Aliens, Enemies, and Allies

Images of Asia in the James Bond Films

XIANG GAO

Since Ian Fleming's creation of the British Secret Service agent in his 1953 novel *Casino Royale*, James Bond has become a cultural phenomenon and a mirror of the times. Bond stories have been adapted into various entertainment forms, the most famous of which is the Eon-produced film series. The film series has captured the Cold War superpower confrontation and competition in a bi-polar world system. At a more contemporary age, the film series has hinted at the various traditional and non-traditional security threats rooted in the evolving international environment where the Soviet Union dissolved and new Great Powers such as China and Japan have risen. On the contrary to the conventional wisdom of international relations where states are the most important, if not the only, actors in world arena, Bond's cinematic international relations have highlighted the individual and transnational organisations' roles. The supervillains in the film series are often stateless individuals, such as former agents gone rogue. The notorious criminal organisation and Bond's primary nemesis, SPECTRE, is a transnational criminal organisation that is not seemingly controlled by any state government.

Yet despite the emphasis on non-state players, the reality of Soviet/Russian power has been a part of the film series' storytelling, as has America's global reach and the partnership with Western European states. What is a relatively rare

Xiang Gao is a Senior Lecturer at the University of New England, NSW, Australia.

JBS
THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
James Bond Studies
Volume 6 · Issue 1 · Spring 2023
ISSN 2514-2178
DOI: 10.24877/jbs.95
Distributed under CC BY 4.0 UK

but interesting element in the series is the representation of Asian characters and locations, as well as the props, customs, and storylines associated with Asian countries and culture. These Asian images reflect underlying Western attitudes and perceptions of Asia. Among the twenty-five Eon-made films so far, nine films include Asian characters, most of whom are minor roles given few or no lines. Indeed, the absence of Asian elements has not been unusual in Hollywood movies. *The New York Times* recently criticised the lack of China's presence in the "Bondworld" as a part of the general trend of the recent Hollywood movies (Douthat 2021, n.p.). This study argues that these limited Asian appearances in Bond films provide a useful cultural window into the images and discourse of the evolving post-war international relations and the interaction between the East and the West. Through an examination of the Asian images in the James Bond film series, this article argues that "aliens", "enemies", and "allies" in Bond's international relations represent the three major Western perceptions of Asian countries and Asian peoples after WWII. As Umberto Eco observes, the Bond series "seeks elementary opposition" and in order to "personify primitive and universal forces", the series "had recourse to popular standards" (2009, 46). While partially reflecting the realities and thoughts of world politics, this over-simplistic Asian representation on screen fails to fully illuminate the complexity and diversity of Asian presence in historical and contemporary international relations.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN BOND'S WORLD

Films and other cultural productions can provide an important perspective into how populations understand geopolitics and conflict (Shaw and Youngblood 2010; Grant and Ziemann 2016). This imagery is crucial to "moulding popular understandings" of conflict such as the Cold War or the current Western confrontation with China and Russia (Gehrig 2019, 2). The continued global success of the James Bond novels and films, from the height of the Cold War to the rising conflict between America and China in the 2020s, indicates its continuing cultural purchase and the notion that besides the economic and political elements of international relations there exists a "world of shared conceptions, dreams, and problems" (Iriye 2004, 254). The Bond character, as cultural artifice of a Manichean Western Cold War sensibility as well as plural post-Cold War globalism, has been a vehicle for audiences to perceive both the imagined and actual material conditions of geopolitical conflict – a place where chaos lurks precipitously close to the usual lives of citizens and policymakers. The international relations challenges that are reflected in the Bond films are complex and fraught with peril. Indeed, the post-Cold War world has been "shaken", if not also

"stirred". Alongside traditional security concerns, state governments are facing the increasing challenges brought by non-traditional security threats, such as climate change and environmental disasters, infectious diseases, financial crises, transnational crime, and human trafficking. The global nature of these issues has compelled sovereign states to engage in self-help as well as to seek collective action; these issues have also brought non-state individuals and groups into focus, from international terrorism to humanitarian networks. These global issues and conflicts have been reflected in popular culture which has in turn influenced how they are perceived by the public.

While in many instances Bond's antagonist, often megalomaniacal, is disassociated from any particular ideology or state, external events and international *milieus* have nevertheless permeated the Bond series. Throughout its long run, the basic structure of international politics as well as issues of particular global concern – such as blood diamonds, infectious diseases, drug cartels, the energy crisis, disruptive technologies, the communist Chinese "menace", and global casino culture – have provided a backdrop to each film. David Earnest and James Rosenau point out that the Bond film series has surprisingly predicted and presented the impact of globalisation to world systems: the rise of non-sovereign actors, various states' lack of capacity to solve and regulate global issues, and the need for international cooperation (2000, 88). This international or global backdrop is arguably one of the familiar elements that explains the continuing popularity of the films, as this context provides the "balance between repetition and variation, between continuity and change" that has led audiences to relate with the Bond stories (Chapman 2009, 116). The background is evident in the films from various villains having Eastern European accents (reflecting Cold War and post-WWII attitudes and stereotypes), to the persistent motif of potential international conflict, and the use of exotic "Third World" locales and characters, where colonialism lingers and Western power and values have less traction with other values and power (Funnell and Dodds 2017, 160).

