



RESEARCH

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HOLLYWOOD AND THE PENTAGON. THE PROPAGANDISTIC CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

Hollywood y el Pentágono. La producción cultural propagandística del Departamento de Defensa de los Estados Unidos

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ABSTRACT

The Department of Defense of United States and a sector of Hollywood maintain a long and prosperous productive relationship. The Pentagon helps the production and financing of various films under the condition of being able to make script modifications and influence the representations that the film makes of the United States and its army. This work analyzes the latest films in which the Pentagon has participated since 2015 to specify the possible propagandistic elements common to these production that would serve to classify them as pieces of persuasive or manipulative communication. Through an analysis of discourse applied to the sample, several recurrent narrative and representational strategies have been identified in the different films that, together, make up a clear propaganda strategy that is sustained at the time of the investigation. The cinema influenced by the United States Department of Defense works as a tool for the legitimation and promotion of North American global hegemony trough construction of Manichean representations of the army and political power of United States.

KEY WORDS: Hollywood - propaganda - cinema - discourse analysis - Department of Defense - United States - army.

RESUMEN

El Departamento de Defensa de los Estados Unidos y Hollywood mantienen una larga y próspera relación productiva. El Pentágono ayuda a la producción y financiación de

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diversas películas con la condición de poder hacer modificaciones de guion e influir en las representaciones que la película hace de los Estados Unidos y su ejército. Este trabajo analiza las últimas películas en las que ha participado el Pentágono desde 2015 para tratar de concretar cuáles son los posibles elementos propagandísticos comunes a estas obras que podrían catalogarlas como piezas de comunicación persuasiva o manipulativa. A través de un análisis del discurso aplicado a la muestra se han identificado diversas estrategias narrativas y representacionales recurrentes en las distintas películas que, en conjunto, componen una estrategia propagandística clara y sostenida en el tiempo de la investigación. El cine influido por el Departamento de Defensa estadounidense funciona como una herramienta para la legitimación y promoción de la hegemonía global norteamericana mediante la construcción de representaciones maniqueístas del ejército y del poder político de Estados Unidos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Hollywood - propaganda - cine - análisis del discurso - Estados Unidos - ejército.

HOLLYWOOD E O PENTÁGONO. A PRODUÇÃO CULTURAL PROPAGANDÍSTICA DO DEPARTAMENTO DE DEFESA DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

RESUME

O Departamento de Defesa dos Estados Unidos e Hollywood mantêm uma larga e próspera relação produtiva. O Pentágono ajuda a produção e financiamento de diversos filmes com a condição de poder fazer mudanças de roteiros e influir nas representações que o filme faz dos Estados Unidos e seu exército. Este trabalho analisa os últimos filmes nos quais participou o Pentágono desde 2015 para tratar de concretar quais são os possíveis elementos propagandistas comuns à estas obras que podiam catalogá-las como peças de comunicação persuasiva ou manipulativa. Através de uma análise do discurso aplicado à amostra foram identificadas diversas estratégias narrativas e representacionais recorrentes nos distintos filmes que, em conjunto, compõem uma estratégia propagandística clara e sustentada no tempo da investigação. O cinema influenciado pelo Departamento de Defesa americano funciona como uma ferramenta para a legitimação e promoção da hegemonia global norte americana mediante a construção de representações maniqueístas do exército e do poder político do Estados Unidos.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hollywood is one of the largest cultural industries in the world and its productions have the capacity to reach the majority of the global population. This is well known to the US government and, above all, to its Department of Defense, which devotes a great deal of time and resources to collaborating with the production of various films. These collaborations result in an exchange in which the Pentagon gives military equipment, locations and personnel to the producer in exchange for this one to suggest modifications in the script regarding the representations made in it of the army and the United States government. A well-known example of this is what happened with the Superman case, since the collaboration was rejected in the first instance by the Department of Defense, whose opinion changed after establishing meetings in which the agreement was accepted after modifying aspects of the script (Weisman, 2014).

Since 1989, Philip Strub has been in charge of the department of relations with the entertainment industries of the Pentagon. Different statements show the relationship between Hollywood and the United States Department of Defense whereby the Pentagon allows the use of war machines or locations in exchange for making changes to the script. This relationship is so fruitful that Strub has become the person who appears most in the acknowledgments of the top 200 commercial films made between 1997 and 2016, being mentioned in the credits of 35 different films (Follows, 2018).

This close and productive relationship turns cinema into a medium capable of transporting values that benefit the interests of the United States government, so this paper intends to analyze the films resulting from these collaborations in search of elements that confirm a propaganda intention of the works. In order to configure the perspective from which this project will be approached, a brief theoretical review of the concept of propaganda will then be carried out by going through its relationship with ideology, discourse and power in the network society. In addition, it will also be necessary to attend to propaganda and discourse in the way that concerns this work, the cinema.

