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## THE RESEARCH OF DIFFERENT NATIONAL ARTISTIC SCHOOLS OF CINEMATOGROPHY IN CONTEXT OF WAR MOVIES

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**Abstract.** The article discuss the issue of cultural aspects of national security in relation to the context of contemporary art. The author examines American, European, and Russian war films of the 2010s. and reveals the typical features of the representation of images of the army, the soldiers, and the war in general in two different national cinematographic schools. The connection between the features of war cinema and the specifics of historical fate and the circumstances of current foreign policy is revealed. In conclusion, the author identifies some of the risks and threats to national cultural security associated with the broadcast into the Russian cultural space of the point of view expressed in American war cinema.

**Key words:** war cinema, cinema, national security, modern culture, Russian cinema, American cinema.

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## ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ РАЗЛИЧНЫХ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫХ ШКОЛ КИНЕМАТОГРАФИИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ФИЛЬМОВ О ВОЙНЕ

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается вопрос о культурных аспектах национальной безопасности применительно к контексту современного искусства. Автор рассматривает американские, европейские и российские военные фильмы 2010-х гг. и выявляет типичные черты репрезентации образа армии, солдат и войны в целом в двух разных отечественных кинематографических школах. Выявляется связь особенностей военного кино со спецификой исторической судьбы и обстоятельствами современной внешней политики. В заключение автор выделяет некоторые риски и угрозы национальной культурной безопасности, связанные с трансляцией в российское культурное пространство точки зрения, выраженной в американском военном кино.

**Ключевые слова:** военное кино, кино, национальная безопасность, современная культура, российское кино, американское кино.

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### Introduction

At the end of the 20th century, the world entered a «perfect storm» in terms of geopolitics and civilizational interactions. The expected global leadership of the US and geopolitical monopolarity never came. Instead, we have entered an era of chaotic multipolarity. There are many poles of power in the contemporary world, for example, Russia as a rebuilding superpower, Europe, China, and India as rising superpowers<sup>1</sup> [12], Japan – as an economic superpower<sup>2</sup>. In such conditions, national security has become a key priority of state policy. However, scientific

<sup>1</sup> India Rising // Newsweek. URL: <https://www.newsweek.com/india-rising-106259>.

Kitai – novaya sverkhderzhava? // BBC.News. URL: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/in\\_depth/newsid\\_4307000/4307933.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/in_depth/newsid_4307000/4307933.stm).

<sup>2</sup> Japan From Superrich To Superpower // Time. URL: <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967823,00.html>

and technological leadership, economic power, and military potential are not enough to ensure national security. The external and internal political potential of «soft power» is an important aspect of ensuring national security [15; 16]. The cultural aspect of national security includes the preservation of historical memory, the ability of the state to create an attractive image of the future for the nation, the creation of significant products, and an attractive lifestyle.

Military cinema is the synergy point of cultural policy and national security strategy. It contributes to the preservation of historical memory and participates in national self-determination and the formation/preservation of identity. Authors of war films promote the values of a peaceful life and the importance of national security. As the object of our research, we have chosen the socio-cultural representation of the army and war by artistic means of cinematography.

The subject of the research was military films made in the last decade.

At present, the issues of the representation of the army in Soviet and Russian cinematography have been well studied. Researchers such as V.O. Chistyakova [4], O.S. Nagornova, and T. V. Raeva [14] carried out in-depth research on the history of Russian military cinema. A. M. Voronov [20], V. A. Dronova [5], A. V. Lyamzina [10], V. A. Khokhlov [7] specially devoted articles to cinematographic images of the Great Patriotic War. Many works are devoted to the pedagogical aspects of cinematography (for example, the article by E. S. Kulkin [9]). There are also publications on specific films on military topics, usually associated with individual personalities or key events in Russian military history (article by S. P. Bychkov about the film «Alexander Nevsky» [3]). A general analysis of soft power cinematography such forces as F.B. Akhmedov [1], O. A. Zhemchugova [22], O. Koine and V.A. Franz [8], A.V. Maslova [11], O. V. Ryabov [17].

