

License to Chill: James Bond and Détente in Film

Abstract:

The following paper aims to investigate how the détente period from 1963-1979 was portrayed in film. Détente as a policy significantly contributed to the ending of the Cold War, for it opened avenues of dialogue previously not available between the United States and Soviet Union. However, how the average person experienced détente or whether or not the policy impacted citizens lives at all is up for debate. This paper utilizes film as a unit of popular culture to understand détente's role in everyday life in the United States between 1963 and 1979. This paper specifically investigates James Bond films because of their creation during détente, their ongoing series nature, their inclusive rating system, as well their role as insights into the geopolitical landscape.

Background

On June 10, 1963, President John F. Kennedy addressed American University's graduating class. In a speech entitled "A Strategy of Peace," Kennedy warned of the dangers of current U.S. foreign policy towards the Soviet Union, highlighting that tensions between the two superpowers had already demonstrated their potential to destroy the world during the Cuban Missile Crisis (Kennedy, 1963). "A Strategy of Peace" would later come to be recognized as turning-point moment in the U.S. foreign policy approach of détente, leading to an evolution in the pursuit of such policy.

Détente has been largely defined as the "the relaxation of strained relations or tensions [as between countries]" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* s.v. détente). Author Jussi Hanhimaki, in his book *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War*, found that détente was applied to U.S.-Soviet relations between the years of 1963 through 1979 (Hanhimaki, 2013). While détente was prevalent in many larger geopolitical moves, such as the signing of sweeping treaties such as SALT I or the Helsinki Final Act, the degree to which détente influence popular culture has not been thoroughly analyzed.

Introduction

Considering how détente was represented in popular culture is essential because popular culture, including mediums such as film, literature, art work, and more, offers insight into the general view of the populace on any given issue, while policy is often reflective of government attitudes. Therefore, this paper analyzes one of the most popular film series to date— James Bond, which was conceptualized and produced during the Cold War period and still runs to this day, to gain a better understanding of how détente was presented in films released at the time.

While previous scholarship has discussed how the James Bond films displayed geopolitical trends of the Cold War, research and analysis is lacking regarding the potential influence of détente on the development of the James Bond film franchise. Preceding scholarship further lacks analysis of individual films. Therefore, this paper will analyze individual Bond films between the years 1962-1981 and use détente as a lens to measure the influence of the policy on plot, character development, and dialogue within the Bond series. Finally, this paper will contemplate whether the James Bond film series followed general film trends of the 1960s and 1970s or whether the series was an exception to the status quo in its portrayal of détente.

Explanation of Film Selection

The James Bond saga was selected for analysis in this paper because of its timeliness of in accordance with the United States foreign policy transition into détente (“Bond Films in Order of Release”, 2015). The James Bond series was also chosen because of its ongoing nature, meaning that the franchise consistently produced Bond films between the détente years of 1963-1980 (“Bond Films in Order of Release”, 2015). While other films of similar subject matter and genre exist, Bond holds the unique position of being the longest running film series within the genre. As a result, analysis on the plots, characters, and rhetoric over a period of time can provide more well-rounded perspective into détente’s role in popular culture. Additionally, it is important to note that the James Bond films follow a “basic formula which remains remarkably consistent throughout the series” (Chapman 2000, 19). This is significant because it permits a consistent examination of the Bond films and how détente is displayed within them.

On top of the franchise’s ongoing series nature, I selected the James Bond series because of its inclusive rating system. From the détente years of 1962-1983 every Bond film was given a

PG rating (Chapman 2000,19). This meant that the films reached a large general audience of a wide range of ages. On top of the wide range of ages the Bond franchise touched, they also extended viewership to a plethora of countries. According to author of *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming's Novels to the Big Screen* Jeremy Black, “half the world’s population has seen a Bond film” (Black 2001, xiii). As a result, the Bond films offer perspective into important political moments that occurred during détente internationally.

The James Bond films were also selected because of their significant to geopolitics and culture. Author Dinitia Smith in her article “James Bond, Then to Now: Agent of Cultural Change” comments on how James Bond films served as commentaries on these elements, “the primary ideological and cultural coordinates within which the figure of Bond has functioned have been, first, representative of relations between West and East” (Smith 1998). Therefore, due to the subject matter of Bond franchise, and the role that they serve as commentaries on geopolitics, they are essential to analyze as historical pieces.

More specifically regarding film selection, the Bond films chosen for this paper are inclusive of the twelve films released between the years of 1962-1981. I have identified détente as occurring between the years of 1963-1980, beginning with the speech Kennedy gave at American University in 1963, and ending with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Hanhimaki, 2013). As a result, I started my film selection in 1962 with *Dr. No* because it was the first Bond film produced, and I end my film selection in 1981 with *For Your Eyes Only*, because 1979 was for many the end of the détente years (Hanhimaki, 2013). *For Your Eyes Only*, was written and shot during the end of détente and can provide insight into the final years of this policy. Finally, I will briefly touch on *Octopussy*, which was released in 1983 to draw a

comparison to the Bond films made during the détente years and films made immediately following the ending of détente.

