: How the United States Can Court Its Adversaries" (2010) writes about how the United States make enemies whenever its interests are threatened, and how it befriends those former enemies, whenever there are

common interests that serve it. This article in particular sheds light on the policy Barack Obama followed to make his friends close and enemies closer, by making conventions with the US adversaries America's most important priority.<sup>8</sup>

Another critic, David Seed in his article "Constructing America's Enemies: The Invasions of the USA." (2007), shows how the United States of America constantly creates enemies. He writes "In short, the USA could not conceive its own nationhood without imagining an enemy."<sup>9</sup> This article deals with the American fiction writings. First, there was what Americans call "The Yellow Peril", which refers to the Asiatic threat to North America in the period of WWII. Then, there was a shift of the identification of the enemy to that of the Russians in the period following The Second World War. Next, the enemy shifted to be "The Alien" who presented an extraterrestrial threat on the human species in the era of the space explorations.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Carlo Gall et al in their article "On War and on The Enemy" (2009), show how the enemy shifted in western literature. Native Americans were perceived as the "enemy", they were depicted as "barbarian". Between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, the enemy that people fought was "themselves", that is to say, they fought the imposed ignorance to gain truth in the Age of Reason. During the Twentieth Century, in the period of the Cold War, the enemy shifted to be the Communists.<sup>11</sup>

### **Issues and Working Hypothesis**

The previously reviewed critical studies dealt with the changing agendas of the West in terms of its enemies, and shed light on the ideological function of literature in these changing agendas. The critics dealt with the topic in reference to politics and literature. However, their arguments are limited, because they emphasized only these two fields, literature and politics, and did not depict these changing agendas in other fields. Most

importantly, they did not consider the ideological function of cinema as a form of discourse that affects in a direct and indirect way these changing agendas of the US.

Therefore; the aim of our research paper, in addition to focusing on the ideological function of cinema, purports to examine the changing concepts that result from this changing of the enemy. In other words, our main purpose is to shed light on the changing agendas and the changing concepts in the US cinema in the two movies *Rambo III* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008) relying on *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, *Language and Power* (1989) by Norma Fairclough, and the concept of the Just War Theory.

### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister, "Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet" in *Junius and Joseph: Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet*, (Logan, Utah: University Press of Colorado, 2005.) 9 - 28.

<sup>2</sup> Lars Martens, "A Summary of U.S. History".

<http://www.fundus.org/pdf.asp?ID=3066> .Accessed July 23, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Lambert. "Part One Colonial America". *A short history of US*.

<http://www.localhistories.org/america.html> . Accessed July 25 ,2017.

<sup>4</sup>"Manifest Destiny", *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 2, No. 1 (1857), 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia "Chosen People, Chosen Land: Utah as the Holy Land." In *Go East, Young Man: Imagining the American West as the Orient*, (University Press of Colorado, 2011) 87-125.

<sup>6</sup>Lars Martens, "A Summary of U.S. History".

<http://www.fundus.org/pdf.asp?ID=3066> . Accessed July 25, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union-1991*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, "Enemies into Friends: How the United States Can, Court its Enemies. ", *Foreign Affairs* 89, No. 2 (2010): 120-134.

<sup>9</sup>David Seed, "Constructing America's Enemies: The Invasions of the USA", *The Yearbook of English Studies* 37, No. 2,(2007): 64-84.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Carlo Gall, “On War and on the Enemy”, in *The New Centennial Review*,( Michigan State University Press 9, No.2(2009): 195-219

## II. Materials and Method

### A. Materials

In the following section we will present briefly the main events of the stories of the two movies *Rambo III* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008) in order to better understand the choice of the theoretic frameworks.

#### a. Presentation of Peter MacDonald's *Rambo III* (1988)

*Rambo III* also known as *First Blood part III*, is an American action movie written by Sylvester Stallone and Sheldon Lettich and directed by Peter MacDonald in 1988. The movie starts with colonel Trautman's (Richard Crenna) returning to Thailand. After witnessing the victory of Rambo in a fight, Trautman and officer Griggs (Kurtwood Smith) meet Rambo in a construction site where Rambo helps in the building of a temple. They try to convince him to join Trautman in a mission to Afghanistan, in order to supply weapons and missiles to the Afghan *Mujahidin* who are in a war against the Soviets. Although Trautman shows Rambo pictures of the suffering civilians in Afghanistan, the latter declines their request, so Trautman ends-up going alone.

On their way to Afghanistan, Trautman's troops are captured by the Soviets. As a result, Trautman is imprisoned. Officer Griggs (Kurtwood Smith) informs Rambo about the incident, and Rambo decides to go to Afghanistan for an unofficial operation. Rambo flies first to Pakistan where he meets Moussa (Sasson Gabai) who agrees to take him to Khost – a village in Afghanistan close to the Soviet base-, where Trautman is imprisoned.

In the beginning, the *mujahidin* in the village hesitate about helping Rambo. However, when he fights with them against the Soviet troops and demonstrate his fighting skills, they agree to join him. With the help of Moussa and Hamid (Doudi Shoua), Rambo goes to the

Soviet base where Trautman is imprisoned. Rambo's first attempt to free Trautman is unsuccessful and result in Hamid's getting shot in his leg and Rambo getting a wound in the side by a fragment. Rambo sends Moussa away and Hamid returns alone to the base. The second attempt is successful. Rambo succeeds to free Trautman, and then steals a helicopter and escapes from the base. However the helicopter is damaged, so they carried on, on foot.

Rambo and Trautman are confronted by the Soviet army, led by colonel Zaysen (Marced Jonyce). The Soviet colonel orders them to drop their weapons. At that time the *mujahidin* arrive at the battlefield and fight with them against the Soviets. During the fight, Rambo succeeds to kill Zaysen. At the end of the battle, John Rambo and Colonel Trautman say goodbye to their *mujahidin* friends.

#### **b. Presentation of Riddley Scott's Film *Body of Lies* (2008)**

*Body of Lies* (2008) is an action spy movie directed by Ridley Scott. The movie is starred by Leonardo Di Caprio, who plays the role of Rogger Ferris, a field officer working in CIA's Near East Division and who later becomes the CIA station chief in Amman in Jordan. The movie opens on a scene showing three Muslims in some place in Manchester, England, listening to a recording made by an Islamic extremist, which incites people to avenge the American wars on the Muslim world by leading several random attacks throughout America and Europe. Accordingly, the three Muslims conduct a "suicide attack" in which they cause a big explosion, which leads to their death as well as the death of the British security agents that were surrounding the place.

Then the setting switches to the Middle East, precisely, to Samarra, Iraq, where Ferris arranges to meet a member from the terrorist organization who is ready to provide him with data in exchange of Asylum in North America. However, Ferris's boss Ed Hoffman (Russell Crowe) refuses to grant it to him and to act on the data he provided him with. Nizar is used as

a pawn to catch the rest of his team. However the terrorists succeed to catch him, the thing that obliges Ferris to shoot him dead in the head.

Next, Ferris and his associate Bassam (Oscar Isaac) rush back to Balad, Iraq to the safe house in order to collect some evidence that would lead them to Al-Saleem (Alon Abutbul), the head of the terrorist organization. However, once there, Ferris's real identity was quickly revealed; so the terrorists chase him to execute him. Luckily, at the last minute Ferris and the recordings he brought from the safe house from Balad are saved by a helicopter, while Bassam is killed.

Later on, when Ferris has recovered from his injuries, he is sent to Amman, Jordan to resume his quest for Al-Saleem. Once there, Ferris meets Hani Salam (Mark Strong), the head of the Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate to ask for his collaboration in order to stop *terrorism*. Hani Salam accepts the offer, and grants Ferris the agents he needs for the surveillance of a safe house where Al-Saleem is suspected of coordinating operations. Meanwhile, Ed Hoffman planned a "side operation" without the knowledge of Ferris. The agency asset Skip (Vince Colosimo), -Ferris's CIA subordinate- working by the orders of Hoffman, blows cover and ruins the operation, so once more; Ferris is obliged to kill him to not inform his mates in the safe house about the surveillance. Later, Ferris goes to a local hospital to get his wounds cured and there he meets a local nurse named Aisha (Golshifteh Farahani), for whom he develops romantic feelings. Back to Europe, another terrorist attack targets a public place in Amsterdam, Netherlands; that causes the death of many innocent civilians.

Hani Salam plans to have a man within the Amman cell, a double agent who would bring them data, which would help them progress in their investigations. To that end, he chooses Mustapha Karami (Kais Nashief), who was a criminal when he was a teenager.



Accordingly, Salam takes him to the desert where he forces him to collaborate with the Jordanian Intelligence. Hoffman asks Hani to give him karami to use to extract information for him, but Salam declines the request.

Hoffman instructs Skip to follow Karami and kidnap him without Salam's and Ferris's Knowledge. However, for the second time Skip fails to accomplish his mission, Karami runs away and informs his friends in the cell that the safe house is under surveillance so they leave it immediately. Salam accuses Ferris that he knew about this second side operation, and exiles him out of Jordan.

Ferris goes back to Washington, and together with Ed Hoffman, set a new strategy to trap Al-Saleem. Ferris stimulates the creation of a fake terrorist cell, that would lead a similar attack as the ones Al-Saleem have planned before so as to trap him, and, indeed he falls in it. Accordingly, they set up Omar Sadiki (Ali Suliman), an innocent Jordanian architect who suits perfectly the profile of a terrorist. Salam invites Ferris back to Jordan and tells him his doubts about Sadiki's being a terrorist, but Ferris pretends ignorance of the whole matter.

Ferris and Hoffman with the help of the computer engineer Garland (Simon McBurney), plan an explosion in the US military base in Incirlik, Turkey. They make it look like a terrorist attack led by Omar Sadiki. Al-Saleem sends his men to kidnap Omar Sadiki, Ferris tries to prevent them from doing so, and save Omar, but he fails, Omar gets interrogated and killed by Al-Saleem's men.

Al-Saleem kidnaps Aisha. Ferris goes to Hani Salam and confesses that Omar Sadiki's story is fake, which he has contrived, and asks him for help in order to save Aisha. However, Hani Salam refuses to aid him because Ferris has lied to him in his face.

The kidnapers of Aisha get in touch with Ferris. He offers himself in exchange for her, and they take him to Dar'a, Syria in the middle of an empty desert, and from there to where

Al-Saleem is. Al-Saleem interrogates Ferris and tortures him by breaking two of his fingers one at a time with a hammer. Then he orders his men to execute him, however at the last minute, Hani Salam -who is aware of the kidnapping plan by the means of his inside-man Karami- and his men from the Jordanian intelligence interfere to save him, and arrest Al-Saleem.

