

The Russian Federation

Soft Power, Cinema and the BRICS

Film as knowledge system

- Representation
- Brand
- Soft power

→ Popular geopolitics

Context

- Joseph Nye, early 1990s
- Economy of symbols
- Economy of attention
- Dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of new states in the former Eastern Europe

- A dual task of nation building and nation branding

Russia vs the USSR

- De-coupling the two notions
- Contemporary Russia is a non-ideological state but it is often perceived as an ideological one due to its history
- The brand of the USSR (a military superpower) is often used by the Russian government as a securitization strategy

Internal vs external

- Films can be used to 'explain' government policy incl. foreign policy to its own people ('London has Fallen', 2016)
- However in Russia it is more complicated because Russia is not a nation state but a federation of nations
- → soft power for internal consumption

'Patriotic blockbuster'



Critical soft power



Screening soft power

- 2016 years of the cinema
- Film festivals around the world, incl the BRICS
- Multiple agents – competition for scarce resources, confusion, inefficient management (nothing like the work of the British Council)
- Delegation of responsibilities to private agents / commodification
- However another successful year for Russian films internationally (Cannes, Venice, etc.), a strong Oscar nomination
- Selection for Mostra 40 – Kirill Serebrennikov's 'The Teacher' – explores the issue of religious fundamentalism

Mechanisms

- Use of existing (Western) structures
- Creating independent structures and systems (RT) but even then their purpose is to critique western structures
- Visualising contexts and conflicts
- Collaborating with independent private agents
- Inconsistent strategy which appears to be like manipulative soft power