

## **The Role of Hollywood Cinema in Geopolitical Representation of the Middle East**

**Dr. Morteza Ghourchi** \* - Faculty member, Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

**Sepideh Sadat Mosaviyan** - M.Sc. Political Geography, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran.

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### **Abstract**

In recent decades, the role-playing of the media has paved the way for the emergence of a new discourse named popular geopolitics that has the potential to link public opinion to geographical policies. Researchers in the context of popular geopolitics seek to evaluate methods of representing geographical phenomena and geopolitical events in media such as cinema. The current study, given the significance of The Concept of the Political as a kind of discourse in popular geopolitics and its impact on public opinion, seeks to choose the Middle East geopolitical region as the subject of the Hollywood cinema representation to examine the structures that try to guide public opinion and increase its power in the region with the help of The Political tools such as political romanticism and political theology. In this context, selected works of cinema made during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama between 2000 and 2015 have been selected for this analysis.

**Keywords:** Popular Geopolitics, The Concept of the Political, Cinema, the Middle East, Representation.

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\* E-mail : m\_ghourchi@sbu.ac.ir

## **1. Introduction**

Critical geopolitics emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and in the 1950s. Critical geopolitics which showed considerable interest in creating a discourse in the field of international politics formed the basis of many discourses in geography which was ultimately known as a power technology (Kuus,2010:4). Thus, critical geopolitics sees the spaces of international politics not as just a 'Backdrop' against which real politics is played out, but as implicated in the performative relations that constitute the realm of international affairs (Dodds, Carter,2014:15).

Hence, Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* appeared in politics as a power discourse in 1927. This discourse, which emphasizes the distinction between friend and enemy, elaborates on the formation of a united political society in which a group of people distinguish themselves from others with the help of this discourse (Schmitt,2014:12). Thus, in Schmitt's view, the enemy is the one who accurately appears for the public and forms another in the public mind, which is known as a threat to the essence of our existence, with whom, in exceptional cases, conflicts are possible. As mentioned, *The Concept of the Political* tries to create an effective political discourse for everyone by using the tools such as political theology and political romanticism, and thus the way for its connection to political power and legitimacy of government and political system is paved.

Political theology can be seen as a process of linking a fundamental model of political order to a theological model (Sirczuk,2018:3). In political theology, Schmitt states that the attempt to get rid of sovereignty is futile and there will be no effective legal order without sovereign authority (Schmitt,2014:8). Schmitt considers the ruler to be the representative of God on earth. The rulers can, as repeatedly expressed in religious books, form "Us" and the "Other" to achieve their political goals in the public mind with the help of theological concepts such as good and evil, to the extent that getting killed for one's country is considered important because of these theological beliefs.

Another tool of *The Concept of the Political* is political romanticism, in which the nature of reality does not matter because it takes a poetic aspect on the way to the desired state, i.e., emotional content is created based on the political motivation which has a great influence on the audience. Also, in political romanticism, the state becomes a work of art, and the realities of politics become an opportunity to create a work of art, which is the creative output of the romantic person in politics (Schmitt,1986:125) and the

distinction between us and the Other is formed poetically in the public mind this time. In the following, we will deal with the distinct concepts of East and West in Edward Said's views in his book, *Orientalism*. He believes, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experience." (Donzé-Magnier 2017:2,3).

Throughout history, governments have allied closely with film production companies, including Hollywood, because of the potential of the cinema media, probably because they believed that films could tell the truth in light of the existing political situation, and thus used cinema to manipulate the public opinion, especially in times of crisis or war (Dodds,2005:83).

In this regard, popular geopolitics has evolved over time into a developed form of critical geopolitics that represents the discourses of world politics in the visual context of cinema (Dodds, Dittmer,2008:440,443). Finally, we point out to the Political of George W. Bush and Barack Obama who have represented their political positions in the Middle East in the period 2000-2005 in the Hollywood cinema scene and in the context of populist geopolitics with the help of political tools such as political theology and political romanticism.

## **2. Methodology**

In the current study, descriptive-analytical research method has been opted for and data has been collected in the form of documentary and library studies, and film content analysis.

## **3. Theoretical foundations of the research**

Geopolitics can be considered in relation to the geography of international politics, which examines the relationship between the physical environment and foreign policy behavior (Tuathail and Agnew,1992:191). Critical geopolitics can be considered as a sub-branch of human geography. Since traditional political geography was not able to explain discourses in politics, critical geopolitics emerged by Simon Dalby in the 1970s and 1980s) Kuus,2010:2,4). Critical geopolitics is a poststructuralist approach to the study of international politics and its purpose is to confirm and explain the role of geography in international relations and to avoid reducing the importance of geography. In other words, critical geopolitics considers the spaces of international politics as scenes to hide real politics, which ultimately constitute the embedded executive relations of international affairs (Dodds and Carter,2014:15).

With the advent of critical geopolitics, the way was paved for presenting

discourses on the world stage. Geopolitical discourse explains the actions taken by elites and those in power in the dominant countries to justify their global policies and to demonstrate their exercise of power in the form of a natural right for the public. In other words, geopolitical discourses are systems for explaining and interpreting cultural and political concepts that are used by leaders and those in power to change the meaning of their actions and decisions and to justify them in the eyes of people. In fact, by analyzing geopolitical discourses on the critical geopolitical platform, we are analyzing the language of those in power and political elites on the global politics scene. (Kurecic,2015:2,3,4).

In this regard, The Concept of the Political entered the world as a discourse of power and tried to create an effective political discourse for all by using tools such as political romanticism and political theology and thus the way for its connection with political power and legitimizing the government was paved and the political system was created. We can also think of The Concept of the Political as a discourse that, by creating us and the Other, always strives for its authority in order to make the Other an enemy.

### **3-1. Carl Schmitt's approach toward the Concepts of the Political**

Carl Schmitt is an influential twentieth-century German philosopher and political theorist. He wrote the first version of The Concept of the Political, which was his most famous work, in 1927. This work can be considered as a statement in defense of the view that real politics is based on the distinction between friend and enemy (Schmitt,2014:5). This distinction can be considered as a symbol of collective identity or difference. In other words, a distinction can be considered decisive if it includes a political feature. The social unit is then based on the aggregation of theories that revolve around this fundamental distinction, and thus this political community in which human life is in its hands can declare its superiority over other social groups and, by creating an alliance, prevent violence within political borders (Schmitt,2014:12).