However, the Russian military cinematography of the last two decades remains a poorly studied topic. At the same time, American cinematography is also underexamined in Russian science. We can note the isolated studies on the subject of American military cinema. These are, for example, the works of T.B. Ryabova and E.V. Pankratov [18], an article by I.V. Morozova on the genre of «biopics» in American cinema [13] (popular and in military service), an article by O.S. Yakusheva about the images of an Asian in Hollywood cinema (including military) [21].

For the cinema researcher, the question of the methodological grounds on which the sample of the films analyzed is made is important. Cinematography as an art form has a prolonged cumulative effect. Movies often gain popularity and cultural influence well after the time they were filmed and released. Classic World and Russian cinema should not be underestimated in terms of the degree of influence on contemporary culture. However, the author was interested in the image of the modern army and actual experiences of military culture. Therefore, the analysis of film premieres for the decade from 2010 to 2019 became a logical step. The author used the resources and genre identifier of the website kinopoisk.ru to compile the sample. The final sample included military films that were widely released in Russia during the specified period. We have limited the theme of the XX-XXI centuries, which corresponds to the short horizon of historical memory.

It is advisable to divide the identified films into categories according to the country of production. The United States, Europe, and Russia have rich and mature cinematic (and more broadly, artistic) traditions as well as unique historical traits. This influenced the content of the films. Different national schools of cinematography approach the construction of the plot, the images of the characters, the problems raised in different ways.

Within the framework of this article, an attempt was made to compare American, Russian, and European military cinema. First, American cinema has the greatest soft power potential. We understand by «soft power» the ability to seek from allies or even the population of adversary countries the necessary actions through an attractive lifestyle, culture, and diplomacy [15; 16]. High assessments of the potential of American cinema as an important component of the «soft power» of the United States, in particular – war cinema [19. P. 61] are given by many researchers [8; 17. P. 168; 22]. Secondly, Russia and the United States have similar claims to the status of the «main winner» in World War II. The events of the greatest war in history have become an important part of national identity and self-determination, political mythology, and the strategy of the historical memory of both countries. Therefore, it is especially interesting to trace how the practices of artistic cinematic reflection on the problems of armed defense of the Motherland and, more broadly, military violence, are changing. Thirdly, Russia and Europe became the main arena of the Second World War and then the Cold War, survived the Nazi occupation, liberation, and separation by the Iron Curtain. However, at the same time, Russia, unlike Europe, did not have the experience of surrender to the «Axis powers», state collaboration with the nazis, and complicity in crimes against humanity. Therefore, the perception of military events in Russia and Europe should be very different.

#### **Features of American military films of the 2010s.**

The United States released 9 war films of its own production in Russian distribution: «Brothers», «Restrepo», «The Lord of the Storm», «In the Land of Blood and Honey», «Law of Valor», «Young Hearts», «Survivor», «Unbroken», «Hacksaw Ridge».

Most of these films are devoted to the military conflicts of the second half of the 20th century: Afghanistan, Iraq, Yugoslavia, etc. We consider this an important feature of American military cinema – American society uses modern stories as a driver of American cultural policy in the world. Moreover, the features of current American history are 100% reflected in the plots of these films. So, 5 out of 9 listed films directly or indirectly tell about the «Global War on Terrorism», which is the focus of American foreign policy from 2001 to 2015.

An important feature is a meta-military plot and semantic nature of American cinema. In addition to war and its vicissitudes, they always have a history of peaceful life. This determines the transitive genre character – American war films are often melodramas at the same time.