Perhaps the most persistent background in the books and the films is the Cold War conflict (cf. Dodds 2005). In the first Fleming novel *Casino Royale*, the objective of Bond's mission to a French casino is to destroy the powerful Soviet agent Le Chiffre. Indeed, the agents of the USSR are some of Bond's most persistent antagonists, with "the plots typically revolving around threats originating from the (present or former) Communist-sphere, with China, North Korea, Russia, and the territories of the former USSR" (Smith 2016, 148). This conflict, however, has not been the sole touchstone of the films; the spies in MI6 are not for-

ever locked in a conflict with the Soviet and Eastern European enemies. Rather the machinations of the villains and the potential for their actions to create superpower conflict and global destruction forms a backdrop for Bond's usual heroics. As Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott point out, SPECTRE is a "freelance" organisation which aims to acquire power and wealth by exploiting the "fragile relations between the East and the West" with its threats to bring global catastrophe in the event its ransom demands are not met (2009, 23).

This Cold War context has been set against the British Empire's continued decline and changes in the American-British relationship. Sandra Reese has argued that Bond films have charted the shifts of American-British relationships over the post-war world while providing a sense of comfort to Anglo nationalists living through the decline of British power and the dissolution of empire. Reese notes:

> Fleming's novels capture Britain's sense of pride but also its decline in the Anglo-American context [...] The Bond films show instead a parade of evils with which America has had to deal, but luckily, always able to call upon plucky Britain to stand by its side. (2003, n.p.)

The connection with Britain and a British identity has been a useful accruement to British soft power (cf. Chapman 2005). This soft power is not based upon an insular self-referential British identity, however. Rather Bond combines his Britishness with elements of internationalism and cosmopolitanism. His job (saving the word from various malevolent actors and forces) transforms his Englishness into a globalised persona whose character traits and action represent the necessarily adulterated "good" versus the "evil" of global malefactors who undermine world order and everyday lifestyles (Jones and Higson 2020, 106).

In the Bond storylines, the emergence of multiple threats within the historical reference point of the Cold War. To this extent as Earnest and Rosenau note: "[i]f Bond films have taught us one thing, it is that popular awareness of globalization and its attendant tensions and paradoxes predates by decades serious scholarly treatment of the subject" (88). The more recent 007 films have revealed the importance of non-state actors, nuanced notions of hard and soft power, control of public opinion, and the opportunities for societal damage through the use of the internet. For example, in *Skyfall* (2012) when Bond questions Q's *bona fides* to work in the agency, Q states: "I'll hazard I can do more damage on my laptop sitting in my pyjamas before my first cup of Earl Grey than you can do in a year in the field". Tobias Hochscherf observes that Bond's

new narrative moves "away from the geopolitics of the Cold War with its opposing blocs, [and] it finally accepts a new world order of asymmetrical threats" (2013, 299). James Smith notes that the later films incorporate the narrative that "the digital revolution has fundamentally altered the nature of intelligence, threats, and conflicts" (149). Within this so-called "net-centric" geopolitical environment

> vast flows of digital information [are] now monitored as an intelligence source, online profiles and activities now subject to routine surveillance and analysis, and critical infrastructure now liable to hostile online attack or takeover. (ibid.)

The Cold War went "hot" in Asia, including conflicts such as the Chinese Civil War, Korean War, and Vietnam War. The two great powers and their allies competed in military alliance, economic institutions and political ideologies and narratives (Wallerstein 2010, 17-22). This battle of physical strength as well as hearts and minds in the Asia Pacific region was not sufficiently communicated in the early Bond movies. This limited Asian presentation is partially rooted in Fleming's conservative perception on the Cold War where Europe and North America were the focus and British Empire remained a key theme (Black 2017, 4). Asian locations are often presented differently in Bond's world, distinctively contrasting East Asian cities with Southeast Asian and South Asian cities (Funnell and Dodds, 114). East Asian cities have gained modernity since the 1960s in Bond's eyes. Hong Kong, Macau, Shanghai, and Tokyo are mostly exhibited to the audience to be as cosmopolitan as Paris, London, and New York. In particular, the mobility and efficiency of Japanese underground system that supported the Japanese Secret Service in *You Only Live Twice* (1967) signals Japan's technological advancement (ibid., 113-114).

Similarly, the iconic Hong Kong nightscape (*The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974) and *Die Another Day* (2002)) and the MI6 base in the submerged RMS *Queen Elizabeth* (*The Man with the Golden Gun*) convey a both the modernity and colonial roots in Hong Kong (ibid., 116). In contrast, the Southeast and South Asian cities, such as Bangkok (*The Man with the Golden Gun*), Udaipur (*Octopussy* (1983)), and Ho Chi Minh City *(Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997)) appear far less modern and possess a "lack of worldliness" (ibid., 116-121). The sharp contrast between different Asian countries also reflects some of Fleming's personal knowledge and understanding

in the Asia Pacific region: he visited Japan and Macau but was relatively uninterested in South and Southeast Asia (Black, 4).

