

# Hollywood and the rise of cultural protectionism media essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

As suggested by Elsaesser, 2005 Hollywood has been used to refer to various artistic goods from the United States of America that are very popular and well known globally. These products include TV programs, films, music as well as a number of world-wide broadcasters for instance CNN, MTV and Disney. The achievement of Hollywood is unquestionable; in 1998 the 39 films deemed to top the list of popularity and successes were of America origin. On the same note Hollywood in Europe has made the home movie industries struggle to hold even 30% of their nationwide market share. The issue of America's cultural influence is conceivably felt most profoundly in France, where President Jacques Chirac said in 1999 that France refused "to consider cultural products like ordinary goods, subject solely to the law of the market." (Scott, 2000) Additionally, other countries as far as Middle East and Asia and Africa are also feeling the American cultural influence as a result of Hollywood.

This attitude is reflected in large subsidies to French creative industries and in laws which limit the amount of foreign material on television and in cinemas. Such cultural protectionism with no doubt has been deemed to be a burning issue in the World Trade Organization negotiations and is attributed to such activities as government sponsoring international broadcasting internationally in order to counter the American media perspective.

The major examples of American films that influence culture in political philosophy, economic philosophy, social structure, education, religion and language include Air Force One, Cruel Intention, The Associate, Passion of Christ and Rush Hour in that order (Bruner, 2008).

On this background, the essay is a critical examination of aspects of culture as being invisible, and using Hofstede's and Trompenaars definition the aspects of culture being promoted by Hollywood films are discussed. Similarly the various ways Hollywood films affect cultural values of people outside US are brought to light. Finally, the essay examines the issue of protectionism declining or being seen as insignificant. Discussions on whether countries should use protectionism or not to support their domestic film industries are also discussed. In the same line of reasoning, the paper brings forth other cultural industries that need protection from the government.

#### Aspects of culture that Hollywood films promote around the world

According to Hofstede's definition of culture, he said that culture is mind software that ensures that it guides each individual in his or her daily interaction (Hofstede, 2001). He said that the entire individual carries with them a pattern of thinking, feeling and the way in which they act that has been learned through their lifetime experience. Much of what one has in life is acquired in one's childhood due to persistence learning of certain aspects and the assimilation of some ideas. Therefore, as some of the thinking has been instilled in one's minds, it changes one's way of thinking and acting in his/her environment. Therefore, if such is required to be reverted, a lot more has to be done as it is very difficult to change the effect one has conceived for a longer period than learning them in the first time.

Trompenaar in his attempt to define what culture holds came up with different dimensions that affect the culture. Therefore, this cultural dimension will be

explored in regard with the effect that has been brought by the Hollywood films.

Hollywood film has promoted different aspects of culture around that world in various films that they have produced. Though they have experienced many critics, their effects are paramount and cannot be ignored.

Some of the cultural effect that the film has brought in the face of the world is political philosophy through their film Air Force 1. This film shows the capacity that the united state has in curbing terrorism. It brings about a vision where the government of US has great ability to fight about the terrorism in its own capacity undermining the strength of such government like Kazakhstan (Peer ally, A. 2008).

The Hollywood film has a great effect on economic philosophy in the world through their films such as Cruel Intentions and The Pursuit of Happiness. Both the films show how economical crisis can lead to breakage of relationship and lack of enough resource can lead to engaging in vices as Cruel Intention postulate. Through these films, Hollywood has put a great impact on those people who are economically stable to be sited to have other wicked ways as being deceitful to their counterparts and taking advantage of the poor ones.

The film has also made a lot of impact on social structure. Such movies as The Associates and Pretty Woman have been at the stage of culture diversification (Gudykunst & Kim 1997). The film shows the level at which one is changed after meeting with other people no matter their caliber. The film shows people being able to change their working condition at taking <https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>

time to socialization. The film is able to enhance the male social responsibility towards their female culprits when they are in time of danger.

The Hollywood films have been equivocal in the nature of the impact they have had towards education. *Dead Poets Society* and *Little Miss Sunshine* are among the films that have been directed towards affecting the education. For example, in a *Dead Poet Society* film, the culture of education is portrayed as parent being so conservative in most of the world (Peerally 2008). This is where the parents decide on what their children are supposed to pursue in their academic future yet their children have different perspective, which should be respected according to their talents. These are some of the things that most of the communities are fighting across the globe. Therefore, the film has brought a lot of sensation on such education culture.