Does Bond Apply to American-Soviet Détente?

When considering these questions, it is important to address that some may argue that James Bond is a British character, created by a British author, and he, therefore, cannot offer insight into the American-Soviet relationship. However, I argue that the James Bond series can mirror an American perspective because throughout the films Bond frequently works with American CIA agent Felix Leiter. Although Leiter is not in every film, a vast majority of the films selected demonstrate the breadth of American intelligence. Black supports this point when he states, “support for the United States [was], central to British policy during the Cold War, is important to Bond’s role” (Black 2001, 94).

Furthermore, James Bond series was adopted by American culture. Black declares that the James Bond films “were an important aspect of post-war popular culture, not only in Britain but also more generally, particularly after the Americans created and financed the films” (Black 2001, 30). Bond being embraced by American culture is further highlighted by the love President Kennedy had for the films. Specifically, according to author Klaus Dodds in his article entitled “Screening Geopolitics: James Bond and the Early Cold War Films (1962-1967)”, “shortly after its official U.S. release, President Kennedy arranged for a private showing of the film *Dr. No* in the White House” (Dodds, 2006). Therefore, the movies ability to reach the peak of American power shows the reach of its influence and its entrenchment in American culture.

Additionally, Kennedy may not have been as public for his love of Bond if the plot of the films did not correspond with foreign policy objectives of the United States, including détente.

Further contributing to the point that the James Bond series can reflect U.S.-Soviet détente, Black elaborates that all Bond films, except *Never Say Never*, which is not included in the scope of this paper, “were the work of the same production company, Eon Productions, established by Broccoli and Saltzman... Broccoli was American and Saltzman was Canadian” (Black 2001, 103). Dodds continues to expand on the role of American money within the franchise. He remarks that even from the beginning of the franchise, Bond films were “financed by an American major partly with British film subsidy funds” (Dodds, 2006). Due to American influence through characters in the Bond films, American role in production, and the adoption of James Bond as a cultural phenomenon within the United States, the James Bond film series follows a British character, but an American perspective.

From Novels to Film: James Bond as an Insight into Détente

When analyzing the influence of détente on Bond, it is essential to ponder how the Bond series changed from the printed to the visual form. Noah Lewis in his article entitled “Shaken not Stirred: The Cold War Politics of James Bond, From Novel to Film” reflects on the contrast that exists between the novels and films. James Bond in the books, which were written prior to the détente period, was hypercritical of the Soviets. During détente, the plots of Bond films were adapted to be friendlier towards the Soviets. Lewis highlights some of these alterations, “the first major change adapted in the films was the switch from the Soviet conspiracy SMERSH to SPECTRE” (Lewis 2018, 7). While SMERSH was a Soviet operated organization, SPECTRE was a transnational criminal organization that was politically neutral. Lewis continues to

elaborate about alterations made to the film as a result of evolving geopolitical views during détente. He states, “in the novels, Fleming typically cast his villains as agents who work either directly or indirectly for the Soviet government” (Lewis 2018, 6). However, in the films released during détente, the antagonists were either independent actors or members of politically neutral crime organizations. This shows that changing attitudes towards the Soviets during détente influenced character development within the franchise.

Accompanying the contributions Lewis makes, Thomas Price, author of “The Changing Image of the Soviet’s in the Bond Saga: From Bond Villains to ‘Acceptable Role Partners’” expands on the different role the Soviets play from novel to film. Price states that in the books of the 1950s, Bond “confronts the deeper conspiracy the Russian’s represent— a worldwide communist revolution” (Price 1992, 27). During the early 1950s, when the first Bond novel was published, the Red Scare fostered an environment of fear and infiltrated numerous aspects of society—including popular culture (“Red Scare”, 2010). However, many of the James Bond films that began production in the early 1960s shied away from the role that the Soviets play as villains. Black emphasizes this, commenting that Fleming’s “strong pessimism was largely ignored in the films” (Black 2001, 95). In fact, the films often demonstrated that collaboration between East and West was possible when the two factions put aside ideology and found common ground. Black supports this claim when he states, “the films were to follow through on this theme, increasingly emphasizing East-West shared interests and cooperation” (Black 2001, 95-96). Cooperation between East and West shown in the Bond films parallels with the core principles of détente.

Bond further reflects principles of détente through his alliances in the films. As Black states, “the widening circle of Bond’s allies eventually extends to include the Soviets. Common threats may lead to political cooperation with the West” (Black 2001, 100). In some Bond films, such as *From Russia with Love* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Bond works together with Soviet characters to defeat the enemy, not unlike the ways in which détente created a platform between the United States and the Soviet Union that allowed them to work towards mutual goals.