Within the bi-polar and now multi-polar Bond universe, Asian elements and motifs are often featured either as locations, friendly or antagonistic agents, lovers, or, as in the case of the People's Republic of China (Red China), a dangerous foreign power. As for the infrequent and mostly unimportant Asian appearances in the film series, the existing scholarship has noted that initially there was little differentiation of Asian peoples (Chinese, Japanese, South Koreans, North Koreans, or Vietnamese) in Bond's early cinematic encounters with the East (Gehrig, 4; Dick 2016, 107). Different Asian languages, costumes, and cultural artefacts were often seemingly exchangeable and indistinctive (Gehrig, 4). At the same time, the "Red China" theme has been consistently adopted as one of the major threats to the Western allies in Bond's international relations (ibid., 2). China under Mao and the ideological threat posed by the Chinese Cultural Revaluation (1966-76) were presented as a significant geopolitical and security issue in Bond's world (ibid., 3). Gehrig argues that this theme resulted in the negative representation of Asia overall in the West, especially American films in the 1950s and beyond (ibid., 2). On one hand, this characterisation was due to the perceived material and ideological threat China posed to Western interests and dominant Realist foreign policy attitudes held within the foreign policy making communities.[1]

The Chinese participation and nuanced relationship with the USSR during the ideological confrontation between the superpowers lent China an additional mystery and danger within Cold War mentalities in the West. Additionally, the concern for the Chinese threat was based on long-standing racial animus and racialist perceptions of the "Yellow Peril" and Asian "Otherness" which brought a certain perilous quality to Asian especially Chinese antagonism. Indeed, the early Bond series further contributed to renewed Western imaginings of a "Yellow Peril" that was configured into communist China (Dick, 104). These attitudes,

1 Alastair Ian Johnston, a leading international relations theorist, argues that increases in Chinese technological, economic and military capacity would inevitably lead to Chinese efforts to remake the international environment to it preferred arrangements. He observes: "it seems fairly evident that the operative Chinese strategic culture does not differ radically from key elements in the Western realpolitik tradition. Indeed, the Chinese case might be classified as a hard realpolitik sharing many of the same tenets about the nature of enemy and the efficacy of violence as advocates of nuclear warfighting on both sides in the cold war, or late nineteenth century social Darwinian nationalist" (1995, 31).

coupled with ignorance and the closed nature of pre-1978 Chinese society often fuelled extreme paranoia and fear (Gehrig, 11).

ASIANS AS ALIENS: "ST. JOHN SMYTHE, MY DEAR"

In *A View to Kill* (1985), Bond disguises himself as potential racehorse buyer St. John Smythe to infiltrate Zorin's French estate. He is greeted by a female Asian staff member who turns out to be a henchwoman. She confirms Bond's pseudonym at the front gate but has difficulty pronouncing it. This Asian character speaks her only line in the entire film with a strong foreign accent: "Mr /ˈmɪsta:/ St. John /ˈsɛnˈʒɔ:n/ Smith /ˈsmɪ:s/?" Bond replies by providing a standard British accent correction: "St. John /ˈseɪndʒɪn/ Smythe /ˈsmaɪ:ɵ/, my dear". Contrasting with Bond's British, posh, and slightly old-fashioned pronunciation of St. John (originated from French, Saint Jean /sɛ̃ ʒɑ̃/) and the emphasis on the diphthong /aɪ/ in Smythe, the foreignness of the Asian character is made distinct and almost ridiculous. Many other Asian characters in the Bond series speak with accents, suggesting foreignness and especially "East Asian-ness". The brief non-English exchange between minor Asian characters is usually not translated or subtitled for the audience, which implies that their dialogue does not hold narrative significance (cf. Pua and Hiramoto 2018). This stereotype of the "inscrutable Oriental" reinforces the Asian population's perpetual alien status in James Bond's world.

Other than poor English, Asian characters' costume, hairstyle, and ethnic background also consistently highlight their "alien-ness" to Western societies, even though many of these cultural references are not necessarily accurate. For example, in the first Bond film, *Dr. No* (1962), the villain is a German-Chinese who lives on an island known as a "Chinese property". Most employees hired by Dr. No are suggested to be "Chinese" by their oriental-looking costume and hairstyle. The female Chinese staff members wear a Turandot opera-style hair, which was not the prevailing hairstyle in Mao's China or even in early-twentieth-century China; it is more similar to a Meiji Japanese (1868-1912) woman's style. Additionally, because of the lack of Asian actors in the early Western film industry, many Asian characters especially in the early Bond films were played by white actors and actresses, such as Dr. No (who is supposed to be half Chinese) and Miss Taro (who offers to cook Bond Chinese food, suggesting a Chinese background). The actresses in *Dr. No* also wear makeup to give their eyes a more "oriental" look: thin and slanting upward. This differentiation of physical appearance

has been emphasised in other Bond narratives as well. In *You Only Live Twice*, for instance, Tiger Tanaka, the head of the Japanese Secret Service, treats Bond to a bath serviced by his female domestic staff members, and he comments that Bond's chest hair fascinates Japanese girls because "Japanese men all have beautiful bare skin". Bond replies with what he claims to be a Japanese proverb ("birds never make nest in bare tree") to establish his Western dominance.