Religion has also been in the receiving end through Hollywood films such as *The Passion of Christ* and the *Love Guru* film. *Passion of Christ* film has been the most controversial film that has received a lot of resistance especially in the Muslim world. This has to some extent been banned to be viewed in countries where Islam religion is rampant. This is because it has been viewed as to support Christian and by the people viewing it, they it will cause religious upgrade which is one sided. This is by purporting one faith and ignoring the Islamic religion. To the Christian world, it has contributed to the culture of religion and has been rampant in the idea of strengthening Christianity.

Language has not been left behind as one of the aspects that have been affected by

Hollywood films. Rush Hour and Borat: Cultural Learning of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan among other films has been in the forefront in the language diversification. The Borat show how the Kazakhstan girl changes her village after marriage to a US man. She is able to learn different language that helps her to bring many changes in her village including technology. Though this film was held with mixed reaction, it has made a lot of impact on the people around the globe.

How Hollywood film has affected cultural values of other nations

The film has been very predominant on the Christianity, thus undermining the other religion. Therefore, by promoting one religion according to Hall 1976, most of the viewers are conditioned towards the superiority that this religion has over other religion. To some extent, due to their high demand across the world, some of the government like the government of Malaysia has developed a soft spot towards its viewing by lifting its complete ban on some of the movies to the entire resident but restrict them only to be viewed by the Christians only. These films has supported Christianity very much in countries whose Islam is a strong hold.

The films have caused Americanization globally through these films upholding American culture and beliefs and propagating their values to the whole world through these films. According to Hofstede 1991, this has made the upcoming generation to be brought up in an environment that has very much been intoxicated by the US culture from the mode of dressing to <https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>

language change that is regarded as urbanization in different parts of the world.

Their movies have been the cause that affects people in the culture that they have in the communication patterns. They ensure explicit and implicit communication that ensures that they improve their values in other countries (Bram, 1997). They come up with the American way and even other way of communication, that seemingly is being emulated by the young generation that is changing towards their assimilation to this communication structure.

These movies will affect on the way people outside US make their decision. They show streams of decision-making process that the actors uses that eventually turns to be either successful or failure according to certain circumstances. This may see some of the people across the globe emulate the movie sterling in making their own decision in regards to the way they have portrayed in some of the movies. This will eventually turn to be a holistic way in which a decision is executed to cater for certain occasion especially by the young generation who may be at high risk of emulating these ideas.

Some of the movies like *The Lord of the Ring* have been portrayed as the one that show struggle between god and evil. Therefore, people who are out of the America and are not at the verge of understanding their culture right away may take it as war between Muslim and Christianity. This may deepen the hatred that has been perennial among this religious group and always causing havoc amongst them.

## Aspects that make Hollywood movies to have effects on other nations

### Realia

The use of film as the Hollywood has been using can bring lots of change in the cultural world. The movies use Realia in their production that enhances authenticity of the communication that enhances the culture that they want to bring about. Realia is a communicative language teaching that uses life materials from the culture that has been targeted to provide the audience with a dose of reality. This is seen in most films such as *Passion of Christ*, which has been shooting in Italy where it is incorporated with the Roman culture being more real and with then authenticity that makes it very convincing. They are able to use war jets and real staged information that makes the audience to be susceptible towards the effect that the film portrays.

### Saviors

This is the ability of using and coming up with intercultural communicative experience that is so rampant in the Hollywood movies. They are able to incorporate the altitude for example some people from other countries has in different aspect of life with their knowledge of certain professional features like armed forces, and their skills especially in the intercultural communication in the films. This acts as one of the most convincing aspect towards the change of the people behaviors. The curiosity that has been encompassed therein creates a lot of passion for the films making them to be a source of irresistible culture change aspects. It creates curiosity to the people feel that they are supposed to discover unfamiliar phenomena

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>



especially about themselves. This is by creation of stereotypes in different communities making the community concerned to be well aware of how the world thinks of them (Adler, 1991). This makes them to try as much as possible either to counter that or to be self aware about themselves.