Film Analysis

The following subsections analyze every James Bond film from 1962-1981 in order to gain perspective on how détente is demonstrated in each film. In order to do so, I will be focusing on the Narrative Structure Analysis of film, which concentrates on elements of the plot structure and character development (“Film Analysis”, n.d.). Plots will be examined through their story arcs. Character development will be analyzed through who the antagonists are, who Bond is working with, and how the characters interact, whether it be positive or negative experiences. Additionally, I will observe exchanges of dialogue in order to gain a deeper understanding of character. Analysis will further use a contextual approach and situate the film within its cultural and historical context (Jacobs n.d., 3-4). Finally, I will comparatively analyze the plot, characters, and dialogue of the Bond films to other films being produced during detente to determine if Bond is unique or part of a larger trend.

Dr. No (1962)

Dr. No, the film that introduced the Bond franchise, presented the changing geopolitical landscape following the Cuban Missile Crisis and foreshadowed some of the various issues' détente would tackle. According to Lewis, this was demonstrated through changes made to the antagonist Dr. No, "just prior to the release of the first Bond film *Dr. No* in 1962, public opinion of the Soviet communist threat began to change... it became clear to the producers that it would be difficult to justify the Soviets as the 'heavies' at the heart of the conspiracy" (Lewis 2018, 8). As a result, the plot of the film established Dr. No, a Chinese man, as the main antagonist as well as showed the Chinese as a nuclear hazard that needed to be dealt with (*Dr. No*, 1962). The creation of a Chinese antagonist contributes towards a larger commentary surrounding relations between Western powers and China during the 1960s, and feeds into the fear of communist proliferation that existed since the end of WWII (Lindsey 1961, 53). It also provides insight into the impact of the Sino-Soviet split, which officially broke in 1960 ("Sino-Soviet Split", 2013). Due to the split, the communist front was divided ideologically for the first time since the beginning of the Cold War, such that Nixon and Kissinger later opened China and pursued a relationship with the country (Pye 1972, 97).

Dr. No also contributes valuable insight into the dangers of the Cold War. In a standoff between James Bond and Dr. No at the end of the film, the characters discuss the ideological differences between East and West. Bond commences this conversation when he negatively claims to Dr. No, "with your regard for human life, you must be working for the East" (*Dr. No*, 1962). Dr. No responds with, "East, West, just points of the compass each as stupid as the other" (*Dr. No*, 1962). This exchange implies that Dr. No is working his own entity, rather than for one of the two schools of thought. This exchange also suggests that the Chinese role in the

world had yet to be established, and China was acting as a new communist entity with an unpredictable future according to the writers. This sentiment of volatility is echoed in the National Cold War Exhibit's summary of the Sino-Soviet split, which highlights the fears the international community experienced due to the uncertainty arising from China ("Sino-Soviet Split", 2013). While states were prepared to deal with a unified communist bloc, a divided entity posed a challenge to foreign policy makers.

Additionally, this conversation between Bond and Dr. No proposes that there is an underlying absurdity that exists within the ideologies of communism and democracy, which were currently seeking to dominate the world order. Bond retorts that individuals exploit the division between communism and democracy in order to gain power and influence for themselves. He states, "world domination – that same old dream. Our asylums are full of people who think they are Napoleon or God" (*Dr. No*, 1962). *Dr. No* implies that the world is too distracted with the Cold War and this allows other actors to cause tangible harm.

Additionally, *Dr. No* tackles issues surrounding nuclear proliferation. Black comments, "through its cunning connection to the space and nuclear arms races of the Cold War, *Dr. No's* storyline resonated with Western fears, especially among the American audience" (Black, 2001). This film also parallels with the ideas that were to be echoed in Kennedy's speech at American University a month following the film's release that would lead to the establishment of détente; the Cuban Missile Crisis almost lead the world into a nuclear holocaust and eliminated life on earth, and something needed to change to prevent something like the crisis from happening in the future. As a result, *Dr. No* serves as an excellent introduction into what issues détente would have to confront in order to ease tensions throughout the world.

From Russia with Love (1963)

The second film in the James Bond series, *From Russia with Love*, is the first film released following the beginning of détente. While *Dr. No* offered insight into the changing geopolitical landscape following the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Soviet Split, *From Russia with Love* marks improvements in the U.S.-Soviet relationship following these events.

From Russia with Love indirectly calms the pressurized relationship that existed between East and West and suggests that détente is achievable. This is demonstrated within the plot of the film. In *From Russia with Love*, Bond believes he is gathering a decoder from a defected Russian agent named Tatiana, who works in the Istanbul embassy. However, Tatiana believes she is working on an intelligence mission for the U.S.S.R. In reality, SPECTRE, the international criminal organization that is Bond's common enemy throughout the series, establishes a scheme to play the British and the Russians against each other (*From Russia with Love*, 1963). Similar to Dr. No's motivations, SPECTRE's goal is to escalate the Cold War to gain more clients for themselves. Number Three in SPECTRE emulates this when she says, "who can the Russians suspect but the British? The Cold War in Istanbul will not remain cold very much longer" (*From Russia with Love*, 1963). However, once the plot from SPECTRE is uncovered by Bond and Tatiana, the agents work together against a mutual enemy.