The rare portrayal of Southeast and South Asia has also been given a rather "native colour": old houses, crowded streets, exotic yet often chaotic festival scenes, and economically-deprived local people. In *The Man with the Golden Gun*, Bond travels to Bangkok, and to the muddy Chao Phraya River market, where a topless little boy is selling tourists wooden elephants, where shabby houses line the river, and where a Louisianan sheriff on holiday makes racist comments towards the local people. The use of ethnic stereotypes and character-driven colonial superiority goes hand-in-hand with the display of these exotic "foreign lands". James Bond's Indian trip in *Octopussy* starts with a landscape shot of the Taj Mahal, which is not related to the plot, but is designed purely to show the famous tourist spot. Through Bond's short water trip, the audience gains a distant view of a crowded riverbank full of people in ethnic costume and colourful fabric hanging over the old buildings behind them. Bond's Indian contact, Vijay, is disguised as a snake charmer to meet Bond. After Bond wins a fortune from gambling against the villain in a casino, he generously gives some cash to the local agents, commenting: "keep you in curry for a few weeks" Additionally, these Asian countries are often portrayed as lesser places where local authorities are not capable of stopping the evils and are in dire need of Bond's/the West's intervention. This intervention often leads to destruction of local architecture as well as the disruption of local life; for example, when Bond's skirmish with Kamal Khan's henchmen disturbs an Indian market and street shows in *Octopussy*; or when Bond's motorbike chase disproportionally damages many houses and properties of several street blocks in Ho Chi Minh City in *Tomorrow Never Dies*. The preservation of local cultural artefacts seems to be of minimal concern to Bond.

There is limited knowledge about Asian people and Asian countries among the post-war West. Many area studies were formed during and after WWII in order to serve intelligence and military purposes (Khosrowjah 2011, 134). However, public fear of communist expansion and political repression in the 1950s significantly undermined the development of Asian studies as a discipline in the United States. Following Senator Joseph McCarthy's series of investigations to expose supposed communists, many leading East Asian experts in

academia and in the foreign services lost their employment and reputation (Schrecker 2004, 1059). Johns Hopkins University even eliminated its entire international studies programme (ibid.). Asian American Studies programmes that focus on the experience of Asian communities as an integral part of American history only returned to the academy in the late 1960s (Hune 1989, xix). The anti-communist McCarthyist fever also largely impacted the American film industry. A Hollywood Blacklist banned a number of media employees from working in the industry based on their alleged communist ties or sympathies (Perlman 2020, n.p.). The lack of public understanding of Asian countries and the unfriendly political environment towards Asian communities overseas have been reflected throughout the early 007 films. Largely, Asians are displayed as "aliens", if not enemies, with emphasis given to the differences between the supposed "East" and "West"; while there is not much distinction given over to the "East" as a region, despite the reality that Asian countries are culturally, linguistically, and politically very diverse. The political identity and imagery between "us" (the West) and "the others" (the East) is well built into Bond's international relations, leaving very little ambiguity (Black, 169). The differentiation among "the others", be they Chinese, Koreans or Japanese, was not, it seems, a point of significance for the filmmakers.

ASIANS AS ENEMIES: "WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S FIRE"

In the boat chase scene in *From Russia with Love* (1963) Bond ignites the villains' vehicles with gasoline. Looking back as the fire destroys the villains' boats, Bond says to Tatiana, a defected Soviet Union agent, "there's a saying in England, 'where there's smoke, there's fire'". Despite this film's attempt to capture the complexity of the great powers' Cold War confrontation in Istanbul and the non-state criminal actor's/SPECTRE's role in the conflict, the smoke-fire metaphor can appropriately encapsulate the imagination and reality of "enemies from the East" in the Bond series: the enemies are naturally among these perpetual aliens. Asians are often presented as undesirable residents in Western popular culture and literature. The "Yellow Peril" has plagued literary works from the Victorian age to modern times. For instance, in their 1851 essay, Charles Dickens and Richard Horne praised the magnificent British exhibition at the Crystal Palace and in contrast mocked the "extraordinary littleness" of the Chinese display in London prior to the Great Exhibition (Kou 2008, 204). They compared the "greatness of the English results" with Chinese hand-carved ivory jewellery balls that "have made no advance and been of no earthly use for thousands of years"

and decided that the Chinese artefacts in display represented "a glory of yellow jaundice" (Dickens and Horne 1851: 358). The hostile view towards Asians continued in early twentieth century popular culture. Arthur Sarsfield's (Sax Rohmer) Dr. Fu Manchu was described as "the Yellow Peril incarnate in one man" (Lovell 2014, n.p.). Mr. Moto, a Japanese detective created by John Marquand, was "small, delicate, and almost fragile" (Marquand 1938, 155). Moto's distinct "oriental manner" illustrate a clear racial prejudice (Black, 14).

In reality, many jurisdictions historically limited or banned Asian immigration. For example, the US Immigration Act of 1924 prohibited immigration from Asia following the Chinese Exclusion Act 1882; the White Australian policy (1901) denied people of non-European descent, mainly Asian and Pacific Islanders, from immigrating to Australia (Britannica 2020, n.p.); while the New Zealand Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1920 restricted Indians and other non-white British subjects entering New Zealand (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2020, n.p.). During the Cold War, the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and, in particular, Britain's regional confrontation of Chinese-supported communist expansion in Malaya and Indonesia in the 1960s, supplied Fleming's fiction and the James Bond film series with sufficient enemy sources with Asian antecedents (Black, 4). After the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a diplomatic *détente* marked by improved bilateral relations and a series of de-escalating nuclear arms treaties (Onion, Sullivan, and Mullen 2022, n.p.). While the Western tensions with the Soviet Union eased, the threat of a communist China came into focus in both Western policy-makers and the public's eyes. The Sino-Soviet split (1961) over ideology and geo-political interests, coupled with the radical Cultural Revolution, increased the perception of China as a dangerous adversary bent on destroying Western political systems, economic norms, and lifestyles. China successfully tested its first atomic bomb in 1964 and first hydrogen bomb in 1967. The acquisition of nuclear capability further demonstrated China's early ascension to superpower status and its independence from the Soviet bloc, making China an unpredictable and imminent threat to the stability that was precariously papered-over in the improvement in Soviet-American relations after the Cuba crisis.