## **B. Methods**

Our research paper is an attempt to examine the changing agendas and changing concepts in the American cinema through the analysis of the two American movies, *Rambo III* (1988) and *Body of Lies* (2008). We have opted for three theories we judged appropriate to our study, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989), and the concept of the Just War Theory.

As a theory, *Orientalism* studies the western representation of the middle, near and far eastern societies and cultures; and the evaluation of westerners in matters of language and culture by western scholars. In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said aims to deconstruct the western representations of the "Orient". He defines the term as follows: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made Between "the Orient" and -most of the time- "the Occident".....in short, Orientalism as a western style of domination, restricting, and having authority over the Orient"<sup>12</sup>

Orientalism serves as a justification for western expansionism .The West constructs the East as inferior others, who differ totally from the West that is superior "*the Us*" versus "*Them*", "*Good*" versus "*Evil*". Therefore, the East is believed to be in need for western help.

Ridha Mikdadi in his article "Orientalism and the Representation of the "Other" in the Mummy" claimed that the term "Other" can be applied to other marginalized groups. He writes: "While Said defined the "Other" in terms of the Arab, it is a term that can be applied

to any group of people that is denigrated at the expense of another group of people for the express purpose of the group doing the denigrating”.<sup>13</sup>

“*Language and Power*” (1989) by Fairclough is a theory that partakes in the critical study of language, and in Critical Discourse Analysis. It aims to examine the hidden connections between Language, Ideology and Power. Fairclough focuses on how Language plays a significant role in establishing and altering relations of power, and shows that many interactions are ‘Unequal encounters’, and that language choice is imposed by a power mostly taken for granted and considered as normal for this type of encounter. Norman Fairclough asserts that there is mutual influence between Language and Power. According to him, language gives rise to power as power relations can give rise to language. We have relied on this theory to analyze the language of the two Movies *RamboIII* and *Body of Lies*, to examine how language is used by the US in the American cinema to establish a power status for itself, and an inferior status for its rivals, Soviets in the first movie, and Muslims in the second movie.<sup>14</sup>

Last but not least, “The Just War Theory” also referred to as “Jus Bellum Instum” is a doctrine inspired from the Christian theology, which sets a number of principles for conducting a just war. According to this doctrine, war is the last resolution that should be taken in case of conflicts, and when war is declared, it should respect the ethics of war.

Hence, The Just War Theory preaches the necessity of protecting the lives of innocent people; defend freedom, justice and the high moral values of humanity, these are the only reasons that would justify a declaration of war. Furthermore, during war, there is a set of principles that should be respected, such as the proper treatment of prisoners of war, attacking only the elements that cause the conflicts, and keeping innocent civilians out of danger and so on..., third, Justice after War, which consist of reconstruction and peace agreements. We have

relied on this theory in order to show how the United States justified its interventions in other countries, and shifted from an enemy to another according to its interests.<sup>15</sup>

In our current study we will shed light on how the Soviets were portrayed as the Other in *Rambo III* (1988), and how Muslims and Arabs were seen as the marginalized “Other” in *Body of Lies* (2008).

### **C. Methodological Outline**

The present work aims first and foremost at examining the adjustment of Cinema to the changing Agendas of the US. In order to do so, we have selected two American movies that were produced in two different periods of American History. *Rambo III* was produced in the Cold War period, while; *Body of Lies* (2008) was produced in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. In the Introduction, we have introduced the US expansionism that characterized America as a nation that has constantly aimed to be the first power in the world. We also provided a brief summary of the two movies to show their appropriateness as case studies for the subject of this dissertation. Moreover, we have introduced the theories we relied on, namely Edward Said’s “*Orientalism*” to shed light on the stereotypes promoted in the two movies about the enemy of the US; The concept of the Just War Theory in order to show how the US justify and legitimize its intervention in many countries through its history. In addition, we relied on Fairclough’s “*Language and Power*” in order to examine how cinema which expresses the US world view, is used as a powerful tool in this constant changing agendas, and how language creates relations of power in favor of the US.

The discussion is divided into three chapters; in the first chapter we have dealt with three main points; the first is the relations between the US and the Soviet Union prior to the Cold War era. Second, we have written about the relation between The US and the Soviet Union in the Cold War Period (1945-1991). Third, the representations of the Soviet Union in

the American cinema, particularly in the movie Rambo III (1988). Finally, we have dealt with the effect of the bad representation on the public opinion regarding Communists. In the second chapter, we have examined the negative representation of Arabs and Muslims in the US cinema; after that, we have referred to the causes of this negative representation. Then, we have dealt with the effects of this negative representation. In the third chapter, relying on the data gathered in the previous two chapters, we have analyzed the changing Agendas in the American history, and the use of cinema as a means for it. In addition, we have examined the use of language in cinema as a power tool by the US to reach whatever end it wishes, then we dealt with the US and Chaos in the Middle East. Finally, we concluded our work with a brief conclusion in which we discussed the main points of our work, and the means used to examine them.

## Endnotes

<sup>12</sup>Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: penguin Group, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Ridha Mikdadi, "Orientalism and the Representation of the "Others" in the Mummy" *Rhetoric and Writing Studies*, 2003.

<http://www.lorejournal.org/2003/03/orientalism-and-the-representation-of-%E2%80%98others%E2%80%99-in-the-mummy-by-ridha-mikdadi/dh> . Accessed July 20, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (New York: Longman Inc, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> John W. Lango," A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory" in *the Ethics of Armed Conflict*, (Edinburgh University Press: 2014)18-46.

### **III-Results**

Throughout our work, and by the analysis of the two movies, we have shed light on the changing Agendas and Concepts by focusing on Cinema, particularly, Hollywood. We have come to the conclusion that, the United States of America have used Film Industry to create negative stereotypes about Soviets in the period of the Cold War, and about Muslims in the Aftermath of the 9/11 events. We have come also to the conclusion that, this misrepresentation in cinema is not only used as propaganda in favor of the US, but also came as a consequence to numerous historical events. This misrepresentation as well, caused negative effects on both the misrepresented enemies, Soviets, and Arabs and Muslims, such as the spread of Islamophobia, and McCarthyism, the thing that resulted to the spread of hate crimes and the alienation of these US enemies.

We have also come to the conclusion that Cinema as well was affected by this exploitation by governments, in this case, The US government. At the beginning, cinema was destined to entertainment, but later, it was used for political and strategic purposes, the thing that affected the genres produced by Hollywood.

## **IV. Discussion**

### **A. Chapter I: The USSR as the Rival of the USA**

#### **a. USA and USSR: War Allies**

From the beginning, The United States of America and The Soviet Union were too different states. The former was republican and democratic; the latter was an old autocracy, hostile to democracy, and xenophobic. Despite these differences between the two states, the interest of the Russians and the Americans did not collide until the Cold War, except the disagreement over Alaska which was resolved peacefully in 1867.<sup>1</sup>

In the Twentieth Century, The United States was for the democratic Russian revolution of 1917, which ended the regime of Nicolas II and gave birth to the Provisional Government under the lead of George E. Lovov. Only a week after the revolution, the US president of the time, Woodrow Wilson, recognized the provisional government. The president referred to Russia as a “fit partner for a league of honor”. Moreover, the US advanced the new Russian government 450\$ million in the form of loans.<sup>2</sup>

During the Bolshevik Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin, the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union cooled. The United States of America and many other countries refused to recognize the new regime, arguing that it was not democratically elected. For the American president, Wilson, the Bolshevik regime had destroyed the democratic promise of the Provisional Government; therefore, for him Bolshevism could no longer survive in Russia or anywhere else. He sought to oppose the Bolsheviks in different ways; he provided financial and military aid to the anti Bolshevik forces called “White” during the Russian Civil War (1918-1921). In the 1920s and early 1930s, tensions between the Soviet Union and the US eased somewhat. During the Great Famine (1921-1923) more than seven million people died, the US government gave considerable supports to Russian people.<sup>3</sup>

In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union as an independent state. In November 1930, the American president Roosevelt invited the Soviet foreign minister Maxim Litvinov to Washington for negotiations. The latter ended by signing an official agreement; establishing formal diplomatic relations. In the late 1930s, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States cooled another time because of the Nazi Soviet Pact of 1939, and the Soviet invasion of the east of Poland, Western Ukraine, followed by the attack of Finland on November 1939. All these events caused great fear in Washington and changed the relations between the two countries. However; the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, changed the American attitude towards the Soviet Union. Just three months after the invasion, the US president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, sent assistance to the Russians, through lend lease programs. Throughout this cooperation between the two countries, huge quantities of weapons were sent to the Soviet Union that was in a war against Germany. Moreover, “the Big Three” Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, met in several conferences such as Tehran (1943), Yalta (1945) and Potsdam (1945), in order to discuss the nature of postwar settlement.<sup>4</sup>

The US and the Soviet Union ended the Second World War as allies who defeated the Axis Powers. The two superpowers were the cofounders of the UN, and therefore; both have the authority to vote any council, the “VETO” authority.

#### **b. The US and the USSR: the Cold War Period**

As stated before, the Soviet Union and the US were allies during the Second World War. This was due to the fact that both had the same enemy “Adolf Hitler”. The two countries turned against each other just after the defeat of Hitler. This was well summarized by Ronald E. Powaski when he said:

The need for the Big Three to cooperate to defeat the Axis powers was the cement that held together the grand alliance, once Japan had surrendered; the bonds forged by necessity began to crumble.<sup>5</sup>



When Harry S Truman was elected as the US president on 1945, he tried to continue Roosevelt's efforts to establish a collaborative relationship with the Soviet Union. However, the pressure from his republican party and the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe and its attempts to enter Turkey and Iran pushed Truman to change his view toward his relations with the Soviets. As a result, The US adopted the "Policy of Containment" to stop the spread of Communism in Eastern Europe and in the Far East. In 1947, Harry Truman declared a support of \$300 million for Greece and another \$100 for Turkey to help these two countries face the Communist expansion. The Rio Pact is another containment strategy. In September 1947, the United States and nineteen American states signed an alliance, designed to cover aggression from any foreign power. In addition to the Truman Doctrine, and the Rio Pact, the Marshall Plan is another Containment Policy. The Marshall Plan was launched in 1947; it is an aid program destined to rebuild Western Europe after the Second World War to prevent the spread of Communism.<sup>6</sup>

The growing of the US animosity towards the Soviet Union was reinforced by many other issues. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were unable to agree on several German issues, including the division of the German Polish Border, and the political and economic issues of a reunited Germany. Moreover, the Communists Coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Soviet Blockade of Berlin in 1948, the fall of China in 1949 and the North Korean attack on South Korea in the following years, reinforced the tension between the US as Capitalist and the USSR as Communist.<sup>7</sup>

When Eisenhower came to government in 1953, he globalised the Cold War; he carried on his predecessor's Policy of Containment. In the Middle East, he helped to create the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and declared willingness for military intervention in the region. In the Far East, Eisenhower established an alliance with Taiwan, The Southeast

Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in which the US was engaged in the defense of Thailand, Pakistan, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia against any Communist attacks. During the Eisenhower administration, he helped the Shah of Iran to take the throne, and assisted in the overthrowing of the government in Guatemala. In the Middle East, Eisenhower was against the use of force when British and French forces occupied the Suez Canal and Israel invaded the Sinai in 1956, following Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Under the American pressure, British, French and Israeli forces withdrew from Egypt, which retained control of the canal. Moreover, Eisenhower prepared to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly, after the election of Eisenhower as the US president, Stalin died. His death brought huge changes for the Soviet foreign policy. Nikita Khrushchev came to government in 1955. He called for negotiations between the East and the West. He named his policy "Peaceful Coexistence". However; Eisenhower did not trust Nikita Khrushchev's policy. He said to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill: "Russia was . . . a woman of the streets and whether her dress was new, or just the old one patched, there was the same whore underneath."<sup>9</sup> Later on, Eisenhower agreed to meet the Soviet and Western leaders in Geneva, Switzerland, in July 1955, the first meeting since the Potsdam Conference in 1945. The "Spirit of Geneva" conference did not end-up with an agreement; however; it eased tensions between the Soviets and the United States.<sup>10</sup>

John F. Kennedy, came to the White House in 1960. In the beginning, the Soviets were prepared to improve their relations with the US, Khrushchev greeted the new president. However, later Khrushchev declared that he would support "War of National Liberation" in Third World countries. This declaration changed the US stance regarding negotiations with the Soviets. Like his predecessors, J.F. Kennedy relied on the Containment Policy to prevent the spread of Communism. On March 1961, he proposed an aid program to Latin America in order to prevent poverty, illiteracy and diseases.<sup>11</sup>

Kennedy approved Eisenhower's plan to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. However, the entire US forces were killed and others were captured. Kennedy took the responsibility of this failure. In addition, the Kennedy administration witnessed the Berlin Crisis of 1961 and the building of the Berlin Wall in the same year. October 1962, was the date of the Cuban missile crisis. American spy planes knew about the agreement between Khrushchev and Fidel Castro that consist of supplying Cuba with nuclear missiles to protect the region from any US attacks. Kennedy responded by placing a naval blockade around Cuba and calls the Soviets to remove the missiles. Toward the end of Kennedy's presidency, the relationship between the two poles eased as the Limited Nuclear Test Ban was signed and a line of Communication called "Hotline" was established. All these, reduced the danger of a third world war. <sup>12</sup>

After the assassination of J .F .Kennedy, Lyndon .B. Johnson became the president of the United States. The Johnson administration was a turning point in the US Containment Policy. During his presidency, he witnessed one of the great wars of the Twentieth Century; the Vietnam War (1955-1975) .In this war, the US supported South Vietnam against North Vietnam. The latter was helped by the Soviet Union and China. This war ended by the defeat of the US. Though the Vietnam War cooled the US-Soviet relations, Lyndon .B. Johnson tried to narrow the gap by signing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) with the Soviet Union on July 1968.The objective of this treaty was to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapon technology to non-weapon states. However, the Soviet military intervention, in Czechoslovakia, prevented Johnson from fulfilling his wish to begin the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT).<sup>13</sup>

When Johnson left the White House in 1968, he was succeeded by Richard Nixon. The Nixon policy consisted in appeasing the relations between The US and the USSR. His administration was a period of "détente". Richard Nixon was the first American president to

visit Moscow; he signed SALT I with Brezhnev. This treaty concluded in 1972 to control certain nuclear weapons. Brezhnev established diplomatic relations with China.<sup>14</sup>

Nixon was succeeded by Ford, the latter inherited Nixon's foreign policy. During his presidency, Ford signed the Helsinki final Act in 1975 with the USSR. This Act was seen as the highest point of "détente". Ford's successor, Jimmy Carter 1977, tried to follow the "détente" policy of his predecessors. He signed SALT II in June 1979. However, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended the "détente". Carter restored the Containment Policy.<sup>15</sup>

Jimmy Carter was succeeded by Ronald Regan who was an Anticommunist and against the "détente". Ronald Regan did not only want to contain Communism, but also to kill it. During his presidency, he provided the Afghan rebels named *mujahidin*, with military assistance. However, Regan's attitude had changed by his meeting in March 1985 with Mikhail Gorbachev. The latter brought reforms to the Soviet Union which ended-up by signing the INF (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces), which is the first agreement between the US and the USSR about reducing nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup>

The presidency of George Bush on 1989 witnessed the end of the cold war. His relationship with the Soviets was characterized by cooperation rather than confrontation. In December 1989, Bush met with Gorbachev in Malta. During this summit, the two presidents discussed arms reductions. At the Washington D.C summit in June 1990, the two poles signed an agreement around decreasing their nuclear arsenals. Moreover, Bush and Gorbachev met in Moscow on July 1991 and signed START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty).<sup>17</sup>

During the cold war, the US worked hard in order to limit the spread of Communism all over the world by using military interventions. Moreover, it tried to weaken the image and the reputation of the Communist Soviets by using cinema.

### c. The Representation of Soviets in *Rambo III* (1988)

First of all, we start with the study of Peter MacDonald's film, *Rambo III* (1988), to examine the representations of the Soviets that were the main enemy of the US in the Cold War period, in American cinema.

Mainly, the Soviets are portrayed in the movie as cruel, violent, intolerant, aggressive, totalitarian dictators, and merciless bandits who can become killing machines when their interest is at stake. Roberto Geraldo et al, write about this in their article "Hollywood and the representation of the Otherness: A Historical Analysis of the Role Played by the American Cinema in Spotting Enemies to Vilify". They assert:

In the late 1970s, and especially in the early 1980s, it strikes back in what could be interpreted as a last –and, seemingly, successful– attempt to finish the Soviet Enemy off. Reagan identified Soviets as the "focus of evil" in the 1980s, and they were certainly presented that way in many Hollywood productions of that time: they were the past, present and probably future menace to the welfare state of the West, ergo the Evil enemy that needs to be utterly obliterated. Rambo's 'trip' to Afghanistan, where he befriends Afghans is not only paradigmatic of this stigmatization of the Soviet Enemy as pure Evil, but also of the fact of how changeable the Other could be for Hollywood.<sup>18</sup>

We deduce from this quotation that the Russians are viewed and portrayed by the US in Hollywood as a dangerous enemy for the US, as well as for the whole world, for using mass destruction and chemical weapons that threaten the world's warfare.

In *Rambo III* (1988), Communism is portrayed as a Totalitarian system that is led by Colonel Zaysen. The latter personifies most the negative representations of Soviets. He is shown as the model of the Soviet dictator. We see this in his treatment of the Afghans, whom he takes as object to mass genocides. The Soviets did not only attack the *Mujahedeen* who are fighting against them, but also, attack innocent, non-armed civilians including old people, children, and women, just because they find pleasure in killing, this is obviously illustrated in Capture One and Capture Two below.



**Capture One:** Taken from Rambo III (1988): the confrontation between the Afghans and the Soviets.

The Afghans though, are not the only target of the Soviets in Rambo III. The Americans as well, are their enemy and target. A concrete example of this is the bad treatment of General Trautman. Although General Trautman is captured as a detainee, and is considered as a prisoner of war; he is object to torture and very bad treatment as it is shown in Capture Three below. This goes highly against the ethics of the Concept of the Just War Theory and International conventions as well. This gives the spectators of this movie an impression that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is not just at all. Another illustration from this movie that reinforces the idea that the Soviet-Afghan War is not just, is in the scene in 23:24mn when the American General Trautman tells the Soviet Colonel Zaycen “you started this Damn War, and now, you have to deal with it.”<sup>19</sup> By saying this, America throws the responsibility and the whole guilt of the damages of Afghan-Soviet War, and of the Cold War in General on Soviet Russia. As America was in an ideological war against Communist Russia; it tried in any way to distort the image of Communism and Communists under its Policy of Containment. In his article “Why Communism Kills” Dr. Fred C. Schwarz writes:

Communism kills! This is not debatable. The record is crystal clear. The U.S. Senate Internal Security Subcommittee conducted investigations into the number killed in the Soviet Union and China. Their report stated that 35 million to 45 million had been killed in the Soviet Union and 34 million to 62.5 million in Communist China.<sup>20</sup>

This is the image the film Rambo III is promoting. All along the movie, there are many scenes where the Soviets commit random killings; this is referred to in the beginning of the movie when General Trautman and his friend, officer Griggs say to John Rambo “Over two million civilians were systematically slaughtered by invading Russians. Every new weapon, including chemical warfare, has been used to eliminate these people...”<sup>21</sup> These mass killings by the Soviets are also shown in the scene where the Soviets attack the village of Khost by helicopters throwing bombs and shooting bullets on the noncombatant Afghans as it is shown in Capture Two, resulting in the killing of most of them, and the exile of the rest that survived, driven by fear and insecurity.



**Capture Two:** Taken from RamboIII (1988): when the Soviet troops attack the village of Khost.

We also deduce this cruel war-like nature of the Soviets, from the fact that they distribute mines in the form of toys to the Afghan children in the purpose of killing them. This is shown in the scene where the Afghan Moussa speaks with his friend John Rambo about the mines in the shape of toys saying: “...more gifts from the Soviets, they look like toys, but they are mines, we teach the children not to touch, some of them too late.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the Soviet's evil nature is portrayed as well in the fact that they plant mines everywhere, not caring whoever can be killed by them. This is portrayed in the scene where Moussa presents the village of Khost to Rambo saying: "mines start here...one meter like this...then two meters like this...and like this."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, no hospitals were built in the Afghan villages, as another way for the Soviet's Afghan-extermination plan, this is shown in the scene where Moussa takes John Rambo to the hospital in Khost to show him the victims of war, and Moussa says "let's go to the hospital. He is the only doctor for 500km. The first medicine they get in two months".<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to the Soviets, the Afghans and Americans are depicted in a positive way in Rambo III. As an example, General Trautman is portrayed as a brave fellow who remains faithful to his cause which is helping the Afghans against the Soviet colonizers. Although Trautman is under cruel torture, he refuses in any way to surrender, or give Colonel Zaycen and his violent soldiers any information they could use against Americans or Afghans as it is shown in Capture Three.

Another American character who is depicted in such a positive way is officer Griggs. The latter is depicted as a faithful fellow. When his friend General Trautman is captured by the Soviets; he does not let him down, instead he rushes to John Rambo in order to ask for his help to free his friend, and does not hesitate to go by himself for his rescue if that is necessary.