The concept of working together towards a mutual goal was unprecedented during the Cold War before the period of détente. Therefore, the plot of *From Russia with Love* through the working relationship between Bond and Tatiana reflects how détente created a platform in which the East and West could work towards reducing tensions.

Goldfinger (1964) and On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969)

Transitioning away from the narrative of cooperation between East and West, *Goldfinger* represents the important relationship that exists between the Americans and the British. It is important to note that while the British are the main protagonists in many Bond films, the importance of an Anglo-American partnership is at the forefront of the Bond franchise. For example, in *Goldfinger*, while Bond does the hard work, the Americans are the ones who save the world from the nuclear bomb. As a result, *Goldfinger* solidifies the activeness of the relationship.

The main plot of *Goldfinger* surrounds the antagonist, Goldfinger, and his desire to destroy the world economy by flooding it with gold. This plotline is also like the plot of the sixth Bond film, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, in which Blofeld is trying to destabilize the world economy. Specifically, Blofeld (or Number One), who is the leader of SPECTRE, states that his mission is to, "control or destroy the world's economy" (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 1969). In the context of détente, these two films represent a shift from dealing with nuclear threats to socio-economic ones. But this does not mean that the movies are without Cold War-era implications. The commentaries that both *Goldfinger* and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* contribute via their plots are that attacks on the world economy are also attacks on the capitalist system. It is important to note that détente was a period of relaxed tensions; it was not a ceasefire between the U.S.S.R and the U.S. As a result, both *Goldfinger* and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* highlight the importance of expanding the horizon of détente to other areas of contention rather than focusing solely on nuclear issues.

Thunderball (1965)

The fourth film in the James Bond Series follows Bond's mission to track down nuclear weapons that have been taken by SPECTRE in order to hold NATO hostage in exchange for a ransom (*Thunderball*, 1965). The trope of nuclear weapons has been well established in the Bond film series thus far. However, SPECTRE is not just holding a government hostage, but rather a large part of the Western world by targeting NATO, which at the time had 15 members ("Member Countries", 2018). As a result, *Thunderball* directs attention towards larger organizational threats rather than bi-polar ones that dominated foreign policy of the United States prior to détente.

By the mid-1960s questions of NATO's stability were arising. The same year *Thunderball* was released, Charles de Gaulle had announced that by 1969, France would withdraw from NATO's integrated command structure ("NATO Update: 1965", 2001). NATO was also struggling over defense issues surrounding Turkey, as briefly addressed in *From Russia with Love*. Polls conducted by *The Public Opinion Quarterly* asked citizens of various NATO member states about France's desire to leave NATO on the condition that they be let back in if they wanted (Erskine, 1969). Other polls identified the fractures within NATO as a reason to create a new security alliance that included Russia. Prior to détente, questions of Russian inclusion within security alliances was unheard of.

When analyzing *Thunderball* through the perspective of representing détente, it is essential to consider these sentiments. The plot of the film does not focus on the rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but rather highlights internal NATO issues. Therefore, *Thunderball* presents NATO as a collective susceptible to outside tampering because of internal conflict. *Thunderball* also serves as a commentary on nations that would rather focus on perceived

external threats than real internal issues. This shift in thought illuminates how détente created a platform for states to focus on internal issues.

You Only Live Twice (1967)

By the late 1960s, the space race and nuclear defense systems became evolved mediums for U.S.-Soviet competition. *You Only Live Twice* highlights the pressure the superpowers experienced due to the structure of their nuclear systems, which was to “[destroy] the nuclear strength of its opponents before they could act- thus encouraged first-strike plans” (Black 2001, 123). The hair-trigger alert system of the 1960s encouraged an act-first think-later system between the Americans and the Soviets. This allowed tensions to escalate swiftly and potential avenues for dialogue to be ignored. In the opening scene of the film, this pressurized system gets put to the test when an American NASA spacecraft is consumed by an unidentified space-ship. The Americans jump to conclusions, accuse the Russians of hijacking their spacecraft, and begin hurling accusations. One American general angrily states, “any interference with this space-ship will be regarded as an act of war” (*You Only Live Twice*, 1967). As the Soviets and Americans fight, a British commander attempts to defuse the situation by deploying Bond to investigate.

As *You Only Live Twice* progresses, friction between the Americans and Soviets continues to escalate. One of the Russia’s space crafts is seized by the unidentified spaceship and the Russian blame the Americans. Towards the end of the film, both parties are on high alert and ready to take up arms. One American general orders the arming of all American nuclear weapons, barking “order first alert arm all weapons” (*You Only Live Twice*, 1967). The first alert system is the highest and closest command a military officer can give regarding nuclear weapons (“Frequently Asked Questions about Taking Nuclear Weapons off Hair-Trigger Alert”, 2015).