The early Bond film series, in particular, signalled the growing concerns over China's nuclear ambition and the perceived communist expansion led by Mao's China. Dr. Julius No, a German-Chinese criminal scientist working for SPECTRE, was Ian Fleming's re-imagining of a Cold War Dr. Fu Manchu. No and Fu share similar features: they are both physically repulsive, very "tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered" (Rohmer 1994: 129); and they are both mentally repul-

sive and possess "a mania for power" (Fleming 2002, 343). In *Goldfinger* (1964), it is the Chinese government who supplies the villain Goldfinger with an atomic device to contaminate American gold reserves. Were Goldfinger's plan to succeed, it is implied that China will gain strategic advantage from the economic chaos in the West, while Goldfinger's own gold would significantly increase in value. Though not detail-accurate, the costume of Goldfinger's henchmen resembles the Chinese army's uniform, suggesting Chinese government support. Additionally, the Chinese nuclear expert Mr. Ling (speaking standard English) reminds the audience of the first generation of Chinese nuclear physicists – the most famous of whom, Dr. Qian Xuesen, was trained in the United States and returned to China in 1955 after much diplomatic manoeuvring. In *Thunderball* (1965), SPECTRE works closely with China to distribute Chinese narcotics across Western countries; while *The Man with the Golden Gun* also suggests that China is supporting the transnational criminal activities of the film's main antagonist, Francisco Scaramanga, in his pursuit to undermine the West.

Other than the ever-present threat of "Red China" lurking in the background, Bond also encounters many other Asian enemies outright. Numerous henchpeople are depicted as having Asian origins (though sometimes unspecified), such as Cha in *Moonraker* (1979) and Pan Ho in *A View to a Kill*. The ethnic background of these minor villains largely reflects Western perceptions of Asian peoples and states. For example, Koreans gained a reputation for cruelty due to their treatment of British prisoners of war during WWII when many Koreans served in the Japanese army under Japanese colonial assimilation policy (Black, 15). Oddjob, Goldfinger's primary henchman, is presented as a quiet, exotic, and dangerous enemy; he wears a razor-edged bowler hat as his signature weapon, and he is an extremely strong and effective killer. In Fleming's novel, Oddjob's nationality is less ambiguous. He is described as a "chunky flat-faced Japanese, or more probably Korean, with a wild, almost mad glare in dramatically slanting eyes that belonged in a Japanese film rather than in a Rolls Royce on a sunny afternoon in Kent" (Fleming, 496). The novel later reveals that Oddjob is indeed Korean, and his cruelty is further accentuated when the reader is told that his "Korean's eyes gleamed" at the prospect of eating a cat for dinner (ibid., 508). *The Man with the Golden Gun* sees Bond travel to Hong Kong, Macau, and Thailand, where a number of opponents of diverse Asian ancestries are presented throughout, including Thai fighters, the murderous Thai entrepreneur Hai Fat, Japanese samurai wrestlers, and the Chinese military. *Die Another Day* establishes North Korea as Bond's (and the West's) primary enemy: North Korean Colonel Moon

trades weapons for African conflict diamonds in order to build a new orbital mirror satellite which he will use to concentrate the sun's light and cut a path through the Korean Demilitarised Zone, allowing North Korea's army to march on and conquer the South. Additionally, even in the absence of specifically Asian characters, Bond's nemeses often adopt distinctly Asian motifs: *No Time to Die*'s (2021) Lyutsifer Safin is Russian, but he keeps a Japanese garden and often wears traditional Japanese clothing; his base is also decorated in Japanese traditional style with tatami mats lining the floor; and when we first see him he is wearing a Japanese Noh mask.

ASIANS AS ALLIES: "I LIKE YOU BETTER WITHOUT YOUR BERETTA"

Skyfall invites the audience to join Bond in the breathtakingly modern Shanghai and a glamorous Macau casino. In a romantic engagement with a French-Chinese-Cambodian woman named Sévérine, James Bond says seductively: "I like you better without your Beretta", in a comment that recalls an earlier scene between the two. Bond sadly loses Sévérine to Raoul Silva's bullet shortly after, but he has found many Asian allies throughout the film series. For example, Lieutenant Hip from MI6 helps Bond to shake off the Hong Kong police after a suspicious death in *The Man with the Golden Gun*. He and his two Mandarin-speaking and karate-trained nieces further assist Bond in Thailand. In *A View to a Kill*, CIA agent Chuck Lee shares some useful information with Bond in San Francisco.

The two major national Asian allies presented as geopolitical "friendly" to Bond and to Britain's campaigns throughout the film series appear to be Japan in the 1960s and China since the 1990s. One reason for this, perhaps, is the fact that the Bond films have increasingly accommodated for the growing Chinese cinema market and other Asian markets, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia, which contribute enormously to the Bond series' continuous financial success (Beaumont-Thomas 2014, n.p.). After Japan's defeat in WWII, the American-led Allied Occupation and Reconstruction (1945-52) brought fundamental changes to Japanese government and society, from demilitarisation to a new constitution. Nevertheless, the Americans became concerned that a weak post-War Japanese economy would increase the domestic communist influence following Mao's communist victory against Chiang Kai-shek's troops in the Chinese Civil War (1945-49) (Office of the Historian a, n.p.). The Korean War provided Japan with an opportunity to become a major supply depot for the United Nations forces, which greatly stimulated Japanese economy. The military campaign in Korea also placed Japan within the US defence umbrella, reinforced by the 1951 US-Japan security Treaty. These arrangements transformed Japan from a

defeated post-war state to a stalwart Western ally ready to fight against communist expansion in East Asia, and facilitated Japan's economic success from the 1960s. For instance, Japan's technological rise and its status as an ally of the West was first signalled in the Bond series in *You Only Live Twice*, in which Bond's operation is assisted by the field agents and the Head of the Japanese Secret Service, who apparently are in regular collaboration with M of MI6. Bond also admires the advanced technology used by the Japanese intelligence service; although, as the film makes clear, it is Bond's prowess, and not the impressive might of Japanese technology, that ultimately saves the day from SPECTRE's transnationalist criminal minds.

