**Part I: The Enemy & Security**

Part I of the course considers the question of who are the enemies that threaten a country's security. In International Relations, the term 'state' is synonymous with the term 'country'. As such, references to 'state security' are references to how a country tries to protect itself and its people from threats. What films in this section reveal, however, is that the enemy isn't always as obvious as those in charge of security may purport. We will consider how *Dr. Strangelove, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, *WarGames, Clear & Present Danger, Syriana,* and *The Day after Tomorrow*, along with the paired readings (and one video), highlight real-world security issues.

*The Cold War Era*

Since the Treaty of Westphalia marked the start of the modern international system, sovereign states have worked diligently to ensure that no one power could rise to dominate the rest. With the exception of the Cold War Era, the international system has been multipolar in nature, with four or more actors dominating global dynamics. The only significant non-state actor has been the European Union (EU), a regional intergovernmental organization (IGO), an attempt by the comparatively smaller European states to balance power with larger competitors. As self-interested actors, states promote their agendas in pursuit of satisfying their domestic needs, and, like the EU members, cooperating when necessary—especially if they collectively feel threatened by a stronger or rising actor.

Three of these films are set during the Cold War. During this era of history, the United States (U.S.) was focused on spreading democracy and capitalism, while the Soviet Union (S.U.) aimed to spread communism and a command economy. As a means to promote their ideals, each

superpower focused on militarily securing itself, procuring allies, and arming themselves to the hilt as a way to deter mutual destruction through a nuclear exchange. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 effectively ended the Cold War, leaving the U.S. in the dominant role, with global expectations of policing the world. It also left piles and piles of weapons.

Even though *Syriana* isn't set during the Cold War, events in the film are certainly influenced by dynamics set in motion during the Cold War, particularly with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and U.S. support of counterinsurgents. Geopolitical containment of the Middle East during the Cold War ended when the Soviet Empire fell. The lack of a global balance of power left a vacuum that facilitated terrorist activities prompted by the perceived notion of western cultural infiltration and the actual global embracing of capitalism.

### Post-Cold War Economics & Power

The post-Cold War era introduced a multipolar power structure with numerous countries vying to influence global relations. The main players are what are now considered Global North countries, meaning they are advanced industrialized economies. These include the U.S., western European countries such as the U.K., France, and Germany, as well as the Asian powerhouse of Japan. The overwhelming majority of the world's countries are considered to be Global South, in that they lack a level of development that affords the majority of their population a decent standard of living. The Global South is economically very diverse, including emerging economies on the higher end of development with a standard of living averaging $10/day, along with those in the poorest countries with people struggling to survive on $2/day. Despite the fact they have not achieved post-industrial development, emerging economies like China and Russia are undeniably key global actors.

China gained global influence during the Cold War by becoming one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), vesting it with the power to veto any U.N. security decision. On the rise in the post-Cold War 1990s, China's success is the result of its shift to a capitalist economy while retaining its communist political structure. China has seen a decade of rapid development, now threatening to surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy, though it still lags behind considerably in development. Russia lost its footing, essentially declaring bankruptcy in 1998, but under Vladimir Putin (currently president, but has also served as prime minister to retain his authoritarian hold over the government) is ambitious to regain its former level of global influence.

These factors have not stopped either country from investing in their defense budgets. Russia's military invasion, expanding on its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, granted it considerably greater strategic access to the Black Sea, and thus the Mediterranean. Putin also decided to intervene in the conflict in Syria, backing Russia's long-time Cold War ally President Bashar Assad. Both of these forays are considered maneuvers to serve as a reminder to the west of Russia's ability to exert its military power and political will, willingly using hard power as its soft power influence proved, arguably, ineffective.

Meanwhile, China is working to increase its geopolitical reach through its soft power approach with its Belt & Road Initiative and hard power approach in securing territory in the South China Sea (SCS). Southeast Asia was of strategic importance to the U.S. during the Cold War to counter Soviet influence in the region and house U.S. military installments and troops. Thought the Cold War has ended, this region remains of vital economic importance to the U.S. and its Pacific allies—namely Japan and Australia—especially as China seeks to increase its

economic influence in Southeast Asia. To this end, China has moved toward military fortification in the region to anchor itself, as well as balance U.S. influence.