1.1. Propaganda

Propaganda is understood as a persuasive communicative action that, in general, is usually presented as objective information or, at least, does not explicitly disclose its persuasive character. This general conception, although it cannot be considered misguided, is too superficial in the face of the work it is intended to address. Lasswell (1927) defines propaganda as the direction of collective attitudes through the manipulation of significant symbols, thus adding the manipulative character of the term. Manipulation that for Edwards (1938) is oriented towards the intention of influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals. Propaganda falls within the scope of social communication and is inconceivable in its current form without a mass communication system. It is a communicative process through which specific ideas are disseminated, spread and promoted, and it is also an information and persuasion process (Pizarroso, 1993) as it implies control of the information flow such as creation, reinforcement or modification of a response to a message. That said, it is necessary to point out that propaganda appeals to a greater or lesser extent to emotions and, unlike agitation, it is a process sustained over time that seeks to configure changes in opinion and behavior in the long term. Stanley divides propaganda into two distinct types that he calls “support propaganda” and “undermined propaganda” (2016). The first one is a practice similar to post-truth, in which a recognized political ideal is used to generate emotions in favor of a specific interest aligned with that ideal. The second case refers to practices in which political arguments are used for the benefit of a cause that is hidden in the communicative process, this type of propaganda is especially dangerous when a “faulty ideology” such as racism, homophobia or imperialism has a presence and distort the message, making it even more difficult to identify the fact that the political value itself is hiding the ultimate goal of communication.

Regarding the use of emotions to the detriment of reason with the objective of politically influencing the interests of societies, there are several works that relate the digital phenomenon of *fake news* with propaganda actions orchestrated and sustained over time. Described as entertainment propaganda (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016), *fake news* is a phenomenon that has gained importance in the last decade and whose operation is deeply influenced by the commercial model of information (Bakir & McStay, 2018). The manipulative or persuasive intention of the targeted news is now with the new monetization of attention, generating benefits from the impacts and dissemination of the content in question. The concept of entertainment propaganda is of special interest for this work, since it explicitly relates the interest of ideological/political influence with the production of content aimed at building this influence. In addition, it is also necessary to address the privatization of propaganda (Bolin, Jordan & Stahlberg, 2016), which ensures that propaganda production is increasingly carried out by private media companies that establish relationships or collaboration with governments or public institutions in several ways. These

phenomena form a scenario, to which this work intends to apply, in which it seems logical to think that cultural productions sustained mainly by private companies, but directly supported by public institutions, can present propaganda content.

1.1.1. Propaganda and ideology

The fact that propaganda seeks to influence or direct thoughts and behavior, implies that its field of action is in the minds of individuals and, therefore, in ideology. That said, it becomes clear the need to know what ideology is and how its conceptualization could influence the propaganda structure itself. Ideology can be understood as a concrete organization of significant practices that make the individual a social character and produce the experiences that connect these characters with the dominant production relations of a society (Althusser, 2004). Although this definition could be precise, it restricts the scope of ideology only to dominant or generating views of hegemony. Ideology can have a subversive or counterhegemonic dimension when it constitutes critical perceptions with dominant thinking or historical economic infrastructure. Ideology always occurs within the framework of power relations (Foucault, 1988) and they have an essential discursive character since it is about who says what, to whom, and for what purposes. Ideology, although discursive, is not synonymous with discourse and in this difference lies one of the key points of the perspective on ideology and propaganda, since ideology adheres to the central themes of social life and its power struggles (Eagleton, 1995). Thus, ideology is drawn as a discursive practice on the central themes of social life that forms identities and social individuals and relates them to the dominant structure. That said, propaganda is then understood as a process of social communication that promotes concrete ideas related to the axes of social life and that aims at influencing the behaviors and opinions of the recipients.

1.1.2. Propaganda and discourse

Propaganda, as a communication and ideological activity, is a discursive practice that produces (and reproduces) certain aspects of the reality in which it develops. When talking about discursive practice, reference is made to the ways of meaning areas of experience from a specific perspective and always interested to a greater or lesser extent, so that power relations, ideology and, again, propaganda are understood as discursive, and discourse is one of the constituent elements of society and culture (van Dijk, 1999). The discourse is a social practice because it is configured socially and helps the configuration of the social (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), that is, it represents reality but also helps to build it. Propaganda works as a reproducer and as a generator of reality as it constitutes a discursive and ideological structure that produces meaning (Hall, 2001).

The discourse is a practice intimately linked to the power and the reproduction and legitimation of it, Teun van Dijk (1999) argues that most of the beliefs of an individual are

acquired through the discourse, so the influence potential of this discipline in the minds of citizenship is immense. Discourse (and language) is another means of domination and social force that serves to legitimize power relations (Habermas, 1992).