Later, the escalation of the Vietnam War compelled the American government to seek improved relationships with communist regimes in Asia, to not only isolate North Vietnam but to also increase the space for strategic manoeuvres against the Soviet Union (Office of the Historian b, n.p.). The tension arising from the Sino-Soviet split and their border conflicts also motivated China to ease its hostility towards the United States. President Richard Nixon's visit to China and the signing of Shanghai Communiqué in 1972 marked the Chinese-American diplomatic *rapprochement*, which led to the normalisation of the bilateral relations in 1979. Deng Xiaoping's policy of "Reforming and Opening Up" in 1978 underpinned decades of economic growth and pragmatic peaceful co-existence with Western democracies. At the turn of the twenty-first century, China has achieved great economic results, with an average nine percent annual GDP growth and 800 million people being lifted out of poverty (The World Bank 2022, n.p.). Echoing these geopolitical and economic changes, the Bond film series has rarely presented ethnic Chinese villains or villainised the Chinese Government since the late 1970s.

The Clinton administration (1993-2001) also later adopted a policy of engagement with China, and Western democracies expected China to transition to a more open and liberal state through trade, investment, and other transnational relations. Jiang Zemin and Clinton's summits hailed the oncoming of a constructive strategic partnership between the two countries that marked a high point of Western relations with China. Indeed, in *Tomorrow Never Dies* audiences witness Chinese and British agents working together for the first time to successfully restore the peaceful relationship between the two countries: James Bond and Wai Lin, a Chinese security agent, jointly thwart Elliot Carver and his multinational news corporation from causing global catastrophe, including a potential conflict between China and Britain and a political coup in China. Nevertheless, the West's

alliance with Asian powers is often complicated with occasional tension and competition. In *You Only Live Twice*, for instance, when Tanaka says "I imagine that your Mr. M in London has a similar arrangement [that is, a private underground train for transportation]", Bond lies to save face: "M? Oh, yes, but of course". In *Die Another Day*, Mr. Chang, a Chinese Intelligence officer disguised as a hotel manager in Hong Kong, tries to obtain compromising photos of Bond and a masseuse (secretly, another Chinese Intelligence agent), and after the failed attempt he warns Bond that "Hong Kong is our turf now." Bond re-assures him: "I'm not here to take it back". After an endorsement from Beijing, Chang provides Bond with information, air tickets, cash, and a British passport for travel, while Bond promises to eliminate the North Korean terrorist who disrupted a peace summit between South Korea and China. *Skyfall* also reveals a certain British-Chinese intelligence arrangement and makes specific reference to a Chinese human rights violation: we learn that, in exchange for six British agents, M trades with the Chinese government a rogue MI6 agent, Silva, who has hacked a Chinese network, after which the Chinese Secret Service torture Silva.

THE ASIANS ACCORDING TO BOND

The geopolitics of the Bond universe often reflect current international relations. From the bi-polar confrontation during the Cold War to a multi-polar world and the rise of Asia, the James Bond film series places the iconic MI6 agent in an environment that is familiar and resonates with its audience. Yet this very resonance suggests some underlying challenges for international relations scholars and policy makers. The films, as well as many other popular cultural media in Western countries, provide a largely stereotypical and reductionist view of Asia and of Asian life. This cinematic production narrows audiences' experiences and understandings of Asia to the stereotypical Asian images such as crowded Thai marketplaces, shabby Vietnamese housing, Japanese high-rise technology, curry-loving Indians, and the communist-loving Chinese. In reality, the Asia Pacific region hosts diverse civilisations and communities. Asian culture in Bond's eyes is infused by a certain mystifying "Otherness" that can easily be co-opted by nefarious international villains. The Bond film franchise often overly emphasises the culturalist or normative perspectives of Asian communities in order to decide who the aliens, enemies, and allies are, however much of a miscalculation this represents. For example, in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, American policy makers misconstrued Chinese willingness to support and sustain North Korea and North Vietnam (cf. Baritz 1985). As Friederich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie point out, "in the international arena, neither the processes whereby