**Capture Three:** from Rambo III, when the Soviet, Colonel Zaycen tortures the American General Trautman.



However, the American character who personifies most the noble intentions and the good and heroic nature of Americans is John Rambo. Rambo is portrayed in this movie as the brave hero who is ready to sacrifice himself for the well-being of others. This is portrayed all along the movie. For instance, at the beginning of the movie, at the end of his combat, John Rambo helps his adversary to stand up as a symbol of the tolerance, the sympathy and the compassion of the Americans. In addition to that, we notice in the next scene John Rambo handing the money he wins in the combat to a monk, instead of keeping it, and using it for his own profit. This, as well, suggests that Americans are generous, helpful, kind people contrary to the Soviets.

We also notice the goodness of Rambo as a representative of America in the scene where he frees Trautman. Although Rambo's mission is only to free General Trautman, and despite the Soviets that are attacking him to prevent him from liberating Trautman; John Rambo does not only free Trautman, but also frees the Afghans that are imprisoned there.

Moreover; we notice this binary opposition between evil Soviets and good Americans in the scene after the Soviets attack the village of Khost, and the remaining Afghans decided to flee away because of fear, Moussa told Rambo that he, too, should run away and not risk his life in a war that is not his. In 45:46mn Moussa says to Rambo "go, go while you can, this is not your war"<sup>25</sup> but Rambo replies "it is now". So Moussa added "so be it, we are good friends, inshallah..."<sup>26</sup> This attitude of John Rambo represents highly the philosophy of the American "Manifest Destiny" and the humanitarian aspects of the wars led by America. So we can say that, Rambo going to war and sacrificing himself; although it is not his war and in order to restore peace and support truth, is an embodiment and a reflection of the American policy adopted in the wars of the Twentieth Century, such as the intervention in Afghanistan, Vietnam, the Gulf war, the Iraq war and so on.

Concerning the Afghans, in Rambo III, they are portrayed in a positive way. They are portrayed as good, brave, kind, angelic people. They are depicted as the friends of Americans, and as *courageous fighters* who are oppressed by the cruel Soviets. This brave good nature of the Afghans is depicted in many scenes in this movie, such as the scene where Massoud says to Rambo “to us, death for our land and God is an honor. So my friend, what we must do is to stop the killing of our women and children.”<sup>27</sup> In another scene as well, Moussa when relating the history of Afghanistan to John Rambo says:

This is Afghanistan. Alexander the Great tried to conquer this country, then Genghis Khan, then the British, now Russia; but Afghan people fight hard, they never be defeated. Ancient enemy make prayer about these people. Do you wish to hear, very good. It says:”May God deliver us from the venom of the cobra, teeth of the tiger, and the vengeance of the Afghan.”<sup>28</sup>

The Afghans in this movie have helped Rambo greatly to free Trautman, even the little child Hamid is willing to fight by Rambo’s side against the Russians.

#### **d. The Effects of This Bad Representation on Public Opinion**

The major obstacle to US hegemony in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was Communism. Before 1945, Americans did not pay much attention to Communism and knew little about Russia. Many Americans saw Communism as bad and evil, especially after the Nazi Soviet Pact in 1939. However, in 1942, the US found itself as an ally with the Russian Communists. The two different nations became friends and struggled against the same enemy, Germany. During this period, Americans promoted positive images about the Soviets, not only in printed media but in cinema as well. The best example is The North Star 1942. This movie portrayed an ideal image of Soviets to evoke an American admiration for the Russians.

After the end of the Second World War, the American attitude towards the Soviet Union changed and therefore their representation in cinema changed as well. Media in general and Cinema in particular, played an important role during this ideological war. It promoted negative images about the Soviets. As we have seen in Rambo III, the Soviets were depicted

as violent people, totalitarians and as the incarnation of Evil. All these negative images of the Communist Soviets caused an atmosphere of fear in United States.

The Anti-communist sentiment that dominated the US during the Cold War, was reinforced by the misrepresentation of Communists in media and particularly in cinema. As a response to public phobia of Communism; President Truman launched what was known as “Loyalty Programs” 1947. The latter required the investigating all federal employees in executive branch. This act was altered in 1951 to include the dismissing of any employee about whom, there was reasonable doubt, rather than actual proof of guilt of being a Communist.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy exploited the Anti -Communist feeling in the US for his personal benefit, especially to realize his wish to be reelected in the 1952 elections. In his famous speech, delivered in February 9, 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy accused two hundred and five people in The State Department of USA of being Communists. This attracted headlines and caused hysteria about Communists in the United States. As a result, on 23 September 1950, the Congress passed The Internal Security Act, or what is known as The McCarran Act, this act required the investigation of subversive activities and register members of The Communist Party of USA “CPUSA”.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude, considering the historical background of both the US and the Soviet Union, we came to realize that the Cold War was inevitable. Even though, the two nations witnessed a period of cooperation, they turned against each other by the end of their shared interests. During the Cold War period, the US tried to weaken the image of the Soviet Communists by using cinema as an ideological tool, which is the case of Rambo III (1988). This bad representation of Communism during the ideological struggle caused hysteria and phobia toward Communists.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: the United States and the Soviet Union-1991*(New York: Oxford university press, 1998), 295.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, “The United States and The Bolshevik Revolution” in *The United States and the Soviet Union 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford university press,1998), 5 - 6.

<sup>3</sup>“United States Relations with Russia: Establishment of Relations to World War Two”, *US Department of State*.

<https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/85739.htm>. Accessed October 2, 2017

<sup>4</sup>Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, “Truman and The Containment (1945-1953)” in *The United States and the Soviet Union 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford university press,1998), 67.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 68-73.

<sup>7</sup>Ronald E. Powaski, *the Cold War: The United States and The Soviet Union 1917-1991*(New York: Oxford university press, 1998), 299.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 300.

<sup>9</sup>Chster.J.Pach, “Dwight D. Eisenhower: Foreign Affairs, Mille Center”.

<https://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/foreign-affairs> . Accessed October 04 ,2017.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “The Cold WAR”, *The John F, Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/About-Us/About-the-JFK-Library.aspx>. Accessed October 2, 2017.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, “Kennedy and Johansson: confrontation and cooperation, 1961-1969” in *The Cold War: The United States And The Soviet Union 1917-1991*(New York: Oxford university press,1998),152-166

<sup>14</sup>Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War: The United States And The Soviet Union 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford university press,1998), 302.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 303

<sup>16</sup>Ibid

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 304

<sup>18</sup>Roberto Gelado, “Hollywood and the Representation of the Otherness. A Historical Analysis of the Role Played by the American Cinema in Spotting Enemies to Vilify”, (2016). <http://journals.sfu.ca/indexcomunicacion/index.php/indexcomunicacion/article/viewfile/216>. Accessed September 20, 2017.

<sup>19</sup>Peter MacDonald, director. *Rambo III*. DVD. United States: Live Home Video, 1988.

<sup>20</sup>Fred C. Schwarz, “Why Communism Kills: The Legacy of Karl Marx”, *The Schwarz export*.

<https://www.schwarzreport.org/resources/essays/why-communism-kills>. Accessed September 20, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Peter MacDonald, director. *Rambo III*. DVD. United States: Live Home Video, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Jenel Virden, “the Korean War” in *the American and The Wars of The Twentieth Century*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)94.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 95-97.

## **B. Chapter II: Muslims as the Enemy of the US**

### **a. The Representations of Muslims in Ridley Scott's Film *Body of Lies* (2008)**

Ridley Scott's movie *Body of Lies* (2008), similarly, with *Rambo III*, is another reinforcement of the western images and stereotypes about the part that they consider as 'the Other' for being their 'Enemy'. While, in the previous chapter, we have shed light on how the USSR was seen and portrayed as the enemy ; in this second chapter we will study how the next enemy of "the West" namely Muslims are depicted in the US cinema.

In this movie, Muslims are depicted as being aggressive; intolerant, greedy inferior beings, women abusers, dangerous terrorists and by many other negative images. In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Professor Edward W Said writes about these stereotypes the West promotes about Arabs and Muslims. He says:

In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low, Slave trader, camel driver, money changer, colorful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema.<sup>1</sup>

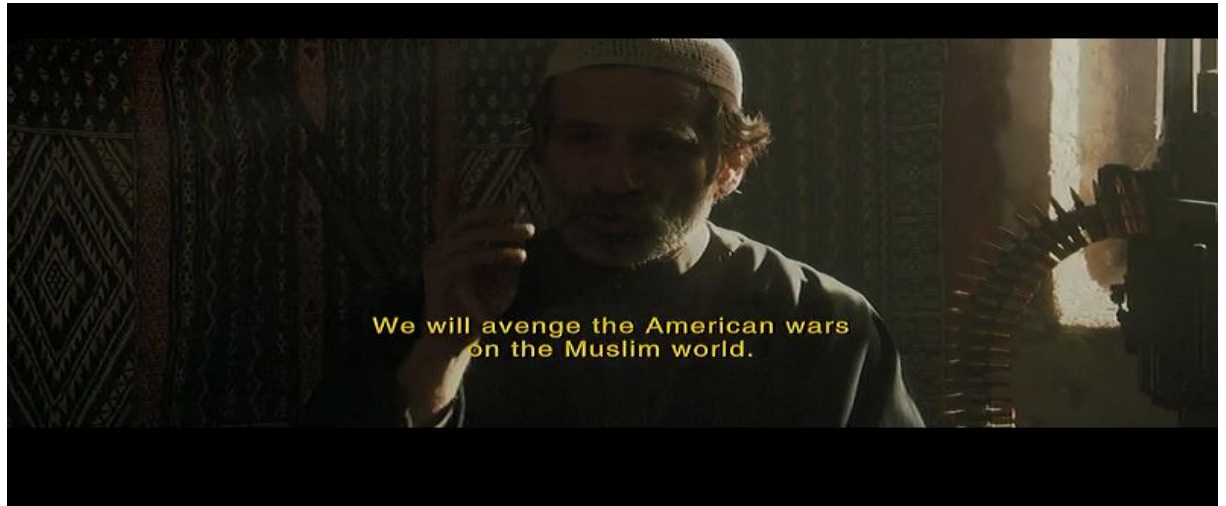
In this quotation Edward Said asserts that Arabs are highly misrepresented in television and Films.

Within the movie *Body of Lies*, an Islamic "anti-western" organization led by the extremist "Al Saleem", addresses the Muslim youth through his video recordings defused in Arabic on television. In these recordings, he incites the *jihadists* to lead several random attacks throughout Europe and America to avenge the American wars on Islam as it is shown in *Capture Four* below. He says:

As we destroyed the bus in Sheffield last week, we will be ready and prepared for the operation in Britain, we will come at them, everywhere, we will strike at random, across Europe and then America continually, we have bled, and now...they will bleed<sup>2</sup>

And right after the end of his speech, the young Muslims that were watching it, bombed the place they were in, in a martyrdom operation that resulted in the death of

numerous British soldiers that were surrounding the place, in addition to innocent civilians that live in the neighborhood. Accordingly, the Muslims here are the ones spreading chaos and threatening the world's peace, contrary to the westerners who are civilized, organized and that serve like agents that watch after peace and human rights in the world. .