1.1.3. Power and propaganda

Finally, propaganda, ideology and discourse end up functioning within power structures with the intention of legitimizing, modifying or demolishing them. It has already been mentioned that power is also discursive; it is a substance that is not exchanged or that diffuses globally. Power is exercised, it exists in fact, there is the power that some exercise over others (Foucault *et al.*, 2000). Power is what represses; it is, according to Manuel Castells, the relational capacity that allows to influence the decisions of third parties asymmetrically in order to favor the interests of the individual or group that holds the power (2014). Power, in short, consists in influencing the performance of third parties with a previous objective; its main manifestation is to conduct behavior based on an interest. The relationship between power and propaganda is very close and, according to the definitions offered here, they could be seen as codependent forces, as elements that give each other feedback. Although propaganda is a tool that seeks power, power becomes effective through the success of propaganda.

In this sense, power has a close relationship with discourse. If power is defined in terms of control, that is, a group is powerful as long as it has the capacity to control the acts and thoughts of other groups, it can be deduced that access to limited social resources (such as access to public discourse production) is an essential source of social power (Mayr, 2008, p. 11). Then, access to certain forms of discourse is in itself a source of power, as it facilitates the production of messages aimed at influencing and configuring the social structure, which may or may not be propaganda. It is necessary to point out, in relation to this power that grants access, that the dominant groups have the ability to control or influence certain types of discourse on the text and on the discursive context. The discourse is composed of a text (language) and a context (communicative situation) and the influence in them defines the dominant group, which holds the power, to a greater or lesser extent, over the discursive events and their configuration (van Dijk, 2016).

After understanding power and its relationship with propaganda, it is of special interest for this work to address the concept of *soft power* proposed by J. Nye (2004). Soft power is defined as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion or the offer of rewards. This type of power arises from the attractiveness of a nation's culture and the general acceptance of its political ideals. So this form of power is exercised through communication and, what interests this work most, propaganda. The concept of soft power has had a lot of weight in the foreign policy of the United States and one of the main productive focuses of this power has been the cultural industry and, especially, the cinema. It is so much that there are

positions that ensure that soft power strategies in the 21st century are shaping a cultural imperialism that constitutes a hegemonic liberal dialogue of the United States (Sánchez, 2018).

Finally, and as a complementary framework in which to encompass *soft power* strategies, it will be useful to understand the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is the ability of a class to reproduce a behavior or values so that individuals assume them voluntarily (Gramsci, 1977), the ability to make attractive a lifestyle, a thought or a culture to end up configuring the ideological positioning. When there is a general consensus between the dominant and the dominated classes, it can be said hegemony exists. This consensus, according to Gramsci, is achieved by structuring the ideological construction of society around a cultural system, in the case of this work, cinema. In addition, it is important to understand that the power of one class over another can manifest itself in two ways: through coercion or through persuasion. This second way is the one that would make up hegemony and, in particular, reference will be made here to propaganda. The sources of social power (violence and discourse) have not varied fundamentally (Castells, 2014), but the terrain in which these power relations operate have been now modified, which are now organized into networks and border between the local and the global. In view of the analysis that will be carried out in this article, we must pay special attention to this persuasive character of power, its new local / global structuring and the cultural construction of hegemony because all these factors unequivocally flow into the cinema as a means for ideological reproduction and the legitimation of the dominant position.

1.2. Cinema

Cinema, as a central element of the analysis that is intended to be carried out in this work, is an artistic and cultural production that represents the reality of its social context and defines it through audiovisual discourse. Like other discourses (Aumont *et al.*, 2008), cinema has the capacity to configure meanings and representations of reality from which individuals construct their identities and those of third parties. In addition to this, the cinema has historically proven its worth as a propaganda medium, being, for example, the destination in which all the states involved during the Second World War focused enormous efforts to try to fight in the ideological field. Nowadays, cinema can function in the same way, pointing out certain groups or organizations as terrorists or showing concrete values as nuclear of a society or nation (Villarreal, 2002).

The cinema and, specifically, Hollywood is one of the largest producers of merchandise in the global cultural industry. The cultural industry is all that capitalist industry that produces cultural goods as merchandise, as interchangeable pieces that distort the meaning of art and culture (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2001). This type of industry integrates individuals ideologically and produces a capitalist culture that reproduces a concrete worldview through the global market. The main problem that critical theorists warned in

these processes is the loss of meaning of art and culture and the ideological integration of individuals in a capitalist culture that reproduces the interests of power through the cultural market. The cultural industry is the result of the process of constitution of a culture and a specifically capitalist form of cultural production (Bolaño, 2013), which implies the extension of the logic of capital to the field of culture and to the whole way of life.