As they pursue their political agendas, countries may also desire to push a particular outcome on other countries and their people. One option is employing soft power. Relying on popular culture requires time and counts on the targeted audience being receptive and responding accordingly. Hard power affords states more direct influence. In some instances, however, they want to do so from behind the scenes, turning to covert methods to influence events and policies in other countries, to maintain their distance from the action. Manipulating events from afar offers 'plausible deniability' that they were involved. Maybe it's by encouraging a coup d'état, pushing for a particular political party to gain power, having someone assassinated, or supporting a minority group viewed as 'rebels' by the opposition. In most cases, countries want to be able to deny their involvement and protect their image, doing so by finding creative, indirect ways to try to make these things happen.

### *Human Security*

Both during and after the Cold War, countries have struggled to promote security. Historically, providing security meant protecting a sovereign state from external interference as well as conquering new territory to expand influence and access to resources. This approach to state-building radically changed with the inception of the United Nations (UN), established to promote peace and discourage expansionist skirmishes between countries. Note that the term 'state' is synonymous with 'country'. In international relations, state is the term most often used. This term differs from 'nation', which specifically means a historically and culturally similar group of people who want political recognition. When discussing international relations, it is

imperative to use the correct terminology (unlike the media, which regularly misuses these terms) to distinguish discussions of states and countries from nations, which are not sovereign.

The traditional idea of security, as it plays out in these films, is quite evident. Yet, as the Cold War played out, another aspect of security emerged. Governments and the organizations they collectively formed [called intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the United Nations, the World Bank, INTERPOL, and so on], recognized the need to address *human* security issues in order to promote development. Note that the terms First World (the US and its allies), Second World (the SU and its allies), and Third World (non-aligned countries) became obsolete when the Cold War ended, and Third World is now considered a derogatory term. The proper terms are now Global North (GN) and Global South (GS), or developed and developing. Consider that the Global South countries (those that have not achieved a level of post-industrialization) constitute about 80% of the world's countries, and an even greater percentage of the world's population. These countries have difficulty providing basic human security for the *overwhelming* majority of their citizens, hence the reason countries like China and Brazil have not achieved Global North status.

Human security involves ensuring basic human needs are met, ranging from access to clean water, medicine, nutrition, and social services like education, to basic rights and freedoms including protection from physical and psychological harm and abuses by a government or factions within the country. Consider that unemployment breeds discontent, which is demonstrated by the strong correlation between poverty and susceptibility to membership in a gang or radical ideological organization (such as fundamentalist religious affiliations). Debt in developing countries only works to undermine the building of an infrastructure that can help to alleviate poverty and provide opportunities, and thus, human security. Corruption is endemic on

a scale that no one in the Global North can appreciate unless they have worked or lived in the Global South.

Degrading environmental conditions increasingly pose human security threats. Global climate change, as is apparent in *The Day after Tomorrow*, considers a very different sort of security responsibility of a government. Both GN and GS struggle to address the systemic issues causing climate change, but GS countries especially lack the capability to handle effects including flooding, drought, deforestation, soil erosion, food shortages, planetary temperature increases, and erratic weather patterns.

Governments are responsible for protecting their sovereign borders from external threats. People often think of security mostly in terms of military protection from external threats, including other states and terrorist attacks. However, a country's ability to secure its citizens from attacks by the government against its own citizens or from rebel factions, raises different concerns and questions about how to secure people. Wealthy and powerful actors also deserve consideration, given the impact that global business networks, crime syndicates, and multinational corporations (MNCs) have on human security. These additional influences raise the question of who the actual enemy of the people is. If citizens rely on governments to protect them but those same institutions turn on their citizens or fail to protect them, those people lack recourse short of finding a way to fend for themselves.

While viewing these films, think about what it means to secure a state, who countries seek to protect, how domestic and international security issues coexist or collide, and a how country goes about achieving the objective of securing its state. Any discussion of security necessarily raises the issue of who the actual enemy is, and consequently who the government is protecting the populace from (or is it?), and what threats a government is trying to contain. Also

consider how countries and those running them work toward securing their states, their positions, and the population.