In Schmitt's view, the distinction between friend and enemy refers to a kind of semantic differentiation. This distinction can be manifested in the form of one "Us" and the "Other" in the field of politics and recounts to us The Concept of the Political.

In fact, friend and enemy conflicts constitute the basic code of The Concept of the Political, and these distinctions can pave the way for a war. Schmitt puts it this way: When those in power make a friend-enemy distinction based on non-political issues. The antithesis which gave rise to this

distinction is no longer a religious, moral, or economic concept, but a political one (Arditi,2008:7,22).

As we have stated, in discussing the friend-enemy distinction, Schmitt emphasizes that the enemy is not the enemy of me, but the enemy of us, thus linking the concept of the enemy to a political one. He explicitly states that a person's rational action has limitations that are determined by the heroic nature of the group in which the person is a member, and as a result, two states emerge: 1. Creating the concept of unity in the mind of a person who thinks that a person shares characteristics with others that lead to the final convergence of interests. 2. The group that corresponds to everyone in the name of humanity is in clear opposition to a group called the spokespersons against humanity, and therefore they are considered as an enemy with the label of deserving to disappear from the world stage. In his book, Schmitt states that humanity has no enmity as a whole. All people belong to humanity, and in this case, if a person differentiates within humanity with the label of the Other and denies a person's humanity and condemns him to destruction will no longer be known as an enemy, but as a peace-breaker (Schmitt,2016:15,16).

According to Schmitt, politics in the crudest sense is the presence of those who are with you and others who fight against them, and thus the struggle and the possibility of being killed is essential to The Concept of the Political (Schmitt,2016:9). The existence of nations, along with the strong sense of their common identity, motivates them to fight and die to preserve the group, and as long as human beings live this way, they will endure the dictatorship of a ruler who will take any action in their name (Schmitt,2014: 12-13).

Therefore, it can be said that politics is the basis of all things. The concept of politics itself includes 2 sections that are in fact subdivisions of The Concept of the Political that includes political theology and political romanticism. In fact, The Concept of the Political examines the political situation in the world through these two cases, and then in the age of information technology, it shows how cinema reflects politics in the world, and by portraying the political theology and political romanticism in films lead the viewer's mind to create us and the other.

### **3.1.1. Political theology**

Political theology is an essential appendix to Carl Schmitt's book The Concept of the Political in explaining his understanding of the concepts of government, sovereignty, and politics (Schmitt,2014:33). Political Theology was written by Carl

Schmitt in 1922 named "Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty," In which he shows the relationship between politics and theology (Rae,2016:567). While expressing the concept of sovereignty as the determined nature of a political system, Schmitt addresses the principle that the core of a political decision is "a determined and spiritual decision"(Strong,2011:34).

Thus, Schmitt argues that political theology means the connection between a fundamental model of political order and a contemporary theological model. In the third chapter of his book Political Theology, Schmitt states, "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts, whereby, for example, the almighty legislator becomes the almighty God, and the concept of exception in jurisprudence is similar to a miracle in speech." Only with the understanding of his thoughts can we become aware of the theological thinking of the state in recent centuries (Sirczuk,2018:2,3).

According to Schmitt's statement of a sovereign or ruling power, a ruler is someone who decides in exceptional cases: If an individual or organization in a system of government has the ability to completely suspend the law and rely on the use of extrajudicial force to normalize the situation, that person or organization is called a ruler, and all laws are not considered a legal norm, but are based on the ruler's decision. In Political Theology, Schmitt points out that it is not possible to get rid of sovereignty because there will be no efficient and calculated legal order without sovereign authority (Schmitt,2014:8).

Political modernity is deeply connected with theological concepts: the specificity of modern politics states that in a modern society the establishment of a political order leads to an absolute center (Sirczuk,2018:6). In his book, Schmitt says, I believe that in the history of modern constitutional rights sovereignty is woven into dictatorship, and this is what connects democracy to sovereignty. According to Schmitt, Institutional ruling dictatorship is very democratic because it makes the ruling decision on the exception in the name of the people (Schmitt,2014:10).

According to Carl Schmitt, in fact, political theology is used as a tool of The Concept of the Political to distinguish between friend and enemy. Thus, today, the important concepts of the theory of government are the same as the theological concepts of state which have become customary following the ups and downs of history. In such a way that today the ruler is known as the representative of God on earth who can, as repeatedly expressed in religious books, form us and the Other to achieve his political goals in the public mind with the help of theological concepts such as good and evil, to the extent that getting killed for his/her country finds meaning through these theological beliefs.

### **3.1.2. Political Romanticism**

Political Romanticism is Schmitt's most controversial book published in 1919. In the process of political romanticism, politics become poetic and the subjects of the political, including political distinctions such as the distinction between the friend

and the enemy becomes aesthetic confrontations, and in the process of the play of emotions, political concepts become aesthetically effective words (Schmitt, 2019:26,41). Political romanticism expresses political discourses that always seek to achieve political goals. In this regard, with the dominance of the romantic story over its axis, it expands. The Concept of the Political distinctions also find a suitable context for becoming romanticism (Schmitt, 1986: 158). In political romanticism, reality is adopted from the content of one's emotional life (Schmitt,2019:35). In this process, reality does not disappear, but is linked to the dreamlike imagination of the person, and thus is justified in the eyes of the audience and its destructive effects are hidden (Schmitt,1986:85).