The concept unifies the field of industrialized culture with that of the media, evidence that there is no mass dissemination of culture without an underlying communicative model and that mass communication is not possible if it does not act at the same time as a systematic diffusion (and reproduction) machine of culture (Bustamante, 2003). The industrial production of culture tries to innovate in the goods produced, but the search for commercial success is prioritized so that the formats and narratives are standardized and the offer is homogenized (Zallo, 2016) Cultural industries simplify artistic production and they create a model that fills the market with offer regardless of their quality (Bauman, 2013). It is a system that directly affects the cognitive development of the receptors by limiting the complexity of the cultural offer, which serves to pave the way for the promotion of ideas and/or interested values that are transported in the cultural products themselves (Illescas, 2015). In addition, the situation that comes from the establishment of this industrialized cultural production model generates a new cultural work, which articulates a mode of appropriation of popular culture by cultural capital (Bolaño, Páez & Herrera-Jaramillo, 2016), this appropriation takes place as an assimilation of the popular culture of the cultural worker, who transfers it to the merchandise through his symbolic work. The American cultural industry produces countless films whose objective is to be disseminated throughout the world, either to increase the economic benefit of production or to promote the message articulated in the works, which has served it to become the main cultural reference of our western societies. This conceptualization allows us to understand the need to know the values that are transmitted through the cultural productions influenced by the most powerful government in the world.

2. OBJECTIVES

Being an investigation focused on the interests that are transferred through the films that make up the sample, the objectives are set around the analysis of these persuasive elements within the cinema, namely:

- Identify propaganda and / or manipulatives elements in the sample.
- Recognize and analyze the elements of manipulation within the propaganda model.

3. METHODOLOGY

To perform this analysis, the last 5 films in which the United States Department of Defense has participated somehow will be selected as a sample. The criteria by which

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these pieces will be selected responds to the gratitude that the production teams of each film express in the final credits to the person in charge of managing the pentagon's relations with the entertainment industry, Philip M. Strub. The sample will be made as follows:

- First Man (2018) Damien Chazelle.
- Transformers: The Last Knight (2017) Michael Bay.
- Whiskey Tango Foxtrot (2016) Glenn Ficarra and John Requa.
- The Bridge of the Spies (2015) Steven Spielberg.
- Under the Same Sky (2015) Cameron Crow.

The analysis of the sample was carried out during the months of January and February 2019, during which, several items were added to the analysis sheet to adapt it to the characteristics of the sample that the analysis uncovered. In the first instance, the main axes that articulated the discourse analysis were established according to the representations that are composed in each audiovisual piece. In this sense, the following item structure was designed that limits the aspects that will be addressed during the analysis of each work:

- Government/Institutional Power.
- Government / Foreign Institutional Power/enemy.
- U.S. Army or Militia.
- Foreign army/enemy.
- Success and failure.
- Honor and justice.
- Nationality and values.

These sections offer an analysis of the representation that cinema influenced by the US Department of Defense makes of today's society and, specifically, of American society and its outward perspective. In the first place, attention is given to the representation of the local institutional power, its attitude and its role in the plot. Here, any type of public or private group or institution that has a superior hierarchical role in the plot has been understood as government or institutional power. With this point it has been possible to identify the way in which the American public power is presented in cultural productions. Similarly, the representation of their rival or foreign counterparts in each plot was also attended to. Thus, the comparison between the two representations has been allowed, and so it can be deduced which interests the differences or similarities present could respond to.

In this block, the final items that made up the analysis sheet have been the following:

Government / Institutional power (American and / or foreign)

- Citizen support.
- Political coherence.

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- Priorities in management.
- Action motivations.
- Assigned or associated functions.
- Influence on public opinion.
- Influence of public opinion.
- Deal/relationship with foreign/rival governments.

In the same way that public power was analyzed, it was necessary to gather information about the army and the military present in the films. It is assumed that the main interest of the Pentagon is to issue a good image of its troops, so it is imperative to include this item in the analysis. On the other hand, it has also been necessary to pay attention to the representations, when there have been them, of enemy or foreign armies in order to be able to establish the same comparisons that are sought in the section on institutional power:

Army or militia (American and/or foreign)

- Citizen support
- Performance motivations
- Influence on public opinion
- Influence of public opinion
- Humanization or dehumanization of its members
- Present hierarchy
- Ethics in acting
- Integration into society
- Linking with cultural features
- Use of violence
- Idealization of war

The following items are intended to draw a portrait of the values and the psychosocial perspective presented in the sample. It can be revealing to know what is the prevailing conception of personal success and its influence on social or collective success, as well as its relationship with honor or justice and how these concepts are understood in the audiovisual works subject to analysis. Finally, it will also be important to compile the relationships established between the primary values and the American nation, since this message will aim at relating those values to the entire state of the United States.