**Capture Four:** from *Body of Lies* (2008), Al Saleem inciting Muslims to lead a war against the West.

The notion of the 'West' in this movie is embodied in the person of Ferris, an intelligent, wise, faithful active man, who is ready for self-sacrifice to protect and guard peace. In contrast, there are many Arab characters in this movie that embody those negative representations. One example of these characters is Nizar, a Muslim who is ready to give away his mates for exchange of American citizenship. Nizar is portrayed as a violent, weak, impatient, coward fellow. We notice in the scene from 00:10:47mn to 00:16:10mn how he is the one who first attacks Ferris physically and refuses in any way to have a civilized conversation with him, as it is obvious in Capture Five below.

In addition, in this scene too, we notice that Hoffman, Ferris's boss from the US intelligence, tells his wife that he is "saving civilization". We may say that this embodies the idea of the "Manifest Destiny", that the Americans are the guardians of civilization, this is on one hand; on the other, we see how the west views the East as uncivilized or as if it needs

protection from the West, we can deduce the latter idea also in Ferris's saying to Nizar "we're friends, we will protect you".<sup>3</sup>



**Capture Five:** from *Body of Lies* (2008), the Arab Nizar attacks the American Ferris in a violent way.

In this movie *Body of Lies*, taking in consideration Ferris as being the representative of the US, and Nizar as the representative of the East; we see in this scene a metaphor of the "West" considering the "East" its friend as long as it serves its benefits, but throwing it away once its interests are fully achieved. This is clearly illustrated in the fact that the US did not grant Nizar the right for Asylum despite the fact that he helps and cooperates with them. Instead, they use him as an instrument to attract the terrorists, and kill him after he gets captured to not tell on them and to not ruin their secret operation.

Another character who is depicted in this negative way is Hani Salam; the head of the Jordanian intelligence. Hani Salam is portrayed as a bad tempered, merciless man, who uses violent means to reach his purposes. Hani uses torture and blackmailing as in the scene when he blackmails Karami to be his inside man in Al Saleem's terrorist organization.



Another aspect of the “clichés” promoted by the western Medias and cinema regarding Arabs and Muslims that we find in this movie is the superiority of the western race, and the inferiority of the eastern peoples. Edward W Said writes on this:

Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, "devoid of energy and initiative," much given to "fulsome flattery," intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking) ; Orientals are inveterate liars, they are "lethargic and suspicious," and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>4</sup>

We notice that this binary opposition between the civilized, developed, intelligent, noble “West” and the uncivilized, primitive, underdeveloped and idiotic “East” is obviously present in this movie. The westerners in “Body of Lies” proved a high level in technological advancement, using satellite technologies, internet, modern cell phones, newest brands of cars and vehicles, planes, boats and so on. In contrast, Easterners walking around either on bicycles, or on animal backs, does not only reflect primitiveness, but unkindness to these exploited animals as well. Orientals are also shown to be using only old non-updated phones. In the scene when Karami is taken by Hani Salam to the desert and is told about the things his mother is offered, we deduce that according to Hani Salam, having a television set is a success and one of the luxuries of the life in the ‘East’.

In relation to society, the US is portrayed to be the “model” of civilization; Ed Hoffman asks Ferris when he gets back from Jordan to the US “How are you enjoying civilization”<sup>5</sup>. Schools, organized markets and buildings, hospitals and clean roads and clean environment, are associated with the US; whereas, the “East” is associated with the lack of hospitals. This is illustrated by the scene when Ferris is driven to a small Clinique despite his dangerous injuries, no schools are shown, the markets are depicted as dirty crowded messy places, and the neighborhoods are chaotic.

Concerning women, Ferris as a westerner is portrayed as an open-minded person, who shows great respect for women. This is shown in his noble, respectful and kind treatment to

Aisha and her sister, whom, despite her rude treatment towards him, he kept being kind and respectful to her and her children. In contrast, the Easterners are depicted as patriarchal, narrow-minded, and racist. This is illustrated in the scene when Aisha and Ferris are sitting in public cafeteria in the Palestinian camps. The Arabs are staring at her in a bad way; also the Arab waiter is rude to her and does not respect her.

The way the film is made also plays a great role in highlighting this distinction made between the US and its rival the Arab Muslim world, for instance, the mise-en-scene, the colors choice of the music, the lights, the timing and the settings.

The spectators of this movie *Body of Lies* may notice when watching it, that whenever there is a scene involving “Arabs”, even the ones in the “West”, there is use of darkness, black dim scenes. As we notice in *Capture Four*, no colors are used, the music inspires sadness or danger, and also loud voices are used. The settings mostly take place in the desert or in isolated places as it is shown in *Capture Five*, at night-time. However; whenever the scenes involved the “West”, there is use of “clearness”, lights, cheerful colors and music which inspire rest and happiness, and the settings mostly take place in cities or at the beach at the daylight.

The western media do not deteriorate the image of the Arabs and Muslims only, but also the image of “Islam” as a religion. Islam is evenly associated with *terrorism*; Islam is made to be thought of as a religion that preaches terror, violence, war and crimes. For instance, in this movie *Body of Lies* from 00:47:10mn to 00:48:00mn when Hani Salam speaks with Karami in the desert; asking him what he should do for him, Hani answers “be a good Muslim, continue your life with your brothers at Al Qaida.”<sup>6</sup> This coming from an Arabic character gives the impression that good Islam equals terrorism, and that the terrorist organization Al- Qaida is based on the true preaching of the religion of Islam.

Also, in the scene from 01:09:42mn to 01:09:55mn, when Ferris is speaking about the Arab architect Omar Sadiki says “he touches his head to the floor five times a day, he believes in God, so why would he treat with an infidel like myself?”<sup>7</sup>. Giving the impression that Islam preaches racism and that it prevents Muslims from mingling with people of other religions and cultures, and that it is not a religion of tolerance.

In addition to this, at the last minutes of the movie, when Ferris tells his boss Hoffman that he intends to stay for a while in the Middle East, Hoffman looks pretty surprised and asks Ferris in an exclamatory way: “Why would you?” and Ferris replies “what if I like the middle east?” Then, Hoffman laughs sarcastically and says “nobody likes the Middle East buddy, there is nothing here to like” and added a little later “you are not safe here”<sup>8</sup>. So as we see, the western media present a bad picture of the Eastern world and diffuse these negative generalizations about the Arabs and Muslims. Edward Said writes in his book “*Orientalism*” “in a sense, the limitations of Orientalism are, as I said earlier, the limitations that follow degrading, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region”<sup>9</sup>, and this is exactly what the West is doing when representing the East. It reduces a whole culture, or even the different cultures that the East encompasses to a limited number of negative generalizations, as a way to reduce the importance of these eastern cultures and disfigure the image of this part that it considers as its enemy in front of the whole world.

#### **b. The Reasons behind the Bad Depiction of Muslims in the US Cinema:**

The Middle East has long been a region of geopolitical and economic significance to the western world. This was largely because of the oil reserves it harbors. The United States needed Middle Eastern oil in order to develop its economy mainly based on industry. After the end of The Cold War, the United States of America and the West in general shifted attention from the USSR to the Middle East, this led to the beginning of the Gulf War.

## **1. The Gulf War**

The Second of August 1990, Iraq invaded its rich but military weak neighbor Kuwait because it was drowning in the debts it inherited from its war against Iran 1980-1988. The USA and its allies that formed the Coalition Forces waged a war against Iraq to ask her to exit from Kuwait, “the Desert Storm” operation. In November 1990 the UN Security Council decided January the 15<sup>th</sup> 1991 to be the deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. However the Iraqi president of the time, Saddam Hussein, did not order his troops out of Kuwait. Therefore, on January the 17<sup>th</sup>, the US and the Coalition Forces began an air bombardment on Iraqi targets continuing for five weeks. After more than a month of air strikes, on February 24, 1991, the Coalition’s ground forces moved against Iraqi positions in Kuwait and in Iraq itself. On February 28, 1991, Iraq retreated officially from Kuwait with a big defeat.<sup>10</sup>

In this war, the US used the U.N troops as a mean to serve its interests. It was not Kuwait that the US defended but rather its oil. The American occupation of Kuwait was not for the aim of guarding peace but it was for aim of safeguarding the region of oil as the main source of oil supplies of the US.<sup>11</sup> This war’s timing paralleled the satellite technology rise. TV channels all over the world diffused the happenings live. The US citizens in particular were very interested and supportive to their troops that were fighting abroad, and this contributed in the growing-up of a feeling of hostility of their Iraqi “Arab and Muslim” enemy.

## **2. The 9/11**

Although America had suffered surprise attacks before, such as Pearl Harbor, and the 1950 Chinese attack in Korea but the 9/11 is an event inscribed not only in the minds and the hearts of the American population, but also in the history of the whole world too for the consequences that followed it.

On September 11, 2001 in the United States, an airliner traveling at hundreds of miles per hour and carrying a big amount of jet fuel crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. A little later, a second airliner hit the South Tower. The Twin Tower being one the busiest places in the US, contained thousands of persons that work there that were present at this tragic unexpected incident. However that was not all; a little later in the same day, a third airliner crashed into the western face of the Pentagon and a fourth airliner crashed in a field in southern Pennsylvania. This fourth one is suspected to be aiming at the White House but was forced down by passengers that knew that America is being attacked. There were thousands of victims in these attacks, some dead, some buried alive, some lost and were never seen since and many other cases that were recorded since . Later on, and after the investigations, it was found that the airliners that led the attacks were young Arabs Islamist extremists from Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

Although the whole world felt pain for the victims and their families and denounced these criminal deeds against humanity; ever since these attacks occurred, the Muslim world became the target of “The West”. Islamophobia has grown in the world. Islam is viewed as an equivalent of *terrorism*, and this led to the “Othering” of Muslims and to their consideration as the dangerous Enemy whether in real life or in cinema.<sup>13</sup>

### **3. The Bush Administration and the Aftermath of the 9/11 Attacks**

Although America has undergone numerous terrorist attacks prior to the 9/11 attack, such as the Car Bomb Attack in 1993 and the Truck Bomb Attacks on the US Army Barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996; the 9/11 attacks was the droplet that overflow the cup to the US, just like the attack on Pearl Harbor in the Second World War. The American home front was furious and supportive of the harsh punishment of the responsible on these attacks, and nine days following the 9/11 attacks, George W Bush declared War on Terror, a war that shifted a

little later its aim from capturing and punishing the responsible on this particular attack, to fighting every terrorist group in the world.<sup>14</sup>