Despite the militaries of the United States and the Soviet Union fighting, Bond saves the captured individuals, and both Russian and American astronauts work together to stop the unidentified spaceship, which was located in Japan (*You Only Live Twice*, 1967). Similar to plots of *Dr. No* and *From Russia with Love*, *You Only Live Twice* explores how ideological war on a worldwide scale allows for third party actors to interfere without suspicion, as the two feuding sides quickly blame each other.

Furthermore, *You Only Live Twice* offers a critique of escalated military control. The military commanders within *You Only Live Twice* are juxtaposed with the civilians in the film, who are willing to work together towards a common goal, just like they did in *From Russia with Love*. As a result, *You Only Live Twice* demonstrates how and why détente is needed and highlights the benefits that come from reduced military tension as well as a reduction of nuclear arsenals. Finally, *You Only Live Twice* stresses how détente must include the average person. Without average people experiencing and working towards détente, détente's success as a policy stagnates.

Diamonds are Forever (1971)

Like *You Only Live Twice*, the 1971 film *Diamonds are Forever*, reflects on nuclear weapons and the military industrial complex. By 1971 détente still had not comprehensively addressed the threat of nuclear weapons, as was evident in their dangerous presence in *You Only Live Twice*. *Diamonds are Forever*, as a result, continues the narrative regarding the threat of nuclear holocaust hovering over geopolitics.

In the film, Blofeld stresses how important nuclear hegemony was to the world when he connects the relationship between nuclear weapons and power, supremacy, and legitimacy. Blofeld states that his mission to disrupt the world is to sell, “nuclear supremacy...to the highest bidder” (*Diamonds are Forever*, 1971). This plan suggests that nuclear proliferation for the superpowers could lead to a loss of power and legitimacy internationally because it would allow other actors to have a larger say in geopolitical issues. Blofeld exploits this fear by threatening to nuclearize other countries. He states, “nuclear powers like all bullies can only be intimidated by force” (*Diamonds are Forever*, 1971). Before détente, the prevailing philosophy was that a country that stockpiled nuclear weapons was one that also increased its internal stability; however, as détente developed under Nixon, it became increasingly obvious that these same countries were exchanging internal stability for global insecurity. Blofeld’s statement reflects this global insecurity, as nuclear weapons grant a country equal authority with other nuclear states and supremacy over non-nuclear states. Because of this shift in thought, détente allowed the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce nuclear weapons and focus on finding common ground through cultural exchanges by the early 1970s.

Additionally, *Diamonds are Forever* shows how détente had improved U.S.-Soviet communication. The radio broadcaster in the film alerts to the public that, “the United States and the Soviet Union have assured each other over the hotline that no offensive action has been taken by either nation” (*Diamonds are Forever*, 1971). This increased level of communication demonstrates how the superpowers actively worked together to resolve issues of nuclear contention, which was impossible prior to détente. Following the film release in 1971, nuclear arms treaties begin to emerge. For example, in 1972 SALT I was signed (“Richard Nixon and

Leonid Brezhnev Sign the SALT I Treaty ca. 1972, 1972”). As a result of increased communication and nuclear arms treaties, nuclear proliferation and the military industrial complex begin to dwindle in importance to the superpowers and détente had made significant strides in reducing tensions.

The Man with the Golden Gun (1974)

By the time Roger Moore took over the James Bond role in 1973, détente had accomplished many feats. For example, Nixon had already visited Moscow and fostered a working relationship with Brezhnev (“Détente”, 2018). However, *The Man with the Golden Gun* is the first film that follows Watergate and the resignation of Richard Nixon, the spearhead of expanding détente (“Nixon Resigns 08/09/74”, 2008). Similar to the uncertainty emerging from the U.S., *The Man with the Golden Gun* somewhat demonstrates a wavering perspective on détente. For the first time within the Bond film franchise, someone with previous ties to Russian intelligence is the antagonist. While *From Russia with Love* involves Russians as villains, as demonstrated through the role of Number Three, SPECTRE, an apolitical organization, is the main antagonist. As a result, Number Three does not represent the average Russian, but rather a rogue villain in a criminal enterprise.