As mentioned earlier, political romanticism has an emotional attitude towards political implications. In this regard, Schmitt speaks of a criterion in which the romantic person, in an opportunistic way, confronts the realities that have gone through a course of history by flying from the last target of his mental imagination and in this way a narrative is formed which is the reason for its political motivations, but this narrative never seeks to deny its historical content, but a discourse to persuade the public mind by stirring up the emotions of the audience. Schmitt also points out that politics, which literally talks about a kind of distinction between enemy and friend, is the best motivation for a romantic person to become a lofty goal in the target of his imagination for a kind of emotional accompaniment and approval in the eyes of the audience. Political romanticism is considered the most fundamental alternative to justifying political action (Luisetti,2011:54). Today, media such as cinema are the scene of political role-playing. Those who are in power have opportunistically ignored political romanticism in the cinema, and thus the producers of such films engage the minds of the audience in unrealistic scenes, and the goal of our actors and others in the world is to cultivate their minds in this direction. Political romanticism flourished in the United States and Hollywood is a sensible example.

#### **4. Research Findings**

By being aware of the role and importance of geography in the emergence and development of powers, we create geographical spaces for “Us” and “Others” on a planetary scale in Edward Said's theory, especially in the field of Oriental studies. He has been able to show the concept of alienation to the audience well. Edward Said, a Palestinian critic of comparative literature refers to this set of activities with the term Orientalism. He notes that Orientalism does not mean Europeans' imaginary notions of the Orient, but rather actions accumulated from successive generations in which material investment has been made (Said,2019:26). Said goes on to say that the effects of these distinctions are called "Orientalist discourse", which affects the understanding of Western affairs and behavior (Donzé-Magnier,2017:

1). In particular, Edward Said noted that the Middle East and its inhabitants are typically backward, fossilized or bizarre in the face of the modern and progressive West (Dodds, Carter,2014:68). In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses the differences between East and West. This discourse has been very influential in representing the political affairs of Carl Schmitt, which is one of the notable topics of this research. These representations of the East cross the line of distortion very quickly and are considered by fiction and media such as cinema, and then enter the realm of imagination in the popular culture of the West forever. In general, orientalism is the method we use to establish domination and authority over another. This adds to the importance of examining the representation of the East in the media, and has led us to further analyze the geopolitical representation of the Middle East in the media.

Cinema flourished immediately after the First World War and in the mid-1890s (Jacobs,1999:1). Today, films are considered as a tool that anyone can watch for a few hours of their daily lives and imagine themselves in a world between reality and fantasy.

Many cinema theorists today tend to bewilder the viewer's mind with unrealistic scenes, or illusions, when they see the film. Basically, film sequences are manipulated and controlled by the filmmaker based on specific goals with the help of the camera's mechanical abilities when recording "Reality". But the audience observes the events just at the time of the event in the film, as if the reality has happened again, this time on the screen. A film is made by choosing focal length, angle of view, etc., and ultimately creates a work of art that has the ability to influence the public mind. Neville Carroll defines illusion as something that "Deceives the viewer or can deceive the viewer." Deception means that it stimulates the viewer's illusion to believe the false beliefs that have been used for specific purposes in the film (Allen,1993:21,22,30,31,33).

Munsterberg identifies and expresses the four mental activities that the audience engages in while watching the film: The first dimension is attention, through which the spectator can pay attention to the object. This is done by placing the camera and moving it to create a pan and close-up. The second and third dimensions include memory and imagination. These two activities allow the viewer to create compact processes and manipulate time, the concept of rhythm, the possibility of creating flashback through montage effects. The fourth is emotion. The main purpose of showing the film is to arouse the emotions of the audience. Such experiences go beyond the

appearance of the material world and help the viewer to achieve a satisfying aesthetic experience that is in line with the goals of the filmmakers. In this process, it can be said that "Reality" and "Experience" undergo imaginary changes. Thus, in the form of discourse, they "Reproduce" or "Replicate" the hidden social and political structures of power. To better understand the effects of cinematic media in the public mind (Gazetas,1997:10,13,21). Let me briefly tell you about the representation process. Representation means using language, signs, and images to tell meaningful narratives of the world to others that represent an objective reality for the audience (Hall,1997:15). "What distinguishes the modern period from other periods is that the world has become an image as a whole," Martin Heidegger said in a 1938 lecture on *The Image of the World*. Today, the world is organized by man as an image(Ahmadi,2017:27). Klaus Dodds argues that the very large, silent, dark space of cinema in general provides an opportunity to convey messages about the world that few governments, especially in exceptional circumstances and during war, can use. That is why Hollywood worked with the Pentagon and other agencies, such as the CIA, to produce films that appear to support American views of the wartime (Dodds,2006:119). Hence, it seems that today the institutions of power and consequently the countries and world powers have put the use of cinema on their agenda as a means to achieve their goals, including showing the distinction between friend and enemy.

#### **4.1. Popular Geopolitics**

During our research, we found that the focus of critical geopolitics on discourse has kept geopolitics away from the people and its presence in politics (Dittmer,Bos:2019:57). In this regard, popular geopolitics became increasingly popular in the literature of geography in the 1990s. One of the experts in the field of popular geopolitics is Klaus Dodds. In fact, it can be said that popular geopolitics is a favorite field in critical geopolitics that has become increasingly popular under the branches of political geography. During this period, narratives and representations of world politics were introduced and studied in various institutional and visual contexts, including cinema, newspapers, cartoons, caricatures, etc. (Dodds,Dittmer,2008: 440,443).

Popular geopolitics can be considered a process that is made in an elite culture and made available to the public through mechanisms such as cartoons, magazines, films, etc. The term "Popular" has been used because of its collective nature and the importance of the presence of the people in

explaining and changing political discourses in popular geopolitics (Pinkerton, Benwell,2014:13).