A common feature of the films analyzed is the markedly personal heroism of a particular soldier. We can say that the general individualism of American culture is manifested in cinema. But this transformation took place in 1980-2000. [2; 18]. Until that time, American cinema showed not only the heroism of specific people but also collectivism in the form of a fighting brotherhood. Individualization and personalization are manifested with negative characters. For example, in Soviet and Russian films of the military genre, with rare, plot-based exceptions, opponents are a generalized, depersonalized evil. In American films, «evil» is personified and concretely [6]. This technique objectifies evil, makes it a tangible focus of a stronger emotional experience. Of course, the personalization of the goodies is just as striking. This creates positive feedback and ensures the growing popularity of the biopic genre in American cinema [13].

It would be wrong to think of American cinema as one-dimensional. We also trace the critical perception of militarism and the aggressive foreign policy of its government inherent in American society. A striking feature is the criticism of the self-confidence of the American military leadership in the context of the fact that this self-confidence is paid for by the lives of «good and ordinary guys». The basis of the plot of «Brothers», «The Lord of the Storm», «The Law of Valor», «The Survivor» is the incompetence or overestimation of one's military talents, a lack of understanding of the principles of interaction between people in a combat unit and their perception of each other's actions. The apotheosis of the American deconstruction of military violence in genre cinematography is «Hacksaw Ridge». This is a film about the fate of Desmond Doss, who became the first conscientious objector to military service, but received the highest US military honor for his heroism in the Battle of Leyte, the liberation of the Philippines and the Battle of Okinawa. «To be a military man and not to carry weapons, to save and not take away human lives is a military duty» – this is the idea of the film. Along with the deconstruction of the idea of military heroism, American films are characterized by the devaluation of the role of the soldier as a hero and protector of society. The heroes of «Brothers», «Young Hearts», «The Lord of the Storm», «The Survivor», and «The Law of Valor» are characterized by a lack of military discipline or its systematic violation, an excessive urge to violence.

#### **Features of Russian military films of the 2010s.**

Russian military cinema has features and similarities and differences from the American one. In the period from 2010 to 2019. Russia has released 11 war films: «A Life-Long Night», «Silent Outpost», «Burnt by the Sun 2. Citadel», «White Tiger», «Atonement», «August. Eighth», «Catharsis», «Hospital», «Stalingrad», «Brest Fortress», «Link of Times».

Russian cinematography is focused not so much on the subject of modern conflicts, as on World War II, in contrast to the American one. Naturally, first of all, directors shoot films about events on the Eastern European front. 8 out of 11 films are dedicated to the Great Patriotic War. Three other films («Silent Outpost», «Catharsis», «August. Eighth») show the history of peripheral military conflicts of modern Russia.

There is no talk of any deliberate deconstruction or devaluation of the images of servicemen in Russian movies. The military man is a hero defending the Motherland and his loved ones. The slogans of the films also speak about this: «I am dying, but I do not give up», «Not a step back!» The only exception is the film «Hospital», which depicts war in a more multidimensional way. The war in it is not just a «stage» for the accomplishment of the feat, but the difficult story of Inna Kuznetsova, a graduate of the Moscow Medical Institute. In 1946 she was admitted to a hospital for German prisoners of war.

The young woman heals and saves the lives of yesterday's enemies. The film explores not so much war and violence, but more such concepts as «mercy» and «medical duty» against the backdrop of the horror of the war years.

Most of the Russian films are associated with the landmark events of the Great Patriotic War: the doomed defense of the Brest Fortress, the battle of Stalingrad, a turning point for the course of the war. Regardless of the outcome of the plot, Russian films demonstrate that heroism and heroism are different things, there is a place for a feat in war, but there is no place for the search for personal glory. Although the image of the military in Russian cinema is unambiguously positive, we are forced to note that it is matched to the Soviet past.