The Man with the Golden Gun marks a return to a communist foe, but one that is perceived as such by supporting characters and not by the audience. In the film, the antagonist Scaramanga was recruited by the KGB but later became an independent actor. However, despite his freedom from the U.S.S.R., him being of Russian descent is important to characters in the film. For example, Sheriff J.W. Pepper of the Louisiana State Police, a satirical character, runs into Bond while on vacation in China. Pepper deduces that Bond is after bad guys and makes an

assuming that person must be a communist. J.W. Pepper screams, “you’re chasing somebody... commies... let’s go get them!” (*The Man with the Golden Gun*, 1974). J.W. Pepper’s character wants to hunt down “somebody” without knowing who they are because he believes that they are communist and as a result must be evil. In reality, Scaramanga is an antagonist acting independently and presents no current ties to communist ideology. Pepper’s statement is indicative of just how relaxed tensions became in the 1970s because while the threat of communism still exists, it becomes faceless under détente. Author Jeremy Black also sheds light on the significance of what détente achieved in the early ‘70s, finding, “the threats seemed distant, remote, and far-fetched” (Black 2001, 133). Pepper demonstrates Black’s idea because Pepper is chasing some distant and unknown enemy who poses no true threat.

The Spy Who Loved Me (1977)

The 10th film in the James Bond series, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, in a sense, is a quick summary of détente starting from a tense relationship to semi-cooperation. This is especially seen through the plot of the film. For example, at the beginning of *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the British and the Russians are fighting. Both a British and a Soviet submarine that have nuclear capabilities have gone missing and the British discover that the Russians have the technological capabilities to “track nuclear submarines underwater and sink them” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). The British fear that this ability will “totally undermine western defense strategy” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). Additionally, Bond has killed the notorious Russian Agent XXX’s lover and she wants revenge (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). This tension is reflective of the world scene prior to the emergence of détente, where every action was met with retaliation.

As *The Spy Who Loved Me* continues, the British and the Russians begin to work together. A British military personnel comments, “our respective governments pull resources together to find out what happened to submarines” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). However, this relationship is established strictly over the deterrence of nuclear weapon proliferation and fear of nuclear war at this point of the film. As *The Spy Who Loved Me* progresses, the relationship between the British and the Soviets improves. This is demonstrated when the British government states, “we have entered a new era of Anglo-Soviet communications” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). Despite this declaration, the relationship between the two opposing sides is still not perfect. This is illuminated within the plot when the British withhold the drive containing sensitive information from the Russian’s because they are not sure they can trust them entirely (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977).

As the plot continues to unravel, tensions between the British and the Soviets relax, as highlighted in the increasingly amicable, and eventually romantic relationship that develops between Bond and XXX, who is also known as Anya Amasova. In one scene, Bond and Amasova discuss how comedic the relationship between their respective governments is. Bond comments, “silly isn’t it, we can’t talk and yet we’re in the same business”, Amasova replies, “but with rival companies”, and Bond retorts, “we’re not rivals at the moment” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). This shift in attitude is also declared by the governments, and not just the agents that represent them. The British later on in the film comment, “Anglo-Soviet cooperation is a reality” (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). Therefore, the ever-changing relationship between the British and the Soviet’s in this film is a perfect case study of how détente evolved between the Americans and the Soviets. More specifically, the film demonstrated that while the

relationship was extremely hostile at the beginning of the Cold War, through mutual goals, the Americans and the Soviets could work together in order to ease tensions between one another. *The Spy Who Loved Me* also suggests that while the relationship between the superpowers is still not perfect, it still had accomplished many feats due to détente, and the fears of nuclear holocaust that were seen in earlier Bond movies has largely dissipated.

The most important perspective emerging from *The Spy Who Loved Me* is that it is the first out of two Bond films that references détente by name. The second being *For Your Eyes Only*, which was made in 1981 and was written in the final years of détente's life as a policy. The main antagonist within *The Spy Who Loved Me*, Stromberg, comments, "a British agent in love with a Russian agent... détente indeed" (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, 1977). While this insight into détente is not ideal because it is in reference to a love affair, it still reflects on how far these countries have come regarding their attitude towards one another at a personal level from the point they were at in *You Only Live Twice*. This shift at the personal level is one of détente's greatest accomplishments.

For Your Eyes Only (1981)

Lastly, *For Your Eyes Only* focuses yet again about the issues of nuclear weapons. Significant parallels exist between *For Your Eyes Only* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Both focus on an easing of tension regarding the relationship between the British and the Soviets, as well as issues pertaining to nuclear submarines. Nuclear matters were some of the most contested issues of détente, and the progress made by countries to reduce their use is often viewed as the era's greatest accomplishment (Roberts, 2018).

The plots of *For Your Eyes Only*, as well as *The Spy Who Loved Me*, both deal with issues of British nuclear submarines being infiltrated by the Soviets. Specifically, *For Your Eyes Only* centers around the sinking of the St. George, a British nuclear submarine that was carrying a submarine nuclear system (ATAC), which when the ship was sunk, the system was not destroyed (*For Your Eyes Only*, 1981). As a result, the British feared that the Soviets could acquire the ATAC and use it against them. *For Your Eyes Only* reflects détente because although the Soviets are involved, they are not the main aggressors of the plot. Rather, the Soviets in the film mean to purchase the system rather than directly confront Bond. This shows that while the Soviet's want to work towards their own interests, aggression is no longer the primary means of negotiation (Roberts, 2018).