### Social cultural knowledge

The movies have ever been at the core point of making the world aware of the cultural and social diversity of people around the globe. They do this by the way they display each culture according to the way they act their movies making their audience emulate some of the cultures especially the ones that has been displayed positively across the film. This has affected the people culture around the globe by trying to incorporate different culture as portrayed in the movies. Mostly, the American culture has been the most borrowed by the film lovers across the globe. Therefore, this has made most critics to accuse the Hollywood filmmakers of trying to instill American cultures and social values to the whole world making other cultural values that had been held with a lot of esteem to start fading or be lost in confusion of integrated culture from different places. Islamic religion has been the most critical of Hollywood work due to them inclining themselves in one religion and using of culture that the Islamic religion do not allow in their countries. They claim that they cause disintegration of morals and there are not viable to be viewed in their countries. Most of these movies are the cause of westernization in most the other part of the world.

### Cultural dimensions

The film has brought about changes around the globe by creating a platform where people are able to acquire cultural awareness of other nations thus being able to identify and interpret and hence analyzing implicit and explicit values of each culture according to the phenomena that are attached in them (Adler, 1991). According to Trompenaar, he claims that the people culture is capable of differing due to what has been equipped in their mind. He called this mental program in his work he described different dimensions that causes cultural change.

Power distance is the first dimension that has been brought to show how Hollywood film causes cultural change in the lives of the people outside US. This is by unequal distribution of power in the movies presented and therefore showing that the American government being more powerful than other nationalities that are antagonist in the plot. This makes people to have a certain view towards the capability that the US government has especially in the way they handle their security issues and fight against terrorism.

The other dimension is uncertainty avoidance that is the capacity at which people from other cultural divide feels uncomfortable of unknown cultural situation. These movies brought about urge of the people to feel insecure to interact freely due to the kind of stereotyping that has been brought to each cultural group in the world. They make people to prepare for ambiguity that may emerge during their interaction, therefore culture change.

Individualism and collectiveness is another dimension that has been coined in the pursuit of understanding the effects of the Hollywood films on the other part of the world. The film is able to put the degree of the

cohesiveness that exists among different societies more pronounced in their films. This has made the people to start changing their way of living to ensure that they embrace the integrated living mechanisms and in the long run, forgetting some of their culture and social values (Hosted, 1991).

Masculinity and femininity is also another aspect of dimension that has been affected very much through the emergence of these films. According to Trompenaar, he used masculinity gender role has a very distinctive contrary to femininity role which overlap (Adler, 1991). Otherwise, the movies have brought about roles of women to equally competitive as men roles are. They have been portrayed to be higher achievers thus changing the mentality of most of the society in the world especially where women are seen as weaker sex.

#### Hollywood in the Global scene

According to Bruner, 2008 globalization a concept characterized mainly by free movement of people, capital, goods and services has seen to it that the world has turned to be a global village. Through globalization, Hollywood has captured market in the entire world topping in most of the films. Strictly speaking, there are various movies that have been released by Hollywood that have influenced various aspects of the worlds thinking and ideologies. These include Air Force One, Cruel Intention, The Associate, Passion of Christ and Rush Hour to mention but a few. The films have had profound effect on political philosophy, economic philosophy, social structure, education, religion and language (Scott, 2000). The wide spread of Hollywood products throughout the world and especially in Europe is attributed to the

progressive dismantling of a number of formal barriers to trade as well as investment fostering creation of global market. Additionally, the urge for higher degree of economic interdependence as well as a higher desire of interconnection and advancement in technology has made this possible.

Hollywood is credited for producing over 80% of films being watched globally and has increased its market share two-fold from 1990. It is worth to note that it is second after aerosol in contributing to US export. The industry not only produces films but books, music, TV programs, software as a single industry has contributed in the economy of America by providing individuals with thousands of jobs among other things. Its dominance has also seen to it that less than 1% of foreign films industries have a stake in the country. On the same note, Hollywood in Europe has made the home movie industries struggle to hold even 30% of their nationwide market share. Hollywood dominance dates back in 1920s; currently compared to 1980 where it received about 30% of its revenue from overseas it now receives slightly above 50%. In Japan, the industry controls slightly over 50% of movie industry. A globalized market as well as world market that fancy big budget and entertaining movies having the ‘right’ stuff are attributed to being the major determinant factors making Hollywood films has a very high demand.