### Features of European war films of the 2010s.

European cinema has released 7 films: «Lebanon», «Roundup», «Special Forces», «Coriolanus», «La mer à l'aube», «Into the White», «Cure: The Life of Another»

We cannot identify one dominant theme other than World War II. But for Russians and Americans, World War II was a tragic and heroic act of victory and saving the world from the Nazis' terror. This is the absolute focus of the recent history for the two allied countries. For Europeans, World War II was a story of defeat (Norway, Denmark, France, Holland, Belgium), defense alone (Great Britain), or guilt (Germany, Italy, Austria). It evokes a very complex set of historical experiences that can be traced in cinematography. Reflection of complicity in Nazi crimes against humanity becomes the central idea of European cinema. Often we are talking about the direct deconstruction of the image of the military as a defender and savior. European cinema seems to be trying to convey the idea that the soldier is a potential criminal and murderer. This can be seen in the films that are associated with the Second World War, and it is seen in the movie «Healing. The Life of Another», which is dedicated to the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993.

Contemporary European cinema deliberately avoids themes of iconic battles and military operations. And even if he refers to her, it is very original, as in the film «Dunkirk» of the American-European production. The plot of the film tells about Operation Dynamo, i.e. the evacuation of British, French, and Belgian military units from the European coast after being defeated by the Nazis. This is the story of an escape, which is presented as ... a triumph of the British army and navy. The servicemen and society in this film change places: it is the soldiers who need to be saved, and civilians who come to aid while the naval department refuses to participate in the doomed operation.

An important question is how the Russian viewers perceive these features of American, European and Russian movies? Do the viewers understand the features that are indicated in the article? We have analyzed reviews of users of the site kinopoisk.ru to answer this question.

It can be noted that audience set the general message of American, European and Russian films correctly. The reviews highlight the heroic image of the Russian / Soviet soldier in Russian films, draw attention to the great importance of the soldier as a defender of the Motherland and civilians. At the same time, the resentment of users is caused by the interpretation of the image of the soldier as a superhero who seeks personal glory in American films. Users notice that the nature of experiences in American cinema is biased towards the personal side.

An important issue of viewers' perception is the problem of reflection of war crimes against humanity in European cinema. We consider it appropriate to quote from the audience's review of the film «La mer à l'aube»: «"Repression is the business of the German army" - the head of the French administration tries to refuse to carry out the order, but finds himself drawn into it. And now the same person gives written permission to shoot at the hostages of the camp when they violate the order <...> The film clearly shows how easy it is to involve anyone in actions with which you deeply disagree. The film demonstrates how our familiar hierarchical system can easily turn into a death machine. It is only necessary for each of us to sacrifice our heart and give up our own thoughts and beliefs. How easy and dangerous it is to think that you can stay on the sidelines, and your inaction frees you from responsibility».

### Conclusions

The American war film genre has undergone dramatic changes over the past 10 years. Film companies have reacted to current political events, which has always been a hallmark of American cinema. Films about the Second World War and the Vietnam War are increasingly being replaced by films about the global war on terrorism.

The American national school is characterized by the glorification of the individual heroism of the soldier and the personification of the enemy. This allows the audience to concentrate their experiences and give them a distinctly personal character, to strengthen them. Russian films retain a generalized, partly depersonalized image of the enemy.

However, in American films, the image of the soldier is often devoid of unambiguity (it is not necessarily positive). Many military heroes are portrayed as narrow-minded or professionally unprepared for the protection of civilians and the fulfillment of the assigned task. We can talk about the devaluation of the role of the military as a defender and savior. Russian films are more unambiguous. The military man is almost a mythological hero, a defender who fulfills his duty rather than fulfilling a contract. The level of professional training of the Russian film soldier does not matter, since he is ready metaphysically, he was prepared by the whole of Russian history and culture.

Europe was created in the 2010s. fewer war films than Russia and the United States. World War II remains the focus of the directors' attention. But the way Europeans address these topics is different. European cinema is characterized by the theme of shared responsibility for crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis. In European cinema, the image of the military as a defender and savior is deconstructed. The soldier is either an accomplice in war crimes, or he needs to be saved. Based on this comparison, we can say that modern European cinema, getting into the Russian film distribution, broadcasts, if not directly harmful, then at least alien to the Russian traditions and historical experiences.

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