George W Bush, just like the presidents before him, justified this declaration of War on Terror by the never-ending war between Good and Evil. America was fighting for the Good, and this time Evil are the Terrorist Arabs and Muslims. The next step George W Bush took is forming a coalition to invade Afghanistan. Ironically, some states of the former Soviet Union and Pakistan were part of this coalition. Three days later, the US launched air strikes on Afghanistan in the operation known as Operation Enduring Freedom, and by January 2002 the Taliban was virtually defeated. However, as long as Osama Bin Laden, the first responsible on the terrorist attacks according to USA, was not captured, the US military remained in the area to safeguard peace; therefore; they turned from intervention forces to occupation forces, whose aim is to institute a democratic government in Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup>

At the time, this war seemed a just war. However, pictures and news reports that depicted the bad treatment of detainees that were brought from Afghanistan to the US prison of Guantanamo have raised many questions especially in the US home front. That is because according to International laws and the protocols of the Geneva Conventions, and especially to the dictations of the Just War Theory, those detainees are considered as Prisoners of War. Thus, they have the right for a just trial, and should not be under any circumstances object to torture or any bad treatment. Those pictures and news reports shook the public opinion and questioned the legality and the morality of this war.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, the Bush Administration claimed that these detainees are a threat to the world security. People at home seemed to agree with that since the passing of the Patriot Act in October 2001 did not face strong protest. The Patriot Act gave right to the US to act against anyone suspected to have terroristic intentions, even before they get any proof that they are

actually terrorists. This act allowed imprisonment of suspects without trials, and if tried at all, they were tried in military tribunals rather than open courts. Later on, this act was reinforced when President George W Bush announced the Bush Doctrine, and suggested the necessity of a pre-emptive doctrine that would allow the US and its allies to attack regimes before even these regimes attack another country. Therefore the US declared Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as Axis of Evil and added later Cuba, Libya and Syria to its enemies list.<sup>17</sup>

By 2002, the Bush Administration has increased the accusations on the Iraqi government that is ruled by Saddam Hussein. The latter was considered as a dictator who is linked with al Qaeda, in addition to owning nuclear mass destruction weapons. Accordingly, the US launched war on Iraq on March 19, 2003 and led Operation Iraqi Freedom, and six weeks later the US announced the fall of the dictator regime of Saddam Hussein by the US troops and Iraqi civilians hand in hand.<sup>18</sup>

Still, after the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein, and the assurance that there are no nuclear weapons in Iraq; the US troops remained in Iraq under the pretext of setting a democratic regime there. However, the situation deteriorated, and there were growing conflicts in the area. There were clashes between Iraqis and Iraqis, also between Iraqis and Americans, so the war that was declared on *terrorism*, resulted to the spreading of *terrorism*, just like the scenario of the Vietnam war.<sup>19</sup>

All these events and wars; the Gulf War; the Afghan War, The Iraq War, The 9/11 attacks have contributed in disfiguring the image of Arabs and Muslims in the Western imagination, and therefore, resulted to their bad portrayal in the US cinema in particular and the western Cinema in general.

### **c. The Impacts of the Negative Portrayal of Muslims in Cinema:**

Throughout history, there was always this part that was viewed as the public enemy, a part that is considered as the centre of hate and despise of everyone. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, it was the witches. The latter were chased and executed without fair trials. They were considered guilty just because they were suspected to be practicing witchcraft and the “Salem Witch Trials” (1693-1693) is the best example for this. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in the period of the Cold War, it was the Communists that were being chased especially after the spread of McCarthyism. Communists were the new target, mostly the ones that were living in the United States of America. They were either in constant danger, or excluded from society, there was even later what is called “The Hollywood Blacklist”<sup>20</sup> which denies employment in the Entertainment Industry to anyone who is suspected to be a Communist because the US was aware of the power of cinema and media’.

In the present day, Muslims become the first suspects in any attacks that occur anywhere. As we have seen in the movie *Body of Lies* (2008), which we took as a sample to examine the portrayal of Muslims in the US cinema, they are represented in a very negative way. They are presented as being the first responsible on the attacks that happened in Manchester, Sheffield and others. Because cinema is the 7<sup>th</sup> art, and as we said earlier, it has a huge influence on setting an agenda and especially influences the way people think about a particular subject, we can say that stereotyped representation of Muslims results to many negative effects.

These representations of Muslims in Media and Cinema as terrorists are a major cause for the rise of xenophobia and Islamophobia. The latter is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as an “unreasonable fear of, and prejudice against, Muslims or Islam.”<sup>21</sup> consequently the Muslim communities are more and more prone to ‘Othering’.



Mayida Zaal writes in her article *“Islamophobia in Classrooms, Media, and Politics”* (2012):

According to the Council on American Islamic Relations (2009), civil rights violations targeting Muslims in the workplace, at religious institutions, and in schools have escalated. For instance, in 2007 there were 118 reported cases of discrimination in schools, and in 2008 there were 153 reported cases. Moreover, the Pew Research Center's (2010) survey in the wake of public debate on the proposed construction of an Islamic cultural center and mosque near the site of the former World Trade Center reveals that since 2005, Americans are tending towards less favorable views of Islam. In 2005, 41% of those surveyed held a favorable view of Islam, while 36% held an unfavorable view. In 2010, only 32% held a favorable view, while 38% looked at Islam unfavorably.<sup>22</sup>

This quotation shows that Muslims are subjects to negative treatment from other communities, notably Western ones.

Politicians also realizing the critical situation of Muslims in the West, use this issue as an instrument to reach their goals, Abdulkader H.Sinno says in his article *“The Politics of Western Muslims”* (2012):

The instrumentalization of Western Muslims for political gain involves the promotion of negative depictions and the assumption that they are, at the least, threatening and implacable nemeses. These stereotypes have receptive audiences within most Western publics and their airing unchallenged, as they often are, by individuals in positions of power and prominence makes them legitimate to adopt, act upon and enforce. The increasing acceptance of these depictions likely encourages discrimination against individuals with an apparent connection to Islam in areas such as education, the job market, housing, services, and political recruitment. It most likely also encourages hate crimes, social hostility, damage to relationships, and stress to physical and mental health.<sup>23</sup>

From this quotation, it is noticeable that the Muslim community in the West is enduring mostly bad treatment and is in constant threat just because they believe in the Islamic Faith. It is used by politicians as an instrument to attain their traced objectives, and this instrumentalization is another factor which contributes to the rise of Islamophobia.

Abdulkader H.Sinno writes in that too

Muslim minorities in the West have become the improbable targets and tools of the discourses of some politicians in the search for votes, right-wing newspapers and tabloids seeking enlarged readerships, and Conservative activists advocating for their causes. These discourses have often taken bizarre twists, such as the surprisingly successful attempt during the 2007 Democratic primaries by a right-wing organization to depict (the Christian) candidate Obama as a Muslim who attended a "Madrasa" as a child.<sup>24</sup>

This quotation too illustrates the use of Islamophobia as a political tool.

An example of this manipulation of “Islamophobia” for political matters is the electoral campaign of the American president Donald Trump; According to the Malaysian intellectual and human rights activist Chandra Muzaffar, she claims:

Donald Trump’s crafty manipulation of Islamophobia, we are told, was one of the factors that propelled him to the presidency of the United States of America. He was very much aware of the prevalence of negative sentiments towards Islam and Muslims within segments of the American electorate. Because Islamophobia was part of the public imagination, he had no scruples about exploiting it for political gain.<sup>25</sup>

Muzaffar explains that the actual president of the US has exploited this hate sentiment towards Muslims to gain the presidential elections.

The American scholar Dalia Mogahed believes that Islamophobia is a threat to all, because it is used as a means of public manipulation. She says “Islamophobia is not organic, it is a tool of public manipulation”<sup>26</sup> she says also “Islamophobia is fueled by fear, and makes us more accepting of authoritarianism, conformity and prejudice –three corrosive elements to the foundation of a free society”<sup>27</sup> she says “fear kills freedom”<sup>28</sup>. These quotations highlight the fact that Islamophobia leads people to take decisions and chose sides, relying on false data, and driven by fear. Dalia says also “Islamophobia, I believe, is a threat”<sup>29</sup>

Another effect of this negative portrayal of Muslims in the US cinema is the growth of *terrorism*. Negative representations of Muslims in Media in general and in cinema in particular do not only result to the rise of Islamophobia, but also reinforces the sentiment of alienation and humiliation in the Muslims, the thing that motivates them to join extremist terrorist groups such as ISIS. The scholar, journalist; historian, and political analyst Tariq Ali writes in his book “Speaking of Empire and Resistance” concerning this:

People are increasingly beginning to feel that democracy itself is being destroyed by this latest phase of globalization, and that politics doesn’t matter because it changes nothing. This is a very dangerous situation on the global level, because when this happens, you begin to see acts of terrorism. Terrorism emanates from weakness, not strength. It is the sign of despair.<sup>30</sup>

In this quotation, Tariq Ali asserts that the Act of Terrorism emanates mostly from the feeling of fear, and that the growth of the ISIS is reinforced by the feeling of Alienation of Muslims.

To conclude, Muslims are misrepresented in the US cinema. This misrepresentation came as a result to numerous events like the 9/11 and the Gulf War. These negative stereotypes diffused in the US cinema concerning Muslims reinforced the hate sentiment towards them, and helped in the wide spread of Islamophobia.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Group, 1978), 287.

<sup>2</sup> Scott Riddley, director. *Body of Lies*, DVD, United State: Warner Bros. Pictures 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Group, 1978), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Riddley, director. *Body of Lies*, DVD, United State: Warner Bros. Pictures 2008

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Group, 1978), 108.

<sup>10</sup> "The Gulf War, 1991", *Office of the Historian*.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/gulf-war>. Accessed July 20, 2017.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas H. Kean, "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States",

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Virden Jenel. *The American and the Wars of the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).167-183.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ellen Schrecker, "Blacklists and Other Economic Sanctions", *Modern American Poetry*,  
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<sup>21</sup>Cambridge Dictionary, s. v, "Islamophobia"  
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/islamophobia> . Accessed September 12, 2017.

<sup>22</sup>Zaal Mayida, "Islamophobia in classrooms, media, and politics", *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 55, No. 6 (March 2012), 555-558.

<sup>23</sup>Sinno Abdulkader H, "The Politics of Western Muslims" *Review of Middle East Study*, 46, No. 2 (2012) 216-231.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Chandra Muzaffar, "Trump, Public Imagination, and Islamophobia", *Global-E* 17,no.17(2017)

<http://www.21global.ucsb.edu/global-e/march-2017/trump-public-imagination-and-islamophobia> .Accessed September 17, 2017.