However, although there are agreements that globalization as well as Hollywood wide spread has had positive stride in the societies; various groups (government, journalists and citizens) hold that the benefits accrued from Hollywood going international have in one way or another undermined cultural identity of a given population within a sovereign state or country. It

is worth noting that indeed common markets has had the capability of  
<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>

promoting comparable manners as well as the chasing and acquisition of analogous ways of life among the world's population; the most affected and vulnerable groups are the youths. The result is that various stakeholders have held their breath with regards to their customs, traditions, beliefs, views, thoughts and heritage being washed away.

As results, to counter the problem, the governments have initiated policies and other tools aimed at safeguarding the nations' culture in the face of globalization. There are a number of trade controls which include taxes, subsidies and quotas have been put in place in order to protect and nurture home cultures.

### Protectionism

By definition, protectionism has been thought as the advocacies, systems or theories aimed at protecting/coddling those local domestic producers by limiting or impeding by using subsidies, quotas and tariffs importation of products as well as services deemed to be of foreign origin. The phenomenon has been insignificant and in decline in the recent years although its applicability has brought both negative and positive impact to the industry (Cavusgil et al., 2008).

It is no doubt that the mechanisms used in coddling domestic industries including film industries for instances tariffs potentially raise the prices of imported products from the United States as well as other foreign countries. This is usually aimed at making the goods and services to be less attractive to end-users as compared to domestic products that are cheap. Quotas aim at reducing the amount or quantities of products being imported have also <https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>

been used as device to protect domestic industries. Historically, wars and economic depressions did play a role in encouraging protectionism (Rosen, 1981). On the other hand, peace, globalization, interconnectedness and economic interdependence have played a part in encouraging free trade. Strictly speaking the policies that encouraged protectionism was wide spread back in 17th and 18th centuries in Europe (Scott, 2000).

In 19th century, Britain abandoned her laws that encourage the phenomenon and during the World War I tariffs were tremendously lowered in Europe. It is worth mentioning that in 1920s, raising economic and political temperatures brought about protectionism through custom barriers. This led to drastic shrinking of world trade. The signing of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade did help countries such as U. S reduce custom tariffs and tremendously cutting down quotas hence encouraging world trade.

Nonetheless, such agreements as GATT and NAFTA have not been successful in curbing the problem as it is evident that a number of countries resort to protectionism when faced with foreign competition (Cavusgil et al., 2008).

There have been very serious arguments as whether movies should be considered and treated just like any other good. Similarly, given the magnitude of the argument, a big question has been brought forth, should countries protect and support their own domestic film industries through protectionism? To fully address the issue the paper will try to analyze both sides of the arguments and arrive at a conclusion.

In one side, there are those of the opinion that movies should be treated just like any other commodities in the market and opt to be given a comparative

advantage where the best producers of the same should specialize on it; consume enough and export the surplus while at the same time import what it is not producing. Like any other goods and services, movies promote the well-being of individual in terms of political, sociological, economical as well as environmentally hence should be treated as such.

On the other hand, those opposing the notion hold that people fail to understand that movies/films are distinct from the normal goods and services. They believe that films have a profound capacity to seriously injure or influence cultures of sovereign nations; this means also that political, sociological and economic philosophies are in the mix. The then Canadian prime minister summarizes this “ Movies are culture incarnate. It is a mistake to view culture as a commodity...Cultural industries, aside from their economic impact, create products that are fundamental to the survival of Canada as a society” (Baughn & Buchanan 2001).

#### Mechanisms fostering protectionist

Strictly speaking there are a number of protectionist policies employed in world trade and for these matter movie industries. They include tariffs, import duties, administrative barriers, anti-dumping legislations, direct subsidies, export subsidies, exchange rates and international patent.

Cavusgil et al., 2008 noted that the most commonly used in movie industry are tariffs, subsidies, quotas and to an extent administrative barriers as well as exchange rates. What necessitated protectionism against U. S films as well as other related product stems from “ being accused of “ cultural

imperialism," " cultural colonialism," and " cultural hegemony" (Murray, 2003).

Tariffs or taxes are placed on imported products. Although they vary from country to country the aim is to increase the cost of importation this in turn makes the product to be highly priced hence unattractive to end-user as compared to the cheap local ones this in the long run lowers the volume of imports. There are other countries that did resort to using administrative barrier on the grounds that the product ' spoil and erode their national culture' (Baughn & Buchanan 2001). This works just like administrative rules for instance safety of food, electrical safety among others this thus is used to bring to play barriers that impede importation.