Since there is a close relationship between the remaining axes, it was decided to articulate a single analysis sheet in which the items that interrelate values, success and nationality were included:

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Values, social success and nationality:

- Representation of success.
- Hero representation.
 - Narrative development.
 - Influence and support received.
- Socially recognized/praised actions.
- Socially rejected actions
- Individualism/solidarity.
 - With compatriots.
 - With foreigners.
- International collaboration.
- Link between national values and social values.
- Link between rebellion and institutional rejection.
- Idealization of justice.

When focusing on the propaganda capacity of the cultural industry, it is necessary to opt for a critical perspective that allows to know the most important meanings of each film. The discourse has a direct relationship with power (van Dijk, 1999) and its capacity for influence is enormous. For the first phase of the analysis, the framework proposed by Bakir *et al.* (2018) will be adopted to analyze organized persuasive communication (OPC). This analytical methodology encompasses all persuasive communication to unify its analysis and allow research on pieces with a hidden propaganda character. In this sense, a line is drawn that divides persuasion, which is agreed upon, and manipulation, which attacks the autonomy of the individual and is an act of power. According to this model, the characteristics of a persuasive message that make it become manipulative are:

- 📁 ① Persuasion through deception by omission, distortion or disorganization of information, making it susceptible to trigger a biased understanding of reality.
- 📋 ① Persuasion for the incentive by promising or providing benefits as a result of a specific decision or conduct.
- 📋 ① Coercion, persuasion or obligation to act in a way that the individual would never do under the threat of a physical, economic, social cost, etc.
- 📋 ① Coercive deception, which consists in forcing attitudes through the creation or exaltation of threats.

The results extracted from the analysis sheet were examined from this categorization, looking for cases of persuasion and manipulation through deception, persuasion or coercion. Thanks to this conceptualization, and taking into account these factors, it was possible to know to what extent the discourse composed by the sample enters the field of manipulation and the toughest propaganda. After identifying the data related to the analysis sheet and its revision from the perspective of the OPC, we moved on to the

final part of the work, in which the objective was to find relationships between the contents extracted from the analysis and the proposed classic propaganda model by Domenach (1955):

- 1) Simplification, single enemy: Simplify as much as possible the slogans that one intends to transfer to make their understanding easier and identify the enemy or adversary in a single person, making the objective more understandable.
- 2) Exaggeration and disfiguration: Propaganda is camouflaged and information is deformed to allow the message to be acquired without questioning.
- 3) Orchestration: Constant repetition of a central theme, but adopting different forms and channels to reach all audiences.
- 4) Transfusion: Base ideas on historical foundations, not starting from scratch to promote propaganda, but support it with excerpts from previous ideas.
- 5) Unanimity and contagion: Unification of opinions, when the social majority seems to think the same way, individuals will be more reluctant to stay out and not share that position.

4. RESULTS

After the analysis of the sample, several coincident elements have been found between the different works that could compose a pattern or a relatively established operating structure in film production with the participation of the Pentagon. Before exposing the recurrent narrative structure within the pieces analyzed, a review will be made of the most important concepts extracted from each section of analysis.

4.1. Recurring representations

Within the preset items for the analysis, some recurring representation strategies have been found in diverse films that could be an established line of communication with the objective of transmitting specific values to the spectators.

4.1.1. Iron power, wise

Iron power but wise power is the absolute representation made of the American institutional power. In this sense, reference is made to a government or severe institutional / military power, determined and with a clear orientation towards development, at least at the beginning of each narrative thread. The position of power could be described, in general and valid terms for the entire sample, as obsessed with development and competitiveness. This strong prioritization of maintaining a dominant or advantageous position as a nation ends up being discovered negative, since the previous line of action has generated unwanted circumstances or even benefited the enemy / adversary. And this is where the so-called wise power comes in, named this

way not because of its knowledge and know-how, but because of its ability to rectify. After checking the ambiguity of their previous position, the members of the institutional power end up recognizing the protagonist (as will be explained in future sections) that his attitude is correct and they offer their support to reverse the adverse situation. Adverse situation that is usually resolved finally thanks to the collaboration among power, the army and, of course, the protagonist.