At the ending of the film, when General Gogol comes to collect the ATAC system, Bond throws the system off the cliff. According to Black, Gogol appears in *For Your Eyes Only* as a “warmly smiling rival, not an automatic vicious bureaucratic state” (Black 2001, 100). This is where the second direct reference to détente in the James Bond film franchise occurs. Bond states, “that’s détente comrade, you can’t have it and I can’t have it” (*For Your Eyes Only*, 1981). After this line is recited, the General turns away from Bond and flies off accepting that the system is lost, rather than getting angry about it and retaliating against Bond (Roberts 2018). Therefore, *For Your Eyes Only* contributes an accurate perspective into the outcomes of détente when Bond comments on the policy. At its best, détente relaxed some nuclear tension and facilitated co-existence. Furthermore, détente did create an atmosphere of Bond’s quotation, “you can’t have it, I can’t have it.” Sometimes the best way to reduce conflict is to minimize points of contention and mutual restraint. Additionally, the perception of General Gogol being a rival

rather than a vicious enemy suggests other ideological shifts in personal relationships as a result of détente. The ideology conveyed in *For Your Eyes Only* presents a stark difference between the duality of the early Cold War and how low tensions became of détente.

The Outliers: Live and Let Die (1973) and Moonraker (1979)

Many of the Bond films contribute significant insight into geopolitical issues occurring during détente, but a few of the Bond films are outliers. *Live and Let Die* does not focus on geopolitical implications, but rather concentrates on the mystic of the Caribbean. *Live and Let Die*'s focal point is on voodoo and the allure of the "exotic Caribbean" and does not substantially contribute to détente. *Moonraker* also does not focus on geopolitics or détente. *Moonraker*, which was released in 1979, revolved around space themes due to an increase in popularity of science-fiction films as a result of the *Star Wars* series ("Star Wars Released, 2018). Furthermore, these films ultimately do not contribute substantially towards détente because, out of all the Bond films, they were much more closely based on Ian Fleming's novels (Price 1992, 27). These novels did not have significant geopolitical implications relating to détente because they were written in the 1950s and, as a result, neither did their movie counterparts. Black supports this point, commenting, "the opponent in *Moonraker* was within and planning to employ new technology, Fleming's account did not propose a politics of paranoia" (Black 2001, 19).

Therefore, while *Live and Let Die* and *Moonraker* largely omit détente policy, analysis regarding the value of the Bond franchise illustrates that the Bond series ultimately does reflect détente and geopolitical trends. Therefore, the Bond series generally is a valuable tool when analyzing popular culture during détente.

Bond Films Following Détente

Some may argue that détente did not influence the plot or the direction of James Bond films or was demonstrated within the film series. However, since the collapse of the détente policy in 1980 and the reflection of détente in *For Your Eyes Only*, the preceding Bond films starkly contrasted the films that were made during the détente period. For example, the film that came after *For Your Eyes Only*, *Octopussy* (1983) follows a surprise Soviet invasion of Western Europe (Black 2001, 92). Author James Chapman elaborates on the striking difference between the Bond films during the détente period vs immediately after. He comments, “the narrative ideologies of these films marked a change in direction after the détente-themed narrative... they relocated Bond, partially at least, within the political and ideological coordinates of the Cold War” (Chapman 2000, 200). The drastic contrast of the antagonists in Bond films, as well as the subject within the plot of the films between the détente period and following the collapse of the policy, suggests that détente did influence the James Bond film franchise.

However, despite this evidence, some may question the importance of the Bond films reflecting détente. I argue that the James Bond series reflecting détente is of significance because of the direct link between popular culture and popular opinion. A famous film series would have to appeal to its audience and pick up on trends of popular opinion in order to gain as much profits as possible. If people consuming the Bond films wanted to see conflict between Bond and the Soviet Union, the film series producers and screenwriters would respond to this change. Some may argue that the film series success could depend more on character likeability or

engaging plot lines. While these elements are essential to a film's success, audiences also care about relatability to reality, especially when watching films that pull current events into their plots. The importance of political accuracy in the Bond franchise is stressed through the significant adaptations made from novel to film to make the films more politically relevant (Black 2001, 95). Therefore, due to the box office achievements of the Bond films, it can be inferred that people wanted to see films that portrayed détente and that détente was indeed experienced by the average person and was not just a government policy.

Bond as an Exception or Part of a Larger Trend

When considering the James Bond film series as reflecting détente, it is essential to ponder if the Bond franchise was an exception to the status quo, or if they fit into a larger trend occurring within popular culture. In order to do this, it is important to analyze the same type of films for comparison. Therefore, this section will examine films that are based on novels that were written before détente and were made into films during the détente period. Additionally, this section will analyze films that share the espionage/action genre.