knowledge becomes more extensive nor the means whereby reflection on knowledge deepens are passive or automatic. They are intensely political" (1986, 773). That is to say, policymakers must appreciate that there is not a direct line from cultural norms to policy output. Informed by cultural values, foreign policy is the product of political processes and bargaining. For instance, Japan's post-war pacifist culture does not eliminate different interpretations of Article 9 of its Constitution. Chinese and Indian cultural differences do not necessarily explain their persistent border disputes in the Himalayan region. Chinese perceptions of cultural superiority over Vietnam did not guarantee its victory in the 1979 border conflict. While it is evident that policymakers and scholars should be aware and consider the implications of these issues, it behooves us to ponder how we produce foreign policy knowledge and interpretative stances: alien, enemies, and allies in international relations are never as clear and one-dimensional as in Bond's world. Related to this reductionist view of Asian culture, values, and villainy is the lack of a more nuanced interpretation of Chinese foreign policy and life in the Bond films. Works such as Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931) and Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* (1937) fostered Western public sympathy and a positive interpretation of Chinese life and Chinese leadership in the 1930s, which later contributed to the political discourses of the benefits and moral imperatives of having the Chinese alliance in WWII Pacific theatre. Despite the temporary war alliance, through the 1950s to the 1970s, the Western perception of China was overall fearful and negative. The dominant perception of China both in policy and public circles was that set out, for instance, in such films as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), with its depiction of multitudes of ideologically-indoctrinated Red Guards brainwashing and torturing with evil intent.

Given the pragmatic shift in Chinese policy making over the past several decades, there has been a tendency to reduce Chinese foreign policy to the objectives of securing economic growth domestically and expanding international influence through trade, finance, and international institutions – just as the Bond films have increasingly presented their audiences with images of Chinese modernity. These elements are wound up in the decades-long policy of "peaceful rise" outlined by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s (cf. He and Liu 2020). Yet these material motivations seem unable to adequately explain Chinese domestic and foreign policy over the past ten years. Western policy makers must clearly weigh both the material and ideational aspects of Chinese foreign policy. This nuance would better enable policymakers to identify areas of common interest where cooperation can be extended while better recognising the normative or

ideological premises and commitments that may make policy compromise difficult for the Chinese leadership.

CONCLUSION

The "meaning" of Asian images is oversimplified in the James Bond film series. Asian people are perpetual aliens, speaking poor English and living exotic lives. Asian cities are either blessed with technological development (such as Japan and China after the 1990s) or remain Third-World in appearance (most Southeast and South Asian cities). The Asian alien-ness marks a clear differentiation between "us" and the "other" in Bond's definitional world, and further leads to the imagination of stereotypical "enemies": those Asian countries under the influence of communism that pose significant threat to the West. The identification of Asian allies seems problematic as well; Bond's culturalist and reductionist perspective of Asian communities is insufficient to capture the dynamics of real-life power and politics. The limitation of James Bond's understanding of Asia, then, reflects our current foreign policy thoughts and practices towards the Asia Pacific and especially in response to China's economic and military rise. Both the Bond franchise and real-world policy makers should look beyond the dichotomy of Asia policy that is either identifying Asia (and, in particular, China) as "aliens" or "enemies" based on the over-emphasised ideological differences; or by blindly accepting their "ally" status merely because of economic incentives – be they box office or trade balance. Indeed, it is admirable that the Bond film series adopts a global perspective to consider the transnational nature of both the traditional and non-traditional security issues, and the films also highlight the importance of individuals and groups in international relations instead of taking a conventional statist approach. Nevertheless, when he meets the diversity and complexity of Asian states and societies, James Bond will have to try harder in his future espionage endeavours.

REFERENCES

A View to a Kill. 1985. Dir. John Glen. Eon Productions.

Baritz, Loren. 1985. *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did.* New York: W. Morrow.

Bennett, Tony and Janet Woollacott. 2009. "The Moments of Bond". In *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 13-33.

Beaumont-Thomas, Ben. 2014. "John Cleese: James Bond Lost Humour to Please Asian Markets". *The Guardian*, 24 June. https://www.theguardian.com/

film/2014/jun/24/john-cleese-james-bond-humour-asian-markets-bourne. Accessed 1 November 2022.

Black, Jeremy. 2017. *The World of James Bond: The Lives and Times of 007*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Britannica. 2020. "White Australia Policy". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 24 November. https://www.britannica.com/event/White-Australia-Policy. Accessed 10 November 2022.

Chapman, James. 2005. "Bond and Britishness". In *Ian Fleming and James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007*, ed. Edward P. Comentale, Stephen Watt, and Skip Willman. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press: 129-143.

Chapman, James. 2009. "A Licence to Thrill". In *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 109-116.

Dick, Bernard F. 2016. *The Screen Is Red: Hollywood, Communism and the Cold War*. Jackson. MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Dickens, Charles and Richard H. Horne. 1851. "The Great Exhibition and the Little One". *Household Words* 3(67): 356-360.

Die Another Day. 2002. Dir. Lee Tamahori. Eon Productions.

Dodds, Klaus. 2005. "Screening Geopolitics: James Bond and the Early Cold War Films (1962-1967)". *Geopolitics* 10(2): 266-289.

Douthat, Ross. 2021. "James Bond Has No Time for China". *The New York Times*, 16 October. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/16/opinion/james-bond-china.html. Accessed 28 October 2022.

Dr No. 1962. Dir. Terence Young. Eon Productions.

Earnest, David C. and James N. Rosenau. 2000. "The Spy Who Loved Globalization". *Foreign Policy* 120: 88-90.

Eco, Umberto. 2009. "Narrative Structures in Fleming". In *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 34-55.

Fleming, Ian. 2002. *From Russia with Love, Dr No, and Goldfinger*. London: Penguin.

From Russia with Love. 1963. Dir. Terence Young. Eon Productions.