This representation could respond to the interest of showing American institutions as determined and implacable but also humble organizations, that know how to recognize a mistake and rectify their actions in favor of the common good. This rectification is usually motivated by the intervention of an individual outside the institutions, but this aspect is something that will be deepened in a future section. For the moment, it is enough to understand that power is always represented with a path ahead, a transformation that humanizes the institution and that, in narrative terms, manages to resolve the central climax of the story. The most unequivocal example of this transition from undeniable power to empathic power can be seen in *Transformers: the Last Knight*, where government organizations focus on their fight against the protagonist, Cade Yeager, which allows the true antagonistic group (the Decepticons) gain ground in battle. When the situation is critical, the militias and the government turn their efforts to help Cade overcome the threat that they themselves had allowed to flourish. It is important to emphasize that the government's position and evolution is also the one that general society and public opinion maintain. In most cases, the institutional powers clearly represent public opinion, which is against or in favor of the protagonist to the extent that the public forces do it.

4.1.2. Iron power, faint-hearted power

As in the case of US power, there is a representation of a strong, solid and inflexible government, in the case of foreign institutions, be it Afghanistan, the Soviet Union or the Democratic Republic of Germany. But, unlike the previous case, this perspective of power does not evolve, in cases in which it is represented, in a transcendent way. On the contrary, it is characterized by appearing as corrupt and amoral organisms, which move for interests far removed from goodness and the common good. Foreign societies tend to appear as incomprehensible, strange and underdeveloped. The ethnocentric perspective is evident in cases in which other cultures or governments are represented. This is such that there are scenes in which native Hawaiians (*Under the Same Sky*) or Germans (*The Bridge of the Spies*) hold conversations in their language and these are not translated at any time nor have subsequent significance in the scenes. These types of representations move the foreigner emotionally and contribute to the perception of minority cultures as strange, incomprehensible or even threatening.

4.1.3. The army of the people

The army generally appears as an extension of the public power that shares its position and its development. The motivation of the security teams is always the protection of their country and its citizens, the army and the military always try to do good and, if they are wrong, they know how to rectify just like their government.

The military hierarchy is very present and it is not complex to identify different ranks of command according to their behaviors and relationships, but, within this marked hierarchy, the humanization of soldiers is common. They are usually presented more as members of a family, as friends or as partners rather than as military and empathy with the members of the US army is much easier. In line with this humanization, a military normalizing treatment can also be identified. That is, the relationship with the army or its membership becomes common. Most of the characters have been in the war or in some military equipment and those who have not participated actively have a daily relationship with the military or ex-military.

Finally, it is interesting to note that a spectacularization of weapons has been recognized in some works. The military and civilians make an aesthetic use of weapons and these also acquire a use of leisure or relief. In addition, the audiovisual treatment of the shots makes them something very attractive that does not seem to have real consequences.

4.1.4. The threat of the West

The cases in which an enemy or foreign army was somehow represented, they did it in a Manichean way. To the enemy soldiers the opposite happens to what happens to the Americans. They are characterized by their cruelty, their amorality and the use of violence. The representation of the foreign military is dehumanizing and, as in the case of foreign governments, it allows the viewer get away from the cultures represented. These armies are characterized by maintaining a crusade against the American way of life and, therefore, that of the West. Its objective does not seem other than to dethrone the United States of its privileged position in the world to make the planet a dark and poor place. Communists, the Taliban or Decepticons end up being the same essential threat, that of changing the way of life that the West has established in the world.

With regard to enemy armies there is also a banalization of war that evolves from the dehumanization of these individuals. The deaths of people on this side, although murders, mean nothing to anyone in the works analyzed, ending a life is something so inconsequential that it ends up resulting in a spectacularization of violence. Even the protagonist of *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* becomes a prolific war reporter for recording how the US military exploded an enemy vehicle with a missile.

4.1.5. What is good for the United States is good for you

The greatest and main success is to contribute to the country. People who achieve something beneficial to the United States become celebrities and heroes. This success always goes through defending the ideals of freedom and justice, which implies protecting the United States and its essence. In contrast, failure is represented in failing these values, in being a coward and not responding to what the American homeland demands. For example, in *Bajo el Cielo Cielo* the protagonist, Brian, goes from failure to success throughout history. He begins as a person that nobody trusts because he failed his country in the Iraq War, but finally he redeems himself by avoiding the launch of an armed satellite that could threaten the country's security. This last action makes him a hero and goes from having the contempt and distrust of his former military companions to being praised by the Government and the army for protecting his country.

4.1.6. Resist and conquer

In the narrative development of several works, a situation is repeated in a very similar way. Justice is threatened as a result of the actions of power and society in general, but a hero who always maintained an honorable position finally manages to put everyone on his side and recover justice and the general good. This achievement of restoring balance and well-being, is usually due to the defense of the values that will be exposed in the next point. The fact of believing in these values and clinging to their goodness ends up being able to rebuild the system and bring peace or victory again. It is the confirmation of the power of American values as a vehicle to change the world for the better, the representation that affirms that the defended postulates are what all humankind should acquire. Although their depth may be doubtful and their critical capacity may be null.