<sup>26</sup>Dalia Mogahed, "Islamophobia a tool of public manipulation" *University of Washington*.  
<https://www.uwb.edu/news/february-2017/dalia-mogahed>. Accessed July 9, 2017.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Tariq Ali, "The Empire Strikes Back" ,in *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (New York: the New York Press,2005),8.

### **C. Chapter III: The US Cinema and Changing Agendas**

#### **a. The US Constant Changing Agendas**

The United States of America being a nation that constantly aims to be the first superpower in the world has always set its relation with other nations to fit its changing Interests. In order to shift from an enemy to another the US has used variable means to justify this shift such as the soft power, and the just war principles.

Tariq Ali says in his book “Speaking of Empire and resistance”:

It's a total failure of the Western imagination that the only enemy they can see is Adolf Hitler. This is something that started during the Suez War of 1956, what I call the first oil war. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the nationalist leader of Egypt, was described by British Prime Minister Anthony Eden as an Egyptian Hitler. Then it carried on like that. Saddam Hussein became Hitler when he was no longer a friend of the West. Then Milosevic became Hitler. The Croatian fascists and the special SS-recruited brigades in Bosnia and Kosovo that had fought for Hitler are rarely mentioned. Now al Qaeda and Taliban are portrayed as Islamo-fascists. The strong implication is that Osama bin Laden is a Hitler, even though he has no state power at all.<sup>1</sup>

In this quotation, Tariq Ali demonstrates how the United States of America is constantly changing its friends and enemies according to its interests, and how it is easy for the US to give-up on its allies whenever its benefits are at risk.

In order to launch any war against any nation or people, as it is known -as “The Just War Theory”-, the part which would be declaring the war should provide a rational justification for it. For the war to be just, the image of the adversary is distorted and constructed in a way in which it would seem to be the faulty part that represents a great danger; not only for the part that wants to declare war, but also for the whole world in general. It implies that this war is fought for the benefit of all. This justification is crucial to convince peoples, governments that the enemy is guilty and this war is inevitable in order to gain validity for their cause.<sup>2</sup>

For instance, during the First World War (1914-1918) the US enemy was the Central Powers, which consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. At first, the US adopted the Policy of Neutrality. However, later, in 1917, following the Lusitania ship sinking by the Germans in 1915 resulting in the death of Hundreds of American citizen; in addition to the interception of the Zimmermann Telegram, sent from the Germans to the Mexicans proposing an alliance with them against the US; the American president of the time Woodrow Wilson declared war in 1917. Woodrow Wilson in his speech justified the entry to war that, the US is leading “a war to end all wars”. Yet, the real interest of the US declaring war is that the German Blockade was interfering with the US economic interests in the area.<sup>3</sup>

In the Second World War (1939-1945), the US allied with Russia, France, and Britain against the Axis Powers consisting of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Similarly, with the WWI, the US at first adopted the Isolationist Policy. However, after the Pearl Harbor Attack in December 1941, President Roosevelt declared the US entry to war against the Axis Powers. President Roosevelt justified this war as being inevitable and that the American intervention is necessary to guard peace in the world and assure the respect of democracy and human rights saying that America should become “the great arsenal of democracy”. Actually, the real intention of America is defeating Germany and becoming the first imperial power in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Later on, following the defeat of the Axis Powers, at the end of WWII, the US and Russia rose as the two leading superpowers of the world. This resulted in a growing tension between the two poles that were aiming to spread their ideologies and establish spheres of influence all over the world. Under its Policy of Containment, USA intervened in several countries such as Korea 1950), Vietnam (1956), and Afghanistan (1988).<sup>5</sup>

After the defeat of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States rose as the first superpower in the world. Therefore it aimed to extend its hegemony and domination over the rest of the world. In order to do so, the US needed to strengthen its economy, and as the US economy is greatly dependent on industry, it needed raw materials, mainly oil. This is the reason behind the US intervention in Kuwait during the Gulf War; Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and other Middle Eastern countries. The US took the 9/11 Attacks as a pretext to launch what George W Bush called the “Wars on Terror” that justify these interventions.

William Eckhart writes in his article “Making and Breaking Enemy Images”:

It may be possible to have a war without an enemy, but it might be difficult, if not impossible, to get people to kill their friends on a mass scale. By definition, an "enemy" is at least "unfriendly," and more likely hostile and malicious, as perceived. Ultimately, an enemy is seen (or imaged) as a person or a group that is ready to hurt or kill oneself; therefore one feels well justified in hurting or killing the enemy in self-defense or in retaliation. In short, an enemy is an image or percept, which is embedded in the concept of hostility or unfriendliness which, in turn, is embedded in the evaluation of such a person or group as being bad or evil. In the psychological process of imaging, the three elements involved are - beliefs (values), attitudes (concepts) and the enemy image itself; these elements are interdependent. A recent review of enemy image studies shows that attitude studies of students and the publics, and content or value analyses of political leaders have been used to probe enemy images in a more or less systematic manner. Among other things, some of these studies have shown that the enemy images have been cultivated carefully by political leaders in order to get people ready for war. Enemy images are most readily adopted by those who most need to feel superior to others in terms of morality, divine will or culture. <sup>6</sup>

This quotation demonstrates how easy it is to manipulate the masses and construct an image of a possible enemy in their minds for political ends.

It is in this way that the US have succeeded to distort the image of its different enemies over the time and to justify the wars it leads, Tariq Ali says in this matter:

All these wars are similar in the way ideology is being used. It's the ideology of the so-called humanitarian intervention. We don't want to do this, but we're doing it for the sake of the people who live there. This is, of course, a sleight of hand because all sorts of people live there, and by and large, the intervention is to help one faction and not the other and above all to serve western interests: strategic, political, and economic.<sup>7</sup>

The quotation above demonstrates how the united states justify its interventions in foreign countries, and how it gives validity to its cause and gain the world point view to its side.

### **b. The changing Agendas in the US Cinema**

Although the origin of movies and motion pictures goes back to the late 1800's with the invention of motion toys, it was until the 1900's that film and motion technology witnessed a great advancement. The first Hollywood movie was made in 1914. In the 1920's the movie industry began to flourish. Hundreds of movies were produced each year. There were many affluent film companies, such as Warner Brothers, Paramount, Metro Goldwin Meyer, and 20thCentury Fox. In the 1930's, sound was first introduced to films, which resulted in the creation of new genres such as Musicals. In its beginnings, mostly, Hollywood films were destined for entertainment. However, when the film industry saw such a wide success, and the film makers realized how these films can be of such a strong influence, they began to exploit the Film Industry for social and political ends. This change became more obvious in the 1950's, mainly, because of the immense change in the American culture in particular, and the world in general, as more and more families owned a Television Set.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the fact that cinema has such a strong and effective influence on the masses, cinema has been constantly taken advantage of for political and social reasons and ends. Hence, we have taken the two movies Rambo III (1988) and Body of Lies (2008); analyzed in the two previous chapters as a sample to study how does the US cinema contribute to this changing of Agendas in the US, and how is it reflected in it too.

In the first chapter, we have seen how the Soviets were depicted as the bad guys especially in the character of Zaysen who is portrayed as a cold blooded criminal who is ready to sacrifice the wellbeing of others for the sake of his own good. We have also noticed the very positive portrayal of Americans as the strong brave heroes, especially in the character of



Rambo. The latter is ready for self-sacrifice in the sake of the good of others, not only the wellbeing of his fellow Americans but also for the good of the Afghans that are depicted in this movie as simple loving people.

John Rambo's readiness for self-sacrifice for others even if that costs him his own life, reflects in a great way the humanitarian aspect the wars and foreign interventions led by the USA, especially in the Middle East area. It also reflects the idea of the 'Manifest Destiny' that America is the leader of the world and that it is the first responsible on guarding peace and civilization worldwide.

This is shown clearly in the scene at the 45:46 min when Moussa told Rambo to go save himself; and that this war is not his, so he should not risk his life for it, but John Rambo refused to let go of them, and insisted that it is his war now, and the afghan replying that, he is being a good friend.

The Afghans in this movie, contrary to the soviets, are portrayed as the allies of America. They are depicted as being a loving people who are ready to collaborate with America for noble reasons. These Afghans "Muslims" also are depicted as the faithful, angelic, honest and helpful people that are ready to stand with the "right" side, namely America.

However, although the Afghans were represented in this movie as being the friends of the US still, are portrayed as inferior to the Americans. As we notice, John Rambo was the one leading the Afghans in the operation. They are depicted as their followers despite the fact that they are in their own land among their people, and are supposed to be the ones in advantage. This reflects the "Orientalist" view of the West on the Orient as Edward Said says in his book *Orientalism*: "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible

relationships with the Orient without ever losing him, the relative upper hand.”<sup>9</sup> This negative portrayal of the Soviets in the US cinema is due to the fact that at the period the movie was produced 1988, Capitalist America was in an ideological war with the Communist USSR, at the time, the Communists were America’s number one enemy.

In the second chapter, we have seen how Muslims are portrayed in the US cinema in such a negative way. Arabs and Muslims are depicted in the second movie *Body of Lies* (2008) as intolerant, cruel, uncivilized, violent and greedy. This is in the exception of some rare characters that are portrayed in a positive way, because they are serving the American interests, and still are even portrayed as inferior to Americans. An example of this, Bassam, Ferris’s associate, is portrayed as a loyal friend because he is helping the American Ferris, but is portrayed only as a follower to Ferris not as his leader although he is in his own country, Iraq. However, the Character Ferris who represents the Americans in this movie is portrayed in a positive way. Just as John Rambo in the first movie, Ferris is the hero who fights the bad people in favor of the Good.

From the analysis of the two movies *Rambo III*, and *Body of Lies*, we notice that there are many similarities in the representation of the US and its enemy. Both movies depict America’s enemies as cruel, violent, totalitarians, uncivilized beings. Although the enemy has changed, from the Russians in the first movie set in the Cold War period to the Muslims in the second movie after the 9/11 events the way the US cinema portrays the Other remains the same. We also notice the existence of the same kind of characters in both movies. As an example, Rambo and Ferris both characters represent the American Hero. In addition, Zaycen and AL-Saleem both represent the totalitarian dictators who do evil guiltlessly. In addition to the ideologies of the US enemies in both movies, in the first movie, any ideology that opposes the ideology of the US is considered bad. Communism is associated with cruelty and Totalitarianism. In the second movie the religion of Islam as an ideology is as well associated

with terrorism and Totalitarianism, so both ideologies are depicted as “Evil” just like Communism in the first movie.