Funnell, Lisa and Klaus Dodds. 2017. *Geographies, Genders, and Geopolitics of James Bond.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gehrig, Sebastian. 2019. "A Second Evil Empire: The James Bond Series, 'Red China', and Cold War Cinema". *International Journal of James Bond Studies* 2(1): 1-22. DOI: 10.24877/jbs.45.

Goldfinger. 1964. Dir. Guy Hamilton. Eon Productions.
Grant, Matthew and Benjamin Ziemann. 2016. "Introduction: The Cold War as an Imaginary War." In *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought and Nuclear Conflict, 1945-90,* eds. Matthew Grant and Benjamin Ziemann. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1-29.
He, Kai and Feng Liu. 2020 "China's Peaceful Rise: From Narrative to Practice". In *The Oxford Handbook of Peaceful Change in International Relations*, eds. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, Harold A. Trinkunas, Anders Wivel, and Ralf Emmers. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 445-462.
Hochscherf, Tobias. 2013. "Bond for the Age of Global Crises: 007 in the Daniel Craig Era". *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10(2): 298-320.
Hune, Shirley. 1989. "Expanding the International Dimension of Asian American Studies". *Amerasia Journal*. January: xix-xxiv.
Iriye, Akira. 1979. "Culture and Power: International Relations as Intercultural Relations". *Diplomatic History* 3(2): 115-128.
Iriye, Akira. 2004. "Culture and International History". In *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations, 2nd*, eds. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 241-256.
Johnston, Alastair I. 1995. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Jones, Huw D. and Andrew Higson. 2020. "Rebooted Bond: The Transnational Appeal of the Daniel Craig James Bond Films"" In *The Cultural Life of James Bond: Specters of 007*, ed. Jaap Verheul. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University: 103-126.
Khosrowjah, Hossein. 2011. "A Brief History of Area Studies and International Studies". *Arab Studies Quarterly* 33(3/4): 131-142.
Kou, Han. 2008. ""The Great Exhibition and the Little One': Chinese Display in Victorian London". *Otemae Journal* 8: 203-217.
Kratochwil, Friedrich and John Gerard Ruggie. 1986. "International Organization: A State of the Art on the Art of the State". *International Organization* 40(4): 753-775.
Lovell, Julia. 2014. "The Yellow Peril: Dr Fu Manchu & the Rise of Chinaphobia by Christopher Frayling – Review". *The Guardian*, 30 October. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/30/yellow-peril-dr-fu-manchu-rise-of-chinaphobia-christopher-frayling-review. Accessed 5 November 2022.
Marquand, John P. 1938. *Mr. Moto's Three Aces: A John P. Marquand Omnibus*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Ministry for Culture and Heritage. 2020. "White New Zealand policy introduced." *New Zealand History*, 14 September https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/white-new-zealand-policy-introduced. Accessed 3 November 2022.

Moonraker. 1979. Dir. Lewis Gilbert. Eon Productions.

No Time to Die. 2021. Dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga. Eon Productions.

Octopussy. 1983. Dir. John Glen. Eon Productions.

Office of the Historian a. "Occupation and Reconstruction of Japan, 1945–52". U.S. Department of State. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/japan-reconstruction. Accessed 5 November 2022.

Office of the Historian b. "Rapprochement with China, 1972." U.S. Department of State. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/rapprochement-china. Accessed 5 November 2022.

Onion, Amanda, Missy Sullivan and Matt Mullen. 2022. "Détente". *History*, 11 October. https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/detente. Accessed 1 November 2022.

Palmer, Brandon. 2007. "Imperial Japan's Preparations to Conscript Koreans as Soldiers, 1942-1945". *Korean Studies* 31: 63-78.

Perlman, Allison. 2020. "Hollywood Blacklist". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 28 January. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hollywood-blacklist. Accessed 1 November 2022.

Pua, Phoebe and Mie Hiramoto. 2018. "Mediatization of East Asia in James Bond Films". *Discourse, Context & Media* 23: 6-15.

Reese, Sarah J. 2003. "James Bond as a Mirror of U.S.-British Relations". *The Chronical of Higher Education*, 8 January. https://www.chronicle.com/article/james-bond-as-a-mirror-of-u-s-british-relations/. Accessed 29 October 2022.

Rohmer, Sax. 1994.*The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=nlebk&AN=2009608&site=ehost-live&scope=site. Accessed 10 November 2022.

Schrecker, Ellen. 2004. "McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism". *Social Research* 71(4): 1041-1086.

Skyfall. 2012. Dir. Sam Mendes. Eon Productions.

Shaw, Tony and Denise J. Youngblood. 2010. *Cinematic Cold War. The American and Soviet struggle for Hearts and Minds*. Lawrence: Kansas University Press.

Smith, James. 2016. "'How Safe Do You Feel?' James Bond, *Skyfall*, and the Politics of the Secret Agent in an Age of Ubiquitous Threat". *College Literature* 43(1): 145-172.

The Man with the Golden Gun. 1974. Dir. Guy Hamilton. Eon Productions.

The World Bank. 2022. "Overview". *The Work Band in China*. 29 September. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview. Accessed 2 November 2022.

Tomorrow Never Dies. 1997. Dir. Roger Spottiswoode. Eon Productions.

You Only Live Twice. 1967. Dir. Lewis Gilbert. Eon Productions.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2010. "What Cold War in Asia? An Interpretative Essay". In *The Cold War in Asia: The Battle for Hearts and Minds*, eds. Zheng Yangwen, Hong Lu, and Michael Szonyi. Leiden and Boston: Brill: 13-24.