

## Examining the Role of Film in Peacebuilding Through Audience Reception

Sebastian Satrio Darminto, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

The Kyoto Conference on Arts, Media & Culture 2025  
Official Conference Proceedings

### Abstract

This study examines the role of film as a medium for fostering empathy, reconciliation, and peacebuilding through audience reception. The purpose is to measure the audience's feelings before and after watching a selected film. While previous research explores soft power, cultural diplomacy, and the political impact of film, few studies directly measure how audiences emotionally and cognitively respond to films that address historical trauma. This research employs a mixed-methods experimental design in which two audience groups watch contrasting biographical films: *First They Killed My Father*, a genocide-centered narrative set during the Khmer Rouge regime, and *Radio*, a neutral biographical drama focused on inclusion. Pre-test, post-test, and focus group discussions were used to evaluate changes in empathy, emotional resilience, and understanding of justice and reconciliation. Findings indicate that reconciliation-themed films evoke stronger emotional, reflective, global awareness, and moral imagination, while neutral films encourage moderate empathy without deep engagement with conflict or trauma. The study highlights film's potential to function as a tool of cultural soft power, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and shaping perceptions of peace. It contributes to the limited empirical literature on audience-centered film analysis within peace and conflict studies.

*Keywords:* film, peacebuilding, soft power, audience reception

iafor

The International Academic Forum  
[www.iafor.org](http://www.iafor.org)

## Introduction

One major concern for the international community is the stabilization and reconstruction of regions post-conflict (Fjelde & Höglund, 2011). Countries and communities do not just return to normal after a conflict. Peacebuilding in post-conflict situations needs more than maintaining political stability; it involves rehabilitation, understanding, and empathy among individuals and communities previously in conflict (Galtung, 2007). This reconciliation can be promoted through cultural communication and media, especially film, which has demonstrated effectiveness in influencing attitudes and enhancing understanding among diverse audiences (Johnston, 2020).

Unfortunately, studies on the use of film as a strategic tool for cultivating empathy and mutual understanding in post-conflict settings are still limited. This research aims to contribute to the existing limited study, by directly inquiring the audience. Films can influence audiences' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Asif & Sangha, 2021). In other words, films can serve as a genre that promotes peace and justice, presenting fresh approaches to reconciliation. They give not just entertainment but also education, telling stories that promote unity in divided communities. A film is a great example of how storytelling can depict human context (Storr, 2020). As social, cultural, and political tensions continue to rise globally, the work of recognizing and wielding the potential of film to promote peace and healing is urgent.

This study aims to examine the reception of a documentary film among two distinct audience groups. One audience group is asked to view a film intended to promote peace reconciliation, while the other group is instructed to watch a different film of comparable duration. The study seeks to examine how these two groups evaluate the film's capacity to promote understanding, reconciliation, and collaborative action, aligning with the following research questions:

1. Can film function as a form of cultural diplomacy by fostering cross-border understanding of historical atrocities and their global implications?
2. What differences emerge between audiences exposed to a conflict-cantered film and those watching a neutral biographical film in terms of empathy and global awareness?

Research on audience response to films utilised as instruments for peace and reconciliation is limited. A film may have universal themes such as perseverance and optimism, yet cultural and socio-political situations profoundly influence audience reception. The comparative effects of such films on audiences with limited direct connections to the conflict yet sharing humanitarian or religious affinities require further research. Through a comparative study between different audiences, it seeks to explore what these differences and similarities tell us about the prospects for films to be effective tools for peace and reconciliation.

The state-of-the-art of this study is that it directly examines the role of films as soft power in international relations through incorporating real audiences. It notes audience responses and impressions firsthand, rather than solely relying on textual analysis or assumptions about the impact of films. It thus offers a more concrete understanding of the effectiveness of films in advancing peace. This approach is particularly relevant in the study of international relations, that essentially focuses on the dynamics of interactions between individuals and societies across countries as the key for the formation of peace, cooperation, and international understanding. International relations is a highly diverse field that addresses the most important problems that shape the lives of people (Baylis et al., 2020). By linking the impact of films to real audiences, this study enriches the perspective on how visual media can act as a bridge of communication and strengthen global relations.

## Literature Review

### Film in International Relations

International relations studies generally concentrate on diplomacy, conflict, and state behavior (Lake, 2003; Sharp, 1999; Walker, 2004). There is also a lot of focus on official political discourse. In recent decades, however, researchers have begun to see films as a useful lens to understanding international relations (Harman, 2019; Lobasz & Valeriano, 2015; van Munster & Sylvest, 2015). Global communication and cultural representation are becoming increasingly significant in shaping how people throughout the world see and identify themselves. Film is one of the most powerful and widely available forms of culture. It not only shows political reality but also creates and spreads them. Film transforms distant events into emotionally resonant experiences that touch our hearts through narrative and visual storytelling. This makes film a unique medium that can serve as vehicles for themes that are important to the study of international relations such as war, peace, migration, and human rights.