The popular geopolitics that we are dealing with in this research can be summarized in 3 steps:

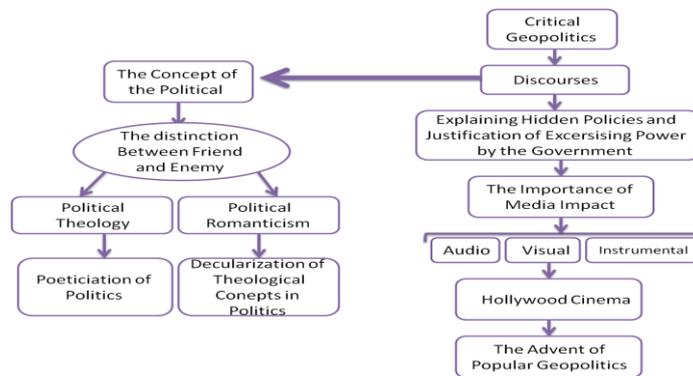
1.Since the production of mass media in the 20th century, global connectivity has intensified. In this regard, the media, as global currents, connect places and events (Dodds,2007:147). In general, streams express how concepts are conveyed. Thinking about popular geopolitical currents requires us to consider technologies such as cinema that allow the transmission of concepts (Dittmer, Bos,2019:65). Today, media such as cinema, which play a key role in representing world politics and provide the basis for mass entertainment and storytelling, are of great importance in popular geopolitics (Dodds,2005:77). Thus, the geopolitical power of cinema lies not only in its distribution but also in the way events, people and places are arranged, and thus films can stimulate all kinds of emotional investments and demands for political action through the representation of places and people (Dodds,2007:149).

2.It should be said that the media often frame events and processes and therefore play an important role in the interpretation or structure of the narrative. A medium such as cinema has the ability to justify their policies in the public mind by using popular imagination in line with the goals of political leaders (Dodds,2005:75).

3.Popular geopolitical resources, such as films, have led to the creation and reproduction of instances of geopolitical ideas and traditions that help preserve particular national views of governments (Dodds,2006:127). In Dodd's view, popular geopolitics used to express how various societies and states try to show their world and position in a legal and logical way, and thus it is quickly used by the political elites as a powerful propaganda tool to demonstrate epic stories about the nation's formation and identity politics (Dodds,2005:77). Billig argues that nationalism and concepts of international politics are constructed through a continuous iterative process of visual images. Since the invention of cinema, governments have relied on the power of the moving image to help create sentiment about national and international status (Dodds & Carter,2014:16). In this study, we also examine Carl Schmitt's the political as a discourse in the field of popular geopolitics, which through the film industry represents the distinctions between friend and enemy in the world politics, i.e., forms a kind of us and another in the public mind.

Today, governments are using the media capacity of cinema and Hollywood films, which have the power to distribute globally. There are many examples of governments and leaders using cinema to manipulate public opinion. They are used especially in exceptional cases such as war (Dodds, 2005:83).

**Figure 1. Representation of the formation of Carl Schmitt's the political discourse in the context of popular geopolitics**



**4.2. The concept of the political, Hollywood cinema and popular geopolitics**

Nowadays, many popular geopolitical cultural products, including cinema, have provided a part of the task of geopolitical representation. Thus, cinema plays an important role in geopolitical representations. In this article, we examine the political of the two presidents between 2000 and 2015, and then examine many of the Hollywood films that, in line with the discourse of President George W. Bush and Barack Obama in the Middle East, highlight the politics of alienation through Hollywood cinema.

**Table 1. Middle East Hollywood films made during the presidency of George W. Bush and Barack Obama**

Barack Obama's discourse discourse				George W. Bush's			
Movie Poster	Movie content	Production Year	films	Movie Poster	Movie content	Production Year	films
	Representing scenes from the fight against terrorism with the help of political theology and referring to the second Gulf War	2010	Green zone		Competition over energy, economic and social inequalities, representation of the concepts of political theology	2005	Syriana

	Representation of scenes from the fight against terrorism and the killing of bin Laden with the help of political theology tools	2012	Zero dark thirty		Representation of 9/11 and terrorist attacks, instilling patriotism with the help of theology and political romanticism	2006	World trade center
	Representation of scenes from the fight against terrorism and the induction of patriotism through the tools of political romanticism	2013	Lone survivor		Representation of 9/11 and terrorist attacks, instilling patriotism with the help of political romanticism	2006	United 93
	Fight against terrorism with a soft war approach and the use of drones with the help of the tools of political romanticism	2014	Good kill		How terrorism was formed and our representation and another with the help of political theology	2007	The kingdom
	Representation of scenes from the fight against terrorism and the induction of patriotism and alienation through the tools of political theology	2014	American Sniper		Representing scenes of terrorist hostage-taking and another show using the tools of political romanticism	2007	A mighty heart

#### 4.2.1. George W. Bush Politics and Hollywood Films

George W. Bush is considered the 43rd president of the United States between 2001 and 2009. In 2001 following the September 11th attacks, George W. Bush changed his approach in the Middle East during a speech, saying: we are fighting against prejudices that are committed to destroying us. We saw that repression and despair on the other side of the world could bring suffering and death to our streets (Bush,2008a). He also said at the

September 11th Memorial: one-day justice will be given to evil men and battles will take place in distant lands. They will learn that the desire for freedom is in the heart of every man, woman and child living on earth, and until that happens, we ask our God to take care of his forces in war (Bush, 2008b).

As stated earlier, in Schmitt's view, war is not the main concept of politics. Rather, it is recognized as an ever-present possibility as a strategic presupposition that determines human thinking and vision in specific ways, and thus creates specific political behavior (Schmitt,2016:61). One of the most important foreign policies of George W. Bush after the September 11th terrorist attacks was the declaration of war on terrorism. In his statement, he called any country that supported terrorism a hostile regime. In this regard, he announced the three countries of North Korea, Iran and Iraq, and said that these countries are the refuge of terrorists, the financier of them and the axis of evil (Brandus,2018). Among the wars that took place in the name of humanity during this period include: The American war with Afghanistan, the war with Pakistan, the second Persian Gulf War, the war with ISIS, the 33-day wars and the 22-day wars. Accordingly, world powers, including the US government, in exceptional cases, which is the fight against terrorism, express their discourses with the help of political tools such as political romanticism and political theology to distinguish between a friend and an enemy in politics and a kind of us and another. They create popular geopolitics in the public mind through the media. In this distinction, terrorism, and subsequently, Muslims in the Middle East have been the target of many Hollywood films. During this time, films such as: *Syriana* in 2005, *The World Trade Center* and *United 93* in 2006, *The Mighty Heart*, and *The Kingdom* in 2007 were made in Hollywood cinemas with the discourse content of George W. Bush.