4.1.7. North American morals

At this point, we intend to collect the values associated with US nationality that appear in the different films analyzed. The main American values are bravery, solidarity, freedom and justice. The following phrase from Donovan, protagonist of *The Bridge of Spies* makes it clear which is the morality promoted "Accusing treason without a trial is not American". A strong moral and based on the universality of justice where every person deserves respect and good treatment, although some ethnocentrism is also appreciated when using the "American" nationality to refer only to Americans, but this is not something recurrent within the sample. In addition to brave, supportive and fair, well-off Americans are determined people who are committed to development and the expansion of knowledge and its dissemination throughout the world. It is necessary to look for growth in a balanced way with the values already mentioned so as not to fall into the problem presented by the institutions, which have momentarily lost their way

and only attend to the country's competitiveness. As you can see, there is a clear idealization of American values that are usually represented by one or more protagonists, responsible for embodying the so-called American spirit.

4.1.8. Mentions to communism

As Chomsky (1988) has already noted, one of the guidelines for the control of cultural media and industries in the United States was anti-communism that, although with less intensity, continued to function after the fall of the Soviet Union. In this sense, different references can be found to states or former socialist states that, normally in a distorted way, intend to remember the threat posed by these systems to the American way of life. One of the most blatant examples of this activity is in *The Bridge of the Spies* when Volger, a lawyer from the GDR tells the protagonist: "We live in the ruins made by the Russians in Berlin". This phrase is a clear example of omission of information, since the ruins to which Volger refers are the result of the capture of Berlin and the defeat of Nazi Germany. In this line you can find other more innocent examples such as presenting a scenario in which the Transformers are illegal worldwide except in Cuba, where it is literally mentioned that Castro lets them live at ease. It is very explicit the negative treatment given to alternative systems to capitalism in the works analyzed, presenting real historical information sometimes mixed with fictional elements that end up composing a misrepresented message of reality as it will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1.9. The formula for success

After identifying the recurrent elements in the sample, it is necessary, finally, to expose the existence of a common narrative structure to the entire sample that may be the result of a productive automation that derives from the effects mentioned in the theoretical framework of this work.

All the films analyzed presented a story starring a non-military character but with a close relationship with the army, whether they are ex-combatants, collaborators or war reporters. These protagonists usually embody American values and are characterized by their strong morals and for keeping themselves in the correct position even when the whole society, including institutional power and the army, thinks otherwise. In the course of these stories, it is proved that the counter-current position but faithful to the national values of the protagonist was correct, so the government, the armed forces and the general society turn to the cause of the protagonist. To close, this union of forces allows to solve the problem and supposes benefits or extinction of threats to the US, turning the protagonist into a hero and an example to follow throughout society.

This structuring of the acts is present, with some nuances, throughout the entire sample and may have different implications. In the first place, the hero is never an active

soldier and the main reason for his success is to blindly trust American values and morals. This representation allows the identification of the spectators and facilitates the assumption of the values represented as unique and positive. In addition, the final collaboration between the protagonist and the public authorities, allows to perceive a higher degree of humanity in these organisms and implies that, although they may be mistaken, they will always defend a just cause and help those who defend it. This shows the humility and humanity of all strata of American society. Finally, the final success is the result of this collaboration and always implies some kind of benefit for the nation, this representation conveys the importance of collaboration and solidarity and places the common good in the highest stage of all achievement. Understanding the common good as the prosperity of American society and its allies.

4.2. From persuasion to manipulation

After analyzing the elements that characterize the sample, it is time to review these elements under the OPC methodological framework to identify the extent to which they enter the territory of propaganda and manipulation.

4.2.1. Deception

First of all, deception is treated as a way to persuade the public that violates the circulation of information in a communicative process. In this sense, deception is present both by omission and by distortion of information. They are, mainly, the cases in which anticommunism is treated in which a biased representation of the information can be perceived. As mentioned in section 4.1.8 there are cases of deception by omission, hiding or not offering important information about a position. Or in *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, where they intend to blame the Soviet Union for the creation of the Taliban and the formation of terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. This case is shocking if one considers that Hillary Clinton herself, being Secretary of State of the United States, recognized that the North American intervention in the Middle East meant the creation of militias that would end up forming an Islamist force in these territories.