Film can change how people think about power, conflict, and identity, and this can change how society works. Films depict how war, colonialism, and humanitarian crises have transformed history and politics. They also show people the human aspect of politics. Cinematic narratives significantly influence worldviews, advocating certain political ideologies while challenging others. Films often serve as symbolic vehicles for ideological conflict, from Cold War propaganda to postcolonial narratives. This demonstrates how culture and politics are intertwined in developing something significant on a global scale.

As the world becomes more interconnected, films have become an important channel for people from different cultures to communicate with each other and cultivate empathy. International audiences appreciate stories that go beyond their own national boundaries. These stories help them understand other backgrounds, traumas, and economic situations better. These are what scholars call “cultural diplomacy,” (Ang et al., 2018; Kimani, 2023; Pajtinka, 2014) which means using culture to help people from different cultures understand each other better. Films have the power to humanize distant others, break down stereotypes, and build relations with people of other nations and cultures (Asif & Sangha, 2021; Harman, 2019; Pakanati, 2023). These activities, although informal, are important in IR for building trust, understanding, and moral responsibility.

Contemporary IR face complex global issues, including genocide, forced migration, ethnic conflict, and humanitarian crisis. These challenges demand more than simple policy responses. They require empathy and compassion. Film contributes to these aspects by visualizing those impacted by international politics by showing their lived experiences. Movies like *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2004), *The Pianist*, *Waltz with Bashir*, and *First They Killed My Father* (Jolie, 2017) provide audiences with experiential entry points into histories of violence and reconciliation. By doing so, films encourage reflection on global responsibilities and the role of the international community. Thus, films play as informal yet powerful agents of what could be called “people-centered diplomacy” or “cultural peacebuilding.”

Incorporating film into IR studies fosters an interdisciplinary discourse that enhances our comprehension of power and agency within global affairs. The constructivist and critical approaches in IR emphasize the significance of ideas, norms, and identity. These are the domains in which film has considerable influence. Film can be examined as a text that encapsulates political significance (Critical Realism) and as a tool of soft power that influences

national perceptions. By analyzing films through these frameworks, scholars of IR can identify how cultural narratives cross boundaries and shape policy, public perception, and collective memory. The film's capacity to foster empathy, challenge injustice, and advocate peace illustrates its potential as a substantial vehicle for disseminating international peace and understanding.

### **Soft Power and Norm Diffusion**

Introduced by Joseph Nye (J. S. Nye, 1990), soft power can be defined as the ability or capacity to get others to do something you want without using force. While hard power hinges on military or economic might, soft power works through culture, political values, and foreign policies. This idea is becoming more relevant in peacebuilding, allowing reviewed nations and groups to work together for goodwill, alliances and contribute to tackling world problems (Gallarotti, 2011).

In Nye's framework, soft power is the ability to shape the preferences of others. These influences stem from three major sources of soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policy (J. Nye, 2004). These factors are seen as key to forming long-term and peaceful diplomatic relations among states (Gallarotti, 2011). Rothman (2011), however, critiques the operationalization of soft power. Rothman suggests that it is conceptually more useful to think of soft power as "norm diffusion," where values and norms spread naturally through cultural interactions rather than deliberate state actions.

The application of soft power in various contexts has been examined. Bräutigam and Xiaoyang (2012) investigate China's deployment of development aid in Africa, showing the interconnectedness of economic initiatives and cultural-political influence. Likewise, Sobocinska and Purdey (Sobocinska & Purdey, 2019) study Australia's cultural diplomacy through study tours to Indonesia and the Asia-Pacific. This underlines Australia's commitment to fostering mutual understanding between nations. Paradise (2018) and Gupta (2022) examine how nations such as China and India deploy cultural instruments, including Confucius Institutes and Bollywood movies, to elevate their reputations abroad. China has also been seen investing in a combination of soft power and multilateralism to foster a friendly worldwide environment whilst promoting China's geopolitical re-emergence (Duarte et al., 2024). In a similar line, though, Kalimuddin and Anderson (2018) explore ASEAN's soft power strategies, drawing attention to its contribution towards regional stability and efficient balancing of great power interests.

These are the different methods in which soft power can be used to accomplish diplomatic and cultural goals around the world. The cultural aspect of soft power is vital to shaping global audiences. Films, music, and other cultural products serve as effective tools for shaping perceptions and fostering understanding. Cuba's use of medical diplomacy and international sporting strategies as distinct examples of cultural soft power has been identified by Huish and Darnell (2024). Esack (2018) examines the religious narratives as a means of creating an ideological possibility and impact, especially in the Muslim world. Artistic and cultural exports have also been described as both strengthening national identity and enhancing global influence (Mozaffarian et al., 2015).