Films that have shown the politics of George W. Bush to the public with the help of the Political theology include:

1. The 2005 film *Syriana*, directed by Stephen Gaghan is more like a jigsaw puzzle game that takes the audience from one place to another, from Tehran to Washington, Geneva, Beirut and Saudi Arabia, and with a thrilling drama genre and at the same time a political realism ignites George W. Bush's the political from oil policies to terrorism, arms smuggling, the power of the global economy, as well as references to social inequality and corruption in the Middle East. In the opening of the film, we see a background with a cold image that shows a depressed atmosphere and at the same time a crowded

view of restless people looking for work. In these images, the Middle East can be seen in the eyes of Eastern wage workers: tired, sad, and inflamed. This image shows another kind in the eyes of the audience that needs peace and justice.

In another part of the film, Dino Whiting, the director of a law firm in the United States, says that "Our job is to find the problem and then solve it. The corroboration of Conex and Celin makes the most lucrative hidden politics on the condition of chaos in the Middle East," addressing hidden politics in the Middle East. A sequence from the film by Brian Woodman, an energy analyst, says that 90% of everything is in the Middle East, and that the first and second Gulf Wars and all the wars in the Middle East continue to the last breath until you (the oil-rich Middle East) lose your massive oil resources. This sequel is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt's *The Political*. In his book *Political Theology*, Carl Schmitt says that the state and its ruler by nature, in order to consolidate and expand their power, show the distinction between friend and enemy (Schmitt, 2014,15), a distinction that, as Edward Said writes about, has been invested materially and spiritually by the West for many years, and has now become a natural right throughout the history (Said,2019:26).

Hollywood has sought to advance George W. Bush's political interests by demonstrating the principle of political distinction, i.e., alienation in the Middle East. The film goes so far as to show scenes of a missile being sold by an American to an arms dealer in Tehran and then handed over to terrorist groups in Saudi Arabia, and finally a terrorist operation and the explosion of an oil tanker, causing extensive damage. American companies enter the region. These trumpet scenes with sound effects really nail the audience in place. Scenes that deal with propaganda in the field of terrorism and by showing the wills of terrorist people under the pretext of Jihad in the way of God and showing people who give up their worldly life under the influence of terrorist thoughts in order to spread the faith from their point of view and achieve justice, while the meaning of justice is something else. This film shows that many young people are misled by the deceptive thoughts and demonic politics of terrorism and become a dangerous one under the influence of their discourses.

*Syriana* depicts political ideas that have become customary through theological concepts. For example, in a sequence from the film, Dean Whiting tells Bennett Halliday that the Bible also says that there are many ways to enlighten Europe, and thus tries to justify their policies by justifying

them in the audience's belief or in another scene in the film quotes a religious teacher at a religious school in Saudi Arabia as saying, "There is no way to build a bridge between human originality and modern life through free trade, and this is impossible, and religion and government are both of the same concept called Qur'an. The pain of life in this modern world will not be solved by a free society, and free states and Christian technology have failed." This sequence tries to portray Muslims as petrified and rudimentary in front of the audience, who see trade and economics as opposed to religious beliefs, and for me evoked the orientalist association of Edward Said, who stated: The Middle East and its inhabitants are usually portrayed as backward, mysterious, and bizarre people as opposed to the modern, developed, and progressive West (Dodds, Carter,2014:68).

2. The film *The Kingdom* is a 2007 action film directed by Peter Berg with an action and political genre, which refers to the formation of terrorism in Saudi Arabia. The rise of terrorism in the present age has created a state of exception for all countries, and in addition to understanding the concept of friend and enemy of Carl Schmitt, the wars in the name of humanity and world peace under George W. Bush have made it clear to all. The Hollywood industry has used these concepts in many of its films. *The Kingdom* film shows how the film industry portrays the Arabs as evil, petrified, and anti-Western. Peter Berg represents the American's understanding of Islam and the Middle East in his film, relying on Edward Said's orthodoxy.

In the opening of the film, there is a flashback to US-Saudi political relations, a history of Western energy exploitation, the Persian Gulf War in Iraq, and how al-Qaeda's terrorist network grew, and finally, the September 11th incident with the help of computer effects and narratives and effects. The sound shows that the sphere plunges the spectators deeper than the imaginations of otherness.

The film first shows melodrama and action scenes from a terrorist bombing during a baseball game at the American Oil Company camp in Riyadh. Meanwhile, the leader of this terrorist operation is watching the operation from the top of a building with his son. An Arab child, far from a political and evil mentality, is painting with content and colors full of hope and expressing his gentle childish spirit, but a few seconds later, with the start of a terrorist operation forced by his father, he sees scenes of explosion of dust and blood, as his father says, the destruction of the devils is the best way of Jihad in the way of God. And then a person runs to the baseball field and

explodes and kills the people around him in a sad and scary tragedy by reciting the testimony and showing that he is a Muslim and instilling the concept of his political theology in the eyes of the spectators. The Kingdom has tried to show Islamophobia in the eyes of everyone. Scenes of the brainwashing of Arab teenagers in a playground, trained teenagers who carry out terrorist operations by their fathers, so that in the final scene of the film, Abu Hamza, a follower of Bin Laden, asks his son to follow his way. Continue his way. These scenes tell me the meaning of Carl Schmitt's the concept of the political in his book *Political Theology*, who believes that the ruler, who is the leader of the terrorist group, is like the representative of God to the terrorist group. The justification of his followers is theological. Thus, by showing scenes of the distinction between good and evil in this film, he criticizes the policies of terrorism and highlights the other and shows their evil and absurd goals, thus trying to justify the hidden policies of the United States in another context to the public.

3. Scenes from the 2006 *World Trade Center* film directed by Oliver Stone represent political theology in a way that leads the audience to make a clear distinction between friend and enemy. The scene, which uses the camera to show a powerful view of Dave Karnes in a soft light setting while praying in the church after the event, shows an impressive and theological scene. He makes a covenant with his God to help the people of his country, thus nurturing humanity and patriotism in the eyes of the audience. Or a scene that contains a cold, dark image of Will Gimeno falling into a deep sleep under the rubble, when suddenly dreams of Jesus Christ in an arc background and gives him a bottle of water. This sequence tells the audience the necessity of the existence of God in the theological realm of the devil, and also tries to theologize politics through a clear representation of friend and enemy in the viewer's eyes.

Also, in the opening sequence of the film, a satellite image of the burning towers shows the explicit geographical implication that this event is more than a tragic tragedy in a local space (Dodds,2008a:1622).

Films that portray the politics of George W. Bush with the help of political romanticism in the public mind include:

1.The events of September 11th brought a profound yet effective shock to the minds of all Americans. Since then, many filmmakers have taken a new direction in their work in line with world developments, including Oliver Stone with his 2006 *World Trade Center* film, which portrays the true fate of two New York City firefighters, John McLoughlin and Will Jimeno tried

to portray some of the realities of September with the help of political romanticism in front of the audience.

It was really painful for New Yorkers and other human beings to watch scenes mixed with fear and anxiety about the free fall of human beings trapped in the tallest structures in the world. Sad scenes of men and women falling into the air with their helpless hands. The painful scenes of broken heads, broken bones were very poignant. These scenes remind me of a fragment of Fishel: "We watched, disbelieving and helpless in that day of savagery, those we loved fell; helpless and disbelieving" (Sahafzadeh,2010: 277). Oliver Stone did well in describing terrorism politics as a tragic tragedy in the eyes of his audience with the help of the tools of romanticism, which stirred up emotions such as anger, fear, worry and anxiety in the eyes of his audience. As we know, the homeland is often seen as a safe national space in which citizens can feel safe away from the realities of the anarchic world. In 2001, a new concern over the rise of terrorism threatened security in the American homeland, well represented in Oliver Stone. The concept of "Home" is of particular importance to the geographer who feels fear and security. In this film, "Home" is known as a place for family security and is far from the dangers in the outside world (Dodds,Carter, 2014:99,100,101). Scenes like John and Will reminiscing about their families, remembering hopeful memories of them under the rubble, or the scene where John says I am building a kitchen for Donna and there are no cabinets in the kitchen, so I have to get rid of this.

2.The film of United 93, directed by Paul Greengrass, was made in 2006. The film is about United Airline Flight 93, which was hijacked by a terrorist group during the September incident and eventually crashed. With the help of political romanticism, Greengrass has highlighted another in his film. Screenings of emotional phone calls from travelers to their families, which made it possible to feel their senses in the safe space of Hollywood cinema, made the film important to viewers of the 2006 Hollywood film. Emotions of fear, worry, love, and longing in the eyes of travelers materialized a baseless truth at the end of the politics game for the public. It also shows the courage and patriotism of United Flight 93 ambassadors who tried to thwart the terrorists in achieving their sinister goals. Travelers who, regardless of gender, race, or social class, were labeled as American citizens only by the fact that in critical moments, one can defend one's country with unity and a commitment to a patriotic spirit. Indeed, political romanticism has done well in the world of animation, portraying friend and enemy in the public mind as

an emotional narrative.

3. *A Mighty Heart*, directed by Michael Winterbottom, is a realist film based on the memoirs of Mariane Pearl. First, we see a video of a crowded view of the city of Karachi in Pakistan. A city for the people who, according to Edward Said, are backward, mysterious and strange versus modern West, developed and dispersed. Places, people, and oriental practices seen in a visual culture (Dodds, Carter, 2014:68).

The film tells the story of the courage of a female journalist and her murdered husband in the complex urban equation of parties, the complex terrorist groups, the hatred between tribes that have ridiculed their lives and countries in politics.

Winterbottom thus makes the policies of intervention in this country and the war with Afghanistan a natural right in the eyes of the audience. It seems to evoke the political implication that the Middle East needs peace, a peace and security that can only be achieved through American forces in the Eastern world. Political romanticism in scenes from the film shows us and the other well by arousing the emotions of the audience. A scene in which Mariane Pearl with her presence on CNN and her emotional requests from terrorists and scenes where her endurance to continue her life in difficult conditions were able to attract many audiences and address the terrorists as someone else who are trying to create insecurity in the world with the most brutal crimes. According to Schmitt, it is in the confrontation with the friend-enemy distinction that we will be able to be sure of what we are called and what is rational to us (Schmitt, 2016:14).

#### **4.2.2. Barack Obama's Politics and Hollywood Films**

Eventually, the 2008 US presidential election led to the victory of Barack Obama, and this time the black democrat Barack Obama entered the White House with a new discourse. In his speeches, Barack Obama stressed the need for military intervention in many cases, and in his statement noted that if we have an interest in pursuing peace and freedom outside our borders, it does not mean that every problem is a way out. It has a military solution. "The best hammer doesn't mean every problem is a nail," Obama said (Obama, 2014).

"The war in Iraq diverts our focus from our efforts to defeat al-Qaeda," he said in a speech. We need to get out of Iraq, but not in a way that fills the security vacuum in Iraq with terrorism, chaos and genocide, because then it could engage a large part of the Middle East and endanger the United States (Obama, 2006). As Obama came to power, some changes were made in US

foreign policy since the George W. Bush era took place in some Middle Eastern countries. Among the most important ones are the use of soft power instead of hard power in the Middle East, such as the use of drones at the center of its strategy in the fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan to prevent American soldiers from being killed. Between 2009 and 2017, the Barack Obama administration, with the help of popular geopolitics, expressed its political discourses through the cinema media. Over the years, films have been made that represent the distinction between friend and enemy through the tools of politics, including political romanticism and the political theology, but in the language of Barack Obama in the Middle East, which we will discuss below. Among the selected films in this period include: *Green Zone* in 2010, *Zero Dark Thirty* in 2012, *American Sniper* and *Good Kill* in 2014.

Films that portray Barack Obama's the political with the help of political theology in the public mind include:

1. *Green Zone*, a film directed by Paul Greengrass and produced in 2010. The genre of this film is war, political and exciting. The film refers to the exceptional situation in the aftermath of the September incident, which eventually led to the Second Gulf War under the pretext of massacres and the establishment of peace and security, the fight against terrorism in Iraq. In this film, Greengrass represents ample evidence of US discourse strategy, such as justifying its interventions in the Middle East. A critique of the moral contradictions of Western intervention, a critique of Western policies of indifference to the East, and similar critiques (Dodds, Carter, 2014:72). Sergeant Miller (Matt Damon), an American officer in the Iraq war, aims to bring massacres to Iraq, establish security in the Middle East, and eradicate terrorism, or the war between good and evil. As we have mentioned, this film tries to convey political thought to the audience in a modern way and mixed with theological patterns by showing the concepts of friend and enemy. Miller finally manages to see General Al Rawi. Before his death, he confesses that he met with Poundstone, the Pentagon envoy in Jordan, before ordering the invasion of Iraq, during which, contrary to Poundstone's claims, he assured them that Iraq had no more chemical weapons and the Pentagon has falsely claimed to be contrary to these statements, and in fact there were other motives behind the war.

2. *Zero Dark Thirty* by Kathryn Bigelow was made in 2012 in the genre of drama, politics, action, and history. The film tells the story of a six-year persecution operation and the assassination of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin

Laden by US forces. In this film, Bigelow represents the tough power of the United States in the war on terror. Demonstrating disruptive interrogation practices, intimidating torture by US intelligence agencies, and many of the most controversial tactics and strategies pursued by the United States, as well as many exciting Hollywood action moves, especially those surrounding the US military's war on terror (Dodds, Carter,2014:55,56,83). Scenes showing military camps based in Afghanistan. It's a reference to Barack Obama's political role in the war on terrorism, and according to Agamben, military camps are a space that opens when the state of emergency is becoming the norm. The war between good and evil that took place in the state exception after the September 11th incident, which shows the political theology of Carl Schmitt that is well represented in this film (Dodds, Carter,2014:48-49).

Also, the film's geographical illustrations emphasize a kind of Islamophobia and portray terrorists as a symbol of the Islamic world. A scene in which one of the perpetrators of terrorism utters the name of God when he blows himself up, and shows us and the other in the eyes of the spectators as if all Muslims are terrorists.

3.The American Sniper, a film in the genre of war, drama, politics, and realism was made in 2014 by Clint Eastwood, a member of the US Navy Commando Units.

In this film, there is a scene where Kyle is at a quandary of shooting or not shooting, and then shows flashbacks to Kyle's past. The second flashback shows that Kyle is in church with his family which is a symbol of Kyle's religiosity and his belief in God and then recalls the priest's sermon which says that human beings are not in a position to judge each other because everyone looks at things through their own eyes. Therefore, the greatness of other plans is incomprehensible to him, and only on the Day of Judgment, deeds and secrets will be clearly revealed. This sequence really refers to American ideology and politics in the Middle East, justifies a different view, and instills political theology in the audience as if the United States were sending its troops to war with the devil in order to establish security and peace in the world. While others misjudge the United States and the CIA.

Scenes from the film also well illustrate the political agenda of George W. Bush and Barack Obama in the fight against terrorism. Mustafa is standing on the first platform in shooting competitions and a person with the Iranian flag is next to him in the second place. Indeed, the placement of people from Iran, Iraq, and Syria in a photo frame can be reminiscent of George W.

Bush's remarks about the Shiite crescent and the portrayal of Muslims as one another, thus representing political theology in materialized ways.

Films that show Barack Obama's politics through political romanticism to the public mind include:

1. The Lone Survivor film, directed by Peter Berg in 2013, tells the story of the war, drama, politics and realism genres, the life of Marcus Luttrell and his comrades in the Red Wings operation in Afghanistan.

In his film, Peter Berg portrays Carl Schmitt's the political of distinguishing between friend and enemy in scenes involving US forces clashing with Taliban insurgents. Painful and disturbing scenes of helpless military captivity in the heart of the Taliban forces and the brutal actions of terrorists such as their attempt to behead him or the horrific scenes of wounded soldiers captured by Taliban gangs with unique music by Steve Jablonsky in which the audience in the dark atmosphere of the film is immersed and causes emotions such as fear, anxiety, insecurity in the eyes of the audience, and thus political romanticism has been able to arouse the audience's feelings in the geographical atmosphere created in the film and associate him with otherworldly policies.

The film also well illustrates the patriotism of American soldiers and the importance of us as saviors of human peace, especially in the opening scenes of the film by showing images of the US Navy's grueling exercises.

2. The film Good Kill, directed by Andrew Niccol, was made in 2014 in the genre of drama, politics, and war. In this film, Nicole discusses Barack Obama's political agenda, which is the use of soft power in the war on terror. Scenes of the importance of using drones to prevent American pilots from being killed in the war illustrate the state of emergency in the United States.

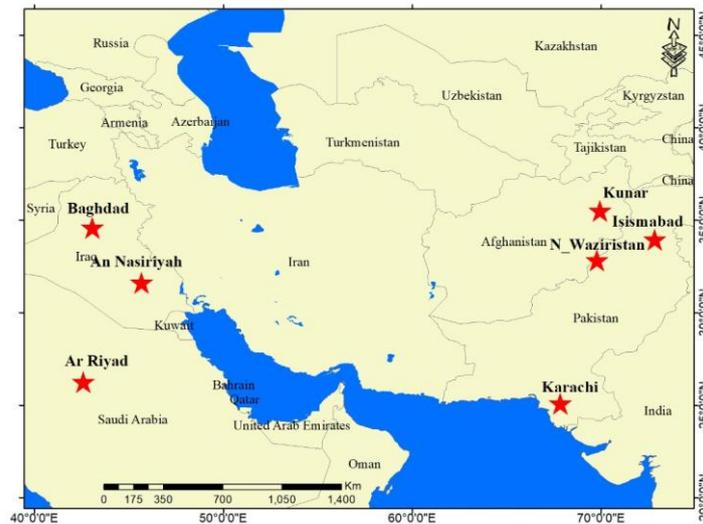
The film is more inclined to support the US military in the war on terror, so it is often politically and government-oriented (Dodds, 2008b:228). The images are displayed by drone receivers on the pilot's monitor screen at the beginning of the film, which looks at everything like the eyes of an eagle over the Middle East (Dodds, 2008a:1622).

All the dialogues exchanged between the pilots in this film show their positive view and satisfaction with the virtual war on terrorism. But in the meantime, Thomas Egan was once the pilot of the F-16 Falcon fighter jet. He is currently in charge of directing drones in the fight against Taliban terrorists in a barracks. Thomas Egan watches the war through the victim's glasses throughout the film. He wants a one-on-one war with terrorists. This

justifies many of the criticisms leveled at the use of drones in the war against evil forces, and shows that the United States, despite its ulterior motives, is using every means at its disposal to destroy terrorists, only to save the lives of its soldiers and to establish world peace. In a sequence from the film, Jack Johns, in a speech to a group of novice pilots, says about the reality and importance of this war: " This war is not like the Xbox game and is real and the pixels do not explode by pulling the trigger, but it is people's flesh and blood" In the face of this political event that evokes a sense of pride, admiration, and concern for American forces by the audience, political romanticism seeks to achieve American political interests by influencing the emotions of the audience.

Throughout the film, Nicole emphasizes the importance of the role of the family and women in American culture by portraying Thomas's grief for Pakistani women and children. This film shows a kind of cultural contradiction between the West and the East in viewer's eyes regarding the way terrorists use their women and children as a tool for their sinister purposes.

**Map 1. Representation of different regions of the Middle East in the films explored in this article**



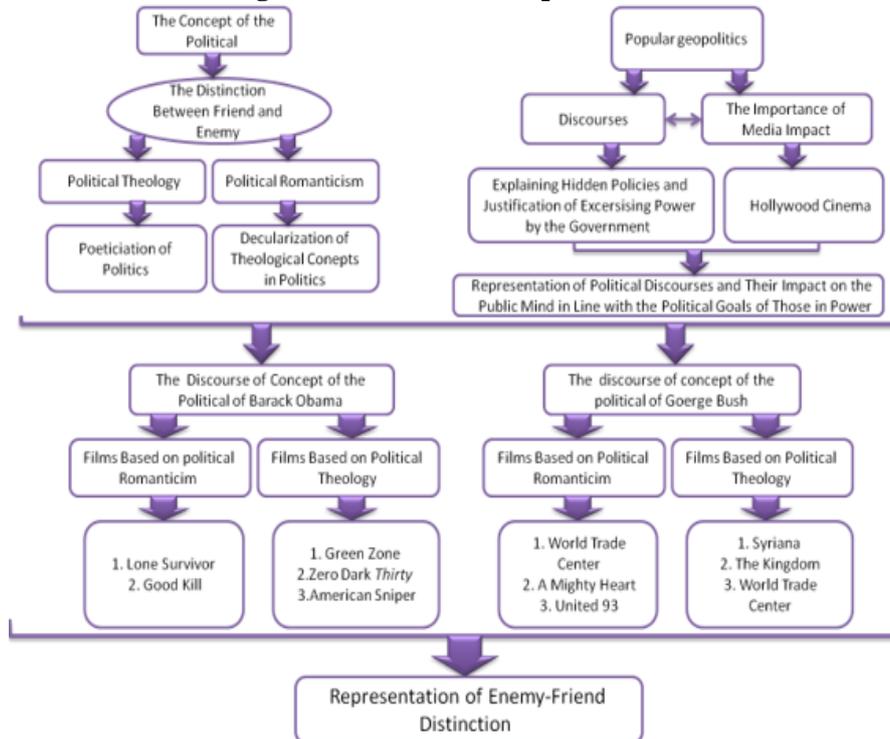
## **5. Conclusion**

At the beginning of this article, we discussed the importance of critical geopolitics and the role of geopolitical discourses in imposing the views of those in power. In this regard, and with the passage of time and the importance of the role of visual media, including cinema in the 1st century, a serious trend of geopolitics with the name of popular geopolitics in the field of global politics has spread. Powerful and political elites used the media on a popular geopolitical platform to express their political discourses and leading their audiences' thinking in line with their political goals. Therefore, the dark space of the cinema creates a suitable space for showing moving images with the genres of drama, war, action, realism, etc., in order to influence the emotions of the audience towards the goals of the filmmakers. Throughout history, many governments have used the media to promote their political affairs or show their political power. In this study, we investigated Carl Schmitt's political and his political views as well as the friend-enemy distinction, and then the representation this political discourse in the discourse of George W. Bush and Barack Obama with the help of Hollywood film industry, the production of films by directors such as Oliver Aston, Peter Berg and others portraying the war on terrorism to achieve world peace in the state of exception after September 11th, the display of the hard power of the United States under George W. Bush and the soft power of the United States under Barack Obama, especially drones in the war on evil, patriotism of American forces, demonstration of Western and Eastern distinctions, and orientalism of Edward Said, demonstration of evil aces with the label of Islam, and spread of Islam-phobia between 2000 and 2015 using political tools such as political romanticism and political theology.

Finally, we reviewed our films separately in a group based on representations of scenes from political romanticism and political theology under George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and highlighted the political significance of Carl Schmitt's the political, who distinguishes between friend and foe. The help of secularized theological concepts in films such as the 2006 World Trade Center film, which shows a scene in which Will Gimeno falls into a deep sleep under the rubble, when suddenly dreams of Jesus Christ in an arc background and gives him a bottle of water. This sequence demonstrates the necessity of the existence of God in the theological realm and expresses to the audience a sense of certainty about the distinction between us and the other through these theological concepts.

Or the representation of scenes that contain political romanticism and try to make friend and enemy inevitable through the poetics of political discourses and playing with the imagination of the audience, such as showing scenes from the Lone Survivor film in 2013, horrific scenes of soldiers being captured by the Taliban gangs with the unique music of Steve Jablonsky that immerses the audience in the dark atmosphere of the film and stirs up emotions such as fear, anxiety, insecurity in the eyes of the audience and leaves a strong image of us and the other in the public mind.

**Figure 2. The final conceptual model**



**7. Acknowledgment**

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