The image of the Muslims presented in the second movie *Body of Lies* (2008) contrasts very much the image of the Muslims presented in *Rambo III*. In the first movie they are depicted as being good fellows because at the time Arabs were helping the US to defeat the Russians. However, once their war against the Soviets was over, they let down their “Friends” and turned their backs against them. In his book *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* Tariq Ali says about this:

We must never, ever forget the image of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security advisor, standing on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, addressing huge gatherings of people with beards, telling them: Go and fight against the Russian infidel. Go and wage the jihad. God is on your side. People in Pakistan remember that, and they said, we worked together with the Americans and we liberated Afghanistan, and then they dumped us.<sup>10</sup>

He also says:

The United States supported the people they now call their main enemies in order to destroy radical nationalist regimes that allied themselves to the Soviet Union and threatened American interests. Now these people have broken loose because the Americans dumped them. The Americans said, “We don’t need you anymore,” and the Islamists said, “You may not need us anymore, but we believe we have a role to play.”<sup>11</sup>

The previous two quotes show how the United States constructs alliances with other countries when it needs them, and how it throws them away when their shared interests end.

### **c. Changing Concepts According to Changing Agendas in the US Cinema**

In order to examine the changing concepts according to the changing Agendas in the US cinema, we are going to support our analysis by Norman Fairclough theory of Language and Power. In his book *Language and Power* (1989) Norman Fairclough stresses the importance of language use as a means of establishing unequal relations of power in society. According to him, there is a rich and complex interrelationship between language and power, because language entails in it ideologies, and therefore, is used as a hegemonic tool. He also

puts it forward that language and power are related in more than one way. Language creates relations of power; also language can arise from relations of power. He writes: "...Sociolinguistic conventions have a dual relation to power: on the one hand they incorporate differences of power, on the other hand they arise out of –and give rise to– particular relations of power.”<sup>12</sup>

The US cinema has exploited this language and power relation for its own favor. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, there is a shift in the US enemy that is reflected in Cinema, and these changing agendas have brought with it accordingly a change in concepts. The '*Friend*' became an '*Enemy*', the '*Allies*' became the '*Opponents*', the ones that were considered as the '*Us*' became the '*Others*'. There is even a change in the meaning of some concepts, for example the notion of '*jihad*' in the first movie "Rambo III" is a positive deed. It means fighting for the right cause, for the truth, for restoring peace, and the word *Mujahedeen* is used to describe those brave Muslim Fighters that served the right cause. However in the second movie *Body of Lies* the notion of *Jihad* has been altered radically. It refers to a very negative deed, it refers to *terrorism*, to fundamentalist and extremist deeds committed by Arabs and Muslims. As we notice Ferris when talking with his associate Bassam referring to the terrorists as 'the Jihadists and Baathists'.

This change is obviously illustrated in the alteration of the dedication of Rambo III. The original dedication says "This Film is dedicated to the brave Mujahedeen Fighters of Afghanistan because they were fighting at their side, however after the September 11, 2001 attacks the dedication says 'This Film is dedicated to the gallant people of Afghanistan.'"<sup>13</sup> This alteration signifies the change of the relationship between the US and the Arabs and Muslims.

According to Fairclough's view on the dual relationship of language and power, we may come to see that the first and the second dedications have arisen from power relations; the first dedication has arisen from the Afghan-US relationship as war allies, we notice in it the qualification of the Afghans as *brave fighters* by the US, whereas the second has arisen from the negative relationship between the US and Muslims after the September 11 attacks, we deduce from this change that it is the US that is in the leading position in both relationships, it is the US that is deciding the position of the other part in the relationship, giving positive and negative qualifications as it suits it.

In addition, both dedications give rise to relations of power as well, both dedications although are simple brief sentences but are highly influential. the wide range of Hollywood's spectators; particularly the viewers of such a famous movie, that reached high view rates, reading the first dedication, would subconsciously consider the Americans and the Muslims as the good guys and the Russians as the bad guys; thus they would support the American cause against the Soviets; and the US would not only maintain its position of power regarding Muslims and Russians but also reinforce it in front of the public view worldwide. And the same goes for the second dedication as well.

Such relations of power are obviously present in the two movies *Rambo III* and *Body of Lies*. For instance, in *Rambo III*, when John Rambo was examining the arms that Moussa gave him, the latter kept asking him about the function of each one, and this helped establish a power relation where Rambo was the expert and Moussa was a kind of learner or follower.

In addition, in *Body of Lies*, when Ferris was in the car with Bassam, he established himself as the leader from the beginning, by saying "rules of the day..." suggesting that he is the leader of the operation and the commander there. Other forms by which language was used to establish such relations of power in favor of the US in the two movies is the frequent

use of orders, the use of the tone, screaming... this insured establishing relationships of leadership, superiority, hierarchy and domination by the US.

In addition to that, we notice in the second movie how Ferris when he first met with Nizar, the first thing he asked him is whether he speaks English. Although Ferris speaks Arabic well, but preferred using English, the language of his country as a means of communication to ensure his authority over him.

#### **d. The US in the Middle East: Hidden interests**

In his book “Friends, Foes, and Future Directions: In Search of a Middle East Partnership Strategy” Hans Binnendijk writes:

The United States has historically had three fundamental interests in the Middle East: to provide security for Israel, to guarantee the free flow of Persian Gulf oil to the West, and to counter Soviet efforts during the Cold War to undermine U.S. influence in the region. That meant supporting moderate Arab regimes, regardless of their commitment to democracy. After 1978, another U.S. interest was to limit Iranian power. Since September 11, 2001, those interests have been overshadowed by efforts to defeat terrorists who could threaten the United States and by a new emphasis on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These circumstances were accompanied by a new emphasis on democracy promotion in the region.<sup>14</sup>

In this quotation the author emphasizes the interests of the US in the Middle East that consist of protecting its ally ‘Israel’, exploiting gas and oil of Middle Eastern countries such as Libya and Iraq, and creating a sphere of influence in this area; thus, creating a large market with huge numbers of consumers for its goods. The author also shows how these interests were overshadowed by the “War on Terror” against Muslims, which was used as a pretext to justify its entry to the Middle East.

In his article “Chaos and Globalization in the Middle East”, Mark Le Vine writes

In examining the changing dynamics of economic and cultural globalization, particularly in the aftermath of September 11 and the US invasion of Iraq in the Middle East and larger Muslim world, I argue that since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the dominant neoliberal ideology and structures of globalization have generated increasing levels of political and socio-economic chaos in the Middle East. Yet, such a chaotic and militarized globalization bears resemblance to a pattern that is well established, if still infrequently discussed, in Africa and Central Asia. By challenging and, to a certain extent, destabilizing authoritarian political

economic and cultural systems, globalized chaos can open spaces for grass roots, democratically inspired public spheres to development in authoritarian political environments (as most clearly evidenced by what at this moment are the still incipient democracy movements in countries like Lebanon and Egypt). More likely, however, is that such chaos is sponsored, managed or otherwise utilized by local government and political elites, and Northern (particularly US) governments as well, to achieve strategic policy goals whose realization was frustrated by the more structured dynamics of the post-Cold War era of globalization that ended on 11 September 2001.<sup>15</sup>

In this quotation the author argues that the US interventions in the Middle East area, and its destabilizing many countries there, is a plan sponsored by the West. This plan consists mainly of spreading chaos and disorder in the Middle East, then rebuilding it in such a way that suits the West's interests. The Middle East being rich in oil and gas and other raw materials, and being also a large area that could serve the US as a market for its goods such as weapons and all, was always seen as a target by Western Powers.

An example of these US interventions in the Middle East area that caused chaos is Iraq. After the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein, and despite the fact that the aim of this was restoring peace and democracy in the area according to the US, peace and democracy were never restored and it is the case also in Libya, Syria, Yemen...

To conclude, the US cinema was used as a tool to distort the image of its changing enemies, even the concepts used to refer to these enemies had changed following the change of its interests.

## **Endnotes**

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<sup>2</sup>John W. Lango," A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory" in *the Ethics of Armed Conflict* (Edinburgh University Press: 2014)18-46.

<sup>3</sup>Jenel Virden, "The First World War" in *the American and The Wars of The Twentieth Century*,(New York: Palgrave macmillan,2008)8-42.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 43-77

<sup>5</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, preface to *the Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union 1917-1991*(New York: Oxford university press, 1998),

- <sup>6</sup> William Eckhardt, “Making and breaking Enemy Images”, *Peace Research* 21, No.4 (1989).
- <sup>7</sup> Tariq Ali “The Empire Strikes Back” ,in *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (New York: the New York Press,2005),5.
- <sup>8</sup> “A Very Short History of Cinema” *National Science and Media Museum*,  
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- <sup>9</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*. ( London: Penguin Group, 1978), 07.
- <sup>10</sup> Tariq Ali “The Empire Strikes Back”, in *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (New York: the New York Press, 2005),6.
- <sup>11</sup>Tariq Ali “Imperialism Then And Now” in *Speaking of Empire and Resistance* (New York: the New York Press, 2005), 38.
- <sup>12</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (New York: Longman Inc, 1989), 1-2.
- <sup>13</sup> Peter MacDonald, director. Rambo III.DVD. United States: Live Home Video, 1988.
- <sup>14</sup> Hans Binnendijk, “In Search of a Middle East Partnership Strategy.” in *Friends, Foes, and Future Directions* ( RAND Corporation:2016).
- <sup>15</sup> Mark LeVine, “Chaos and Globalization in the Middle East”, *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33, No.3 (2005) 394-411.



## Conclusion

To sum-up, throughout our study and examination of the two movies *Rambo III* (1988), and *Body of Lies* (2008), we have noticed the strong role of cinema in setting agendas, by its great influence on the masses. In the Cold War period, the US has exploited Film Industry to create propaganda against its rival of the time, The Soviet Union.

As we have seen in the first movie, *Rambo III* (1988), the US promoted negative stereotypes about the Soviets. The latter were depicted as bloody criminals, cruel dictators and sadistic totalitarians. This bad depiction is due to the fact that the United States was in an ideological conflict with the Soviet Union, and under its “Policy of Containment” it used cinema to distort the image of the USSR to enlarge the spread of Capitalism and reduce the spread of Communism. Later on, following the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and after the 9/11 events, the US aim have shifted from defeating the Soviet Union to be the first and the only empire in the world to aiming to strengthen and extend its empire. In order to do so it needed raw materials, mainly oil, therefore, it intervened in countries owning these riches, mostly in the Middle Eastern area. Accordingly, the enemy of the US has shifted to Arabs and Muslims, so the enemy in the US cinema as well turned to be The Muslims and Arabs, in order to justify the US interventions in the area. Muslims and Arabs are mostly depicted in the US cinema as uncivilized, violent, patriarchal, primitive people who need to be guided and led by a superior power.

In the present dissertation, we have tried to examine how the United States of America use cinema as a weapon to manipulate the masses in order to shift from an enemy to another, and how these enemies of the US were depicted in the US cinema, and how this changing agendas as well, affect the US cinema.

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