Import quotas can also be used where it aims to cut down the quantity of imported products increasing its market price. Quotas bound the number of screen shows to be aired by United States films or may call the domestic industries to make a given number of films within a specified period of time. Eventually this prevents customers from viewing the movies that they want to (Murray, 2003).

Manipulation of exchange rate has also seen to it that a country lowers the value of her currency. This raises the cost of importing goods and lowering the cost of exporting hence aiding in improving the country balance of trade. This has been shown to be effective in a shorter. Subsidies include government paying a lump-sum or offer loans at very low interest rates to domestic industries in order to compete with their foreign counterparts. Subsidies can weaken the domestic film industries (Trumpbour, 2002).

<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>



## Arguments supporting protectionism

According to Murray, 2003 proponents believe that there is dire and legitimate need for governments to restrict entrance of Hollywood product deemed American from entering the country as they will jeopardize the national culture as well as political and socio-ecological philosophies. This will also help boost local industry.

Trying to come up with a better balance of payment or trade balance is one such argument brought forth by proponents of protectionism. This stems from the understanding that when importations are discouraged and exportation of the some product encourage, the country will have a favorable balance of payment. This assumption forgets the long-term consequences for instance, when a country limits importation of products from a certain country, there are also chances that the other country will limit importation leaving the other country with no place to sell her products (Rosen, 1981).

According to Baughn & Buchanan 2001 protection of infant industries from 'unfair' competition has also been used to support protectionism. The nurturing of such industries will help the country pick up, employs her people resulting to a better economic state. Additionally, the idea according to supporters helps protect declining industries from worsening the existing structural unemployment. On the same note, protectionist has been hailed to help countries shield it from being dumping site. There are argument that America produce poor quality films filled with pornographic materials and

negative depiction of other countries political religion and economic ideologies.

### Argument against protectionism

Opponents of protectionism have brought forth arguments that support the notion that indeed the concept has turned to be armful to people it aimed to initially protect. Protecting Hollywood films from entering the global scene in the name of preserving cultural as well as traditional heritage is in no doubt aimed at nothing other than keeping the citizen trapped in the dark ages (Cavusgil et al., 2008). Preservation of culture is intellectual slavery considering the trend of globalization where the world has turned into a global village and people meet every now and then.

Additionally, protectionism misses the point since Hollywood products are aimed at brining together the entire world to have a common ground where communication help spread of knowledge, ideas, and feelings. This help resolve the current stalemate in division and conflict. On the same line, protectionism although aim at promoting local and infant industries, the blockage of foreign screens will definitely block the affected country's citizen from access to information as well as freedom of speech (Trumpbour, 2002). This in itself is a breach of the constitution under human rights. For instance, quotas will limit the quantity of screens being aired making the local citizen with very limited options.

According to Elsaesser, 2005 Greenspan a former chairperson of Federal Reserve said that protectionism, “ leads to an atrophy of our competitive

ability. ... If the protectionist route is followed, newer, more efficient  
<https://assignbuster.com/hollywood-and-the-rise-of-cultural-protectionism-media-essay/>

industries will have less scope to expand, and overall output and economic welfare will suffer.” In a broader scope the concept major aim is to discourage importation of Hollywood product, this definitely have a multiplier effect on a number of countries that are partners in trade. For instance, if a country in the Middle East reduces imports, this may probably lead to a reduced rate/volume of her exports and in the long run jeopardizing global output.

More importantly, the whole idea works against the world trade agreements and also derails competition. The lack of competition brought about by coddling of domestic industries will mean that such industries will not have an opportunity to be challenged in the free market to produce high quality products.

In my view, there are other methods other than protectionism that could be used to help protect a country to shield and support its own film industry. These include among others, competing under a free market environment a situation where competitive advantage dictates who survivors and who does not, while doing so, government should support such industries financially and using measures that are short-term. Additionally, there is need for government to form consortiums that will help evaluates movies as well as other programs before being released to the public (Baughn & Buchanan 2001).

Although there are other cultural industries that need to be protected by the government for instances tourism, it is evident that the negative impacts of doing so will bring down the industry. However there is need to have

acceptable measures to address such issues as demonstration effect, pornography which comes with tourism.