While many famous spy novels were being made into films during détente, James Bond novels are amongst the few written before détente began. For example, popular espionage John Le Carré had a book made into a film during the 1960s. However, his novel *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, was published after the beginning of détente. Many other films like *Torn Curtain* (1966), *Topaz* (1969), *The Kremlin Letter* (1970), etc. were based off spy novels written before détente and cannot be included because they do not fit the same criteria as the Bond movies do.

The Ipcress File (1965) is one of a few films that fits these requirements. Its novel counterpart was originally published in 1962 and was the first film adaptation espionage author Len Deighton (Toole and Stafford, n.d.). The plot of the film closely parallels with that of the novel. *The Ipcress File* (1965) follows a series of high profile kidnappings by a man named Jay who intends to sell his victims to the Soviets (*The Ipcress File*, 1965). It is later discovered that Jay is not working alone and the protagonist's (who is not named) boss Dalby is in cahoots with Jay. On their VIP abductees, Jay and Dalby are employing brainwashing techniques to instill loyalty to the Soviets. The antagonists attempt to frame the protagonist for undermining an American nuclear test and selling secrets to the Soviets but fail and ultimately are defeated (*The Ipcress File*, 1965). Although the antagonists are not Russian themselves, they are working to undermine Western intelligence in favor of the Soviets. Therefore, while the direct blame is not placed on the Soviets, it is implied that working towards achieving Soviet goals is criminal. Similarly, *Dr. No* demonstrated that binary feuds on such a global scale create the potential for third-party bad actors to interfere. But *Dr. No* is a politically neutral actor, while the antagonists in *The Ipcress File* work to give the Soviet an upperhand.

Ice Station Zebra (1968) is another one of these few films that was originally released as a book in 1960 by Alistair Maclean and then was adapted into a movie during détente (*Ice Station Zebra*, 1968). The plot of the film follows an Allied mission to the North Pole to rescue survivors of British weather research station disaster due to an ice storm (Adler, 1968). In *Ice Station Zebra* British commanders work with a Russian defector Boris Vaslov. However, despite some level of cooperation, the Russian's still cause significant trouble for the British within the plot of the film. Specifically, the Russian's convolute the British rescue mission because on one

hand, while they work with the British and Americans over some issues, they are not willing to cross a certain line and surrender, what they believe to be, significant intelligence (*Ice Station Zebra*, 1968). The plot of the novel contrasts significantly from the 1968 movie. The novel *Ice Station Zebra* is far harsher on the Russians. The novel portrays a zero sum game where the success of the British is synonymous with the failure of the Russians. This is unlike the film version in which there exists some level of cooperation between the British, Americans, and the Russians where all parties benefit albeit to unequal degrees.

While it is evident when comparing the Bond franchise and *Ice Station Zebra* that while some level of Western-Eastern cooperation is achievable, the extent to which cooperation exists varies. Bond films *From Russia with Love* (1963) and *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977) both show that some Soviet pushback is inevitable, but all in all the two nations may find common ground to realize their agendas. *Ice Station Zebra* suggests that there are few and far opportunities to work with the Soviets. Meaning that, while some Soviets are good, most are bad. *The Ipcress File* presents a narrative that the Soviets are manipulative. Despite the Soviet government not being involved in the film, the antagonists support communist ideology and actively work to undermine the West. Cooperation between West and East in *Ipcress File* is virtually non-existent. Therefore, it can be concluded that, when comparing the Bond film franchise to films like *The Ipcress File* and *Ice Station Zebra*, the Bond series is more reflective of détente and is friendlier towards the Soviets. While Bond movies could fit into a larger trend occurring in film culture, they are unique in the extent they are willing to relax the U.S.-Soviet relationship.

Conclusion

The James Bond film franchise reflected détente, or at the very least, was influenced by the policy. Individual analysis of every James Bond film released between the years of 1962-1981 demonstrates the policy, starting with *Dr. No* and finishing with *For Your Eyes Only*. More specifically, détente was exhibited in the series via the plot, character development, or dialogue. Further proving that détente influenced the Bond saga was the stark contrast that existed between the narrative and plot of James Bond films following the end of détente in 1980. *Octopussy* presented a strong anti-Soviet narrative and was more reflective of a new stage in Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. This paper also established that while James Bond was a part of a general trend of détente within film, it was more distinctive than in other espionage novels adapted into films during the time, like *Ice Station Zebra*. Because of the unique geopolitical insights that the James Bond film series offered, it can be concluded that the average person was aware of détente and in favor of the policy, largely due to the assertion that popular culture echoes public opinion.

Looking forward, further research can investigate the transition between the détente years and the Reagan years more closely in order to gain a deeper understanding about how Bond films progressed and adapted to popular opinion as well as reflected geopolitical tensions in the 1980s onwards. Because the Bond franchise continues today, another interesting angle for further research would be investigating whether more modern James Bond films highlight current geopolitical tensions, or whether the films have ceased to follow politics since the end of the Cold War.

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