In addition to the deception by omission, cases of deception by information distortion can be identified, for example, a *Transformers* scene: *the Last Knight* represents the US army by taking the Reichstag and defeating Nazi Germany with the help of some robots. Although in the context of fiction, this scene aims at endowing with a certain historical rigor using real locations and representing the Nazi symbology clearly. The distortion here is in presenting an allegedly historical fact falsified, since the Berlin Takeover was carried out by the Red Army of the Soviet Union and the United States had no direct involvement in this battle. With this type of representation, it is intended to issue a heroic image of the United States and reaffirm the values that have already been

mentioned around a nation characterized by defending freedom and its influence throughout the globe

4.2.2. Incentive

In the second step of propaganda communication is the fact of offering benefits as a result of concrete behaviors of individuals. Regarding this, a general tonic can be perceived in the sample towards this strategy. The incentive or reinforcement of behaviors starts from the identification with the protagonists. The message is that of respecting American values, even if nobody does, and you will be rewarded. It has already been reflected on the success, which is always the result of a specific behavior that defends the aforementioned values, this succession of events that is repeated in all frames forces the interpretation of these behaviors as beneficial for the individual and for the group. The viewer would have to understand that if he defends justice, honor and freedom inflexibly, he will get the support of his nation and become a recognized person.

This way of presenting the information is part of the manipulation (Bakir *et al.*, 2018) because it limits the freedom of thought and action of the message recipient. Now he is faced with the dilemma of abiding by the incentive behavior or staying out of it with the loss of the promised benefit and the threat that, on the other hand, could pose an opposite behavior (be it social exclusion, lack of support or recognition, etc.).

The analysis has not allowed to identify cases of coercive deception, although indeed the opposite part to the incentive situations could be understood as coercive persuasion, this type of communication has not been transcendent throughout the sample. With regard to deception and incentive, these practices place the sample within the framework of propaganda and manipulative persuasive communication because they violate the cognitive freedom of the recipient by limiting the information offered and framing desirable or beneficial behaviors for the individual himself.

4.3. Identification in the propaganda model

The last part of the analysis will be to frame the data obtained within the propaganda model proposed in section 3 of this article. Domenach's model (1955) based on five rules, could accommodate the measures collected in the sample as follows:

4.3.1. Orchestration

The same narrative structure that conveys the same message conveying specific and common values to all works is one of the main characteristics of the sample. The same theme is repeated and, although within the same narrative development, it acquires

different forms in terms of film genres, which gives a certain variety to the repetition of the message.

4.3.2. Disfiguration and transfusion

In this case, two different rules are included in the same section because they usually appear hand in hand. The disfigurement of the information implies the distortion of the information and its modeling in order to create a persuasive message for specific purposes. The transfusion is working hand in hand with the disfiguration in cases in which real historical references are used to grant a range of truth to the representations. The examples of these situations have already been exposed and are characterized by a manipulation of elements external to the fiction represented that allows the issuer to offer a biased message that tends to reproduce specific interests, those of American hegemony.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The cinema co-produced by the United States Department of Defense has a clear persuasive / manipulative vocation. In the sample, we have been able to find many strategies and narrative representations that can be interpreted as acts of deception or incentive, so the categorization of these works as propagandist is unequivocal. In this sense, the analysis has allowed us to identify the main propaganda strategies followed by the Pentagon cinema and to recognize elements common to all its films. This contribution opens the door to possible future research on the development of these strategies and their concrete effects on the minds of the audience. Similarly, a questioning of the creative freedom of film producers and screenwriters who decide to collaborate with the Department of Defense could be inferred, but it would be necessary to delve into these issues in future works by applying different techniques.

It is necessary to frame these results within the limited sample, five films produced over a period of four years, to really validate what was proposed by this work, a longitudinal continuation of the study and an extension of its research areas would be necessary, also focusing on the effects and on other types of cultural industries. There are drawbacks to the development of such studies, since the information provided by the United States Department of Defense is very limited and the economic cost of an investigation of this scope would be high. It is hoped that in the near future it will be possible to cover a sufficient extension of what is proposed here as an approach.

Finally, it has been possible to identify 3 of the 5 rules of the propaganda model designed by Domenach (1955). It can be affirmed that the contents produced by the most related to American power cultural industry have a clear propaganda vocation. What in the vision of Nye (2004) would be strategies aimed at increasing the soft power

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of the United States, that is, its good image in the eyes of the rest of the world and the perception of its culture as desirable for the social group. This persuasive / manipulative dimension becomes greater if one takes into account the fact that 3 of the 5 films (*The Bridges of the Spies*, *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* and *First Man*) are based on real events, which gives greater legitimacy to the story and configures a framework of truthfulness that facilitates the assimilation of the precepts articulated in the discourse. In addition to this, it is also noteworthy that Steven Spielberg participates in 3 of the 5 films as a director (*The Bridge of the Spies*) or as a producer (*Transformers: the Last Knight* and *First Man*). It can be deduced from this that there is a preponderant relationship between certain productive teams and the United States Department of Defense, but this is something that, again, would have to be confirmed through the development of new and more thorough investigations.

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