On the screen, human struggles in conflict zones are depicted in films such as *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2004) and *The Kite Runner* (Forster, 2007). This encourages compassion and cultural

diffusion. Narratives that speak to these shared human experiences resonate and in doing so, they reflect Lustig's (Lustig, 2016) framing of soft power emotionally and ideologically.

### **Films as a Reconciliation Tool**

Research suggests that films confronting histories of violence serve as spaces for reflection, collective memory, and healing (Premaratna, 2021). However, effectiveness varies based on cultural interpretation, story authenticity, and viewer proximity to the conflict. Few studies empirically measure audience responses, making this research an important contribution.

Film has become a central medium for shaping cultural memory by transforming complex and often distant histories into emotionally accessible experiences (Erll, 2018). Rather than functioning as simple visual records, films prompt audiences to engage in moral reflection (Bloodsworth-Lugo & Flory, 2013), question political assumptions embedded in dominant narratives (Carroll, 2016), and participate in what Wartenberg (2006) describes as cinematic philosophical inquiry. Through the interplay of narrative structure and visual storytelling, cinematic representations provide viewers with a way to humanize distant suffering and interpret conflict in forms that feel immediate and relatable (Storr, 2020). In this way, film contributes not only to how societies remember the past, but also to how individuals cultivate empathy across cultural and political divides.

### **Methodology**

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of film on attitudes and the facilitation of reconciliation. It seeks to analyze the similarities and differences in audience responses between two distinct groups of participants. The two groups exhibit similarities in size, gender composition, age range, and level of study. The participants targeted for this study are individuals aged 21 and older, encompassing a range of gender identities, nationalities, and educational backgrounds. Prior to participating in the study, participants are provided with comprehensive information regarding the study and must provide their consent. The confidentiality of participants is rigorously maintained, ensuring that their responses are anonymous.

The research design of this study is based on the model established by Memduhoglu et al. (2017), incorporating a pre-test, Focus Group Discussion, and post-test methodology. The qualitative aspect employed focus group discussions, allowing participants to engage in open dialogue and unstructured interviews within a small group context. Focus group discussions, as outlined by Krueger (2014) and Bowling (2014), create a dialogue environment through prearranged semi-structured discussions on specific topics. The quantitative component is conducted via experimental design employing pre-test and post-test methodologies.

During the data analysis, FGD findings are thematically coded. The thematic analysis uses Clarke and Braun's (2016) six steps: (1) iterative readings, (2) developing initial codes to classify significant data segments, (3) clustering related codes to identify overarching themes, (4) evaluating and refining themes for consistency and uniqueness, (5) articulating and labeling themes for clarity and pertinence, and (6) compiling a comprehensive report with applicable data excerpts. The pre-and post-test data are summarized descriptively, based on Kiger and Varpio's (2020) theory. The combination of these data sheds light on whether films might foster empathy, bridge divides, and aid reconciliation.

The film chosen for the experimental group is *First They Killed My Father*, a biographical film directed by Angelina Jolie, based on the memoir by Loung Ung. The set is 1975 Cambodia, and it follows the true story of five-year-old Loung, whose peaceful life is shattered when the Khmer Rouge seizes power. She was, separated from her family, forced into a brutal labor camp and later trained as a child soldier. Loung endures starvation, violence, and loss. The film traces her journey of survival amidst the horrors of genocide. The film ends with a moment of remembrance and resilience as she and her surviving siblings honor their lost loved ones.

*First They Killed My Father* powerfully embodies the potential of film to foster empathy, raise awareness about historical atrocities, and promote peacebuilding. By telling the story from a child's perspective, the film humanizes the victims of conflict and provides a deeply emotional entry point into understanding the trauma of war and genocide. It invites reflection on the consequences of political violence, encourages dialogue on reconciliation and healing, and serves as a cinematic memorial that preserves historical memory, an essential step in preventing future atrocities. Its storytelling makes it a compelling case study for research on how film can contribute to peace education and post-conflict reconciliation.

The control group watch *Radio* (2003), a biographical film situated in the early 1970s, contemporaneous with the setting of *First They Killed My Father*. Both films are biographical in nature. *Radio* narrates the true story of a mentally challenged individual who has a significant bond with a high school football coach. This film provides emotional profundity and examines topics of inclusion and acceptance, rendering it captivating for audiences. Nevertheless, the film maintains neutrality, as it refrains from addressing war, political strife, or peacebuilding. Consequently, *Radio* facilitates a distinct contrast with the experimental group's watching of *First They Killed My Father*.

## Findings

A total of six participants take part in the study. They are four females and two males, aged 21 and over. It demonstrates that all respondents are adults capable of engaging reflectively with complex social and historical themes. Participants originated from various countries of birth, including Australia, India, and Indonesia, currently living in Canada and Indonesia. This composition demonstrates cross-cultural diversity, consistent with the study's focus on examining audience responses across national and cultural boundaries. Participants were evenly allocated into two groