

American Film Industry: Shaping Global Perceptions?

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ABSTRACT

The hegemony of the United States extends its influence across the globe, shaping political, economic, and cultural landscapes. Americanization and imperialism have propelled American culture worldwide, with Hollywood movies serving as a significant tool of cultural dissemination. The economic dominance of the U.S. in the film industry plays a pivotal role in shaping global perceptions of the country. This article delves into the mechanisms through which Americanization and imperialism exert control over the film industry to promote their cultural narratives. Furthermore, by examining the perspectives of various scholars, this article concludes that while the U.S. wields significant influence over the film industry through imperialism, it may not fundamentally alter international perceptions of the nation.

KEYWORDS

Americanization; Imperialism; Film Industry; Global Perceptions.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the new century, the United States has mastered tremendous power and has a central position in the structure of globalization. This kind of hegemony helps the United States export its culture, conquering other country's cultures. Americanization and American imperialism have sent American culture to the world, and movies are the primary medium for American cultural export. The United States controls and dominates the global film industry, with Hollywood as the center. Can the economic control of the film industry in the United States allow it to control the perception of the United States by global audiences? In other words, can Americanization or American imperialism control the global audience's view of the United States through cultural output? There is a view that the export of American culture will control people's perception of the United States. This article does not agree with this view. It will demonstrate that the economic control of the film industry in the United States can successfully carry out cultural export. Nevertheless, it still cannot control the audience's perception of the United States.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, scholars have increasingly delved into the phenomenon of the United States wielding cultural hegemony through its economy and film industry, examining its repercussions on the global cultural landscape. The United States as the foremost global player, not only shaping political and economic domains but also significantly influencing the world's cultural sphere^[1]. Hollywood's film exports serve as a prominent avenue through which the United States asserts its dominance in the global cultural industry. Some researches underscore how Hollywood productions, exemplified by

the Marvel series, adeptly traverse cultural boundaries, disseminating the American ethos worldwide by integrating diverse cultural elements into cinematic narratives^[2]. As the primary recipient of Hollywood exports, China has reciprocated by infusing American films with indigenous elements to resonate with Chinese audiences. While some scholars argue that American movies propagate ideals like the American Dream and individual heroism, garnering widespread acclaim, others contend that cinematic output alone fails to fundamentally alter societal values. This article will start from American imperialism and Americanization, analyze how Hollywood conducts cultural exports under American economic control, and finally draw the final conclusion by analyzing China's views on Hollywood movies.

3. ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS

3.1. Americanization

The process of Americanization can also be described as the process of modernization. The United States has played a role in the minds and cultures of people worldwide^[9]. The United States has constructed its image and fantasy in people's minds around the world. Before the middle of the 20th century, Americanization refers to the process in which foreign immigrants came to the United States to learn the American way of life and habits of thinking and gradually become Americans. After that, Americanization usually refers to the influence of American culture on one's own culture ^[9]. Americanization cannot be separated from American imperialism. American imperialism is a subjective assumption, and Americanization is an objective process to realize it ^[3]. In the process of Americanization, the United States has occupied a central position in the world, which can be called an empire. The role of the United States is comparable to that of Rome in the days of the Roman Empire. The United States has become a center of communication, and it can control the world's online information exchange. American cultural products are exported to all corners of the world, conveying the American way of life and cultural outlook to the world. Moreover, the United States has a minimal understanding of the culture of other countries, and they only care whether their own culture is understood by the world^[5].

3.2. The Trinity of American Imperialism

The influence of the United States is enormous, and this kind of influence can also be called imperialism. American imperialism can be divided into three parts, political imperialism, economic imperialism, and cultural imperialism^[3]. These three types of imperialism are concentrated in different fields, clearly divided conceptually. These three types of imperialism have many overlaps. For example, the United States is the new hegemon in the Western political world. It proposed and released the Marshall Plan, which changed the market structure and trade model. This plan opened the door to the world market, and American products were able to enter the world market smoothly. Thus, political imperialism helps the development of economic imperialism. The entry of the United States into the world market also means that there are more ways to export American cultural products, such as Hollywood movies. Economic imperialism can therefore be transformed into cultural imperialism. And the export of American cultural products, such as American cars, Hollywood movies, and fashion brands, as the carriers of the "American Dream," can all serve as American cultural ambassadors^[5]. Consequently, the export trade of cultural products has turned into political imperialism in a continuous cycle. American cultural product exports and exchanges demonstrate the power of American culture and make consumers feel envious of American culture. The American cultural products are exported with popularization in mind, and it satisfies the preferences of most consumers. When popularization takes root in the people's hearts, it will strengthen the influence of the United States. This influence will become very powerful and will invisibly consolidate American imperialism. Moreover, American imperialism gives the United States the right to speak in the world economic organization, and the United States essentially directs the international financial

organization^[7]. Such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund . These institutions helped the American gain hegemony and export its culture. For example, McDonald's and Hollywood movies are popular in many countries. In general, American imperialism spread American cultural products worldwide, transmitting the American way of life and artistic ideas to the whole world.

3.3. Hollywood's Global Cultural Dominance

3.3.1. U.S. Dominance in Film Industry

As mentioned earlier, American imperialism has accelerated the spread of American culture overseas. The film industry is the core of American cultural exports^[8]. The American film industry is centered on Hollywood and radiates in the world. American imperialism also allowed the United States to control Hollywood and the world's film industry. Every country in the world will not leave the film industry when formulating cultural policies. Even the government will spend a lot of money maintaining the film industry. Films have a tremendous cultural value. However, the development of cultural industries in each country must be carried out under the background that the culture of the American cultural industries occupies a central position. The United States plays a leading role in the world's cultural sector, and actively participates in constructing the world's cultural industry, especially in the film industry. One of the principals means by which American imperialism exports culture is movies. The Hollywood system has established a global industrial framework for the film industry. The world film industry under the Hollywood system involves the production of films and the distribution and marketing of films. Thus, making a movie requires a lot of money. Furthermore, American imperialism has brought much money to the United States, which has become a good guarantee for the American film industry^[8]. Therefore, the United States controls and dominates the global film industry with Hollywood as the center and exports its culture to the world.

3.3.2. The Factors Driving America's Film Industry Dominance

Four reasons can explain the dominance of the American film industry in global films. The first is that Hollywood has gathered the world's top film talents. The Hollywood film network in the United States is the most comprehensive globally. It has many production resources, such as movie stars, directors, and producers. Second, the mature distribution system of American films has rejected foreign films from entering the U.S. market and has made American films a great success overseas. The global film distribution market is almost controlled by the United States, with its market share exceeding 50%. Therefore, American films can successfully convey culture to audiences around the world. Hollywood movies would not be as successful without this mature distribution system as they are now. For example, the United States has a significant influence on 007 movies. Bond films must follow Hollywood's film system. To supervise the production of the 007 series of films, the British production company Eon Productions was established . However, the company was founded by two Americans, and the Americans dominated the actual shooting, production, and distribution process. The distributor of Bond Films is one of Hollywood's famous distributors-United Artists Company . In the film industry, distributors are indispensable members. Several major companies in Hollywood in the United States control the distribution rights, so they can also indirectly control Hollywood and the world film market for cultural output. Another critical factor in the global dominance of the American film industry is the role of cultural policy. The strength of Hollywood is inseparable from the encouragement of various cultural policies of the American government. For example, in 1946, the United States established the American Film Export Association^[10]. The purpose of establishing this institution is to ensure the level of film production and ensure successful distribution abroad. This ensures the leading position of American movies, and other countries can only follow behind the United States. For this reason, the United States can consolidate and strengthen its control over global film distribution through Hollywood. In summary, the great economic power of the United States

provided a guarantee for the production of movies, and it controlled Hollywood and the world film market. Hollywood's advantage allows American culture to spread quickly to all corners of the world.

3.4. The Impact of American Cinema on Audiences

3.4.1. Cultural Values Exported by Hollywood Films

In developing countries, Hollywood movies play an important role in portraying the lives of Americans. Movie fans in these developing countries, especially Asian fans, regard Hollywood movies as their eyes to understand the United States. Therefore, Asian audiences have different emotions towards Hollywood movies. Hollywood has always been the most powerful tool for the export of American culture, especially in developing countries. The influence of Hollywood on audiences is undeniable. Hollywood movies export American culture through two structures. The first structure is to embody the American spirit through film stories. The second structure is to magnify the personal hero myth. Hollywood movies portray an incredible paradise. There, people are free, equal, harmonious, and friendly. The hero will help people uphold justice. The wishes and dreams of American heroes in the movie represent the wishes and dreams of people all over the world. American holidays no longer belong to the United States; they belong worldwide. In the movie, issues such as rich and poor, class, race all questions disappear. This is an act of deception, an illusion rooted in the audience's minds. Hollywood movies portray a beautiful dream and a perfect myth.

3.4.2. Chinese Perceptions of Hollywood Films

In China, there are usually two views on Hollywood movies. The first point is that movies from Hollywood are welcome. Hollywood movies' culture and filming techniques can be learned. First of all, China's film industry can imitate and learn to promote the country's film industry^[8]. Second, Chinese film producers and distributors can learn advanced marketing concepts. Third, Chinese audiences can learn about foreign lifestyles and cultural concepts through movies. This part of the audience has accepted Hollywood movies, whether external filming techniques, marketing methods, or internal American culture. They already have a certain degree of fascination with Hollywood movies. This is the purpose of American cultural export through the film to feel the culture promoted by the United States and support and agree with it. Different from the first position, some viewers believe that the entry of Hollywood films into the Chinese market will bring challenges to local culture, and the national film industry will not develop well. Hollywood's cultural export is essentially an imperialist cultural invasion. Hollywood's cultural export is a kind of imperialist expansion and promotes American exceptionalism . For example, in Hollywood movies, Americans always act as the world's saviors, and American dreams are also regarded as dreams of the world. This part of the audience saw the harmful side of American culture, such as sex, violence, display of wealth, and personal heroism. These factors are pervasive in Hollywood movies. However, American culture did not paralyze the audience's mind^[11]. These audiences saw the problems in American culture and raised their voices of opposition. Those audiences who welcome Hollywood movies are not blindly following American culture. They find valuable parts in the movies to learn from them and eliminate harmful components. Therefore, this part of the audience will not be entirely manipulated by the United States. Everyone will make judgments and choices based on their cultural background. To conclude, as the most important means of American cultural export, Hollywood movies have successfully exported culture to the world audience. Audiences have discovered the harmful side of American culture. They will not blindly follow American culture because of the movie.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Americanization and American imperialism are interdependent, and American economic imperialism controls Hollywood and the world film market. The United States can transmit its own culture to the world through Hollywood movies. This article argues that the economic control

of the film industry by the United States cannot lead to its control of global audiences' perceptions of the United States. The robust economic power of the United States allows it to control Hollywood and the world film market, which enables American culture to be delivered to the world. But the audience is not paralyzed by these movies. They can distinguish the good from the foreign culture instead of blindly following the United States. All in all, the United States' economic control of the film industry can successfully carry out cultural output and penetration, but they cannot control the audience's thoughts. Audiences of different cultural backgrounds will have different perspectives to interpret American culture and distinguish between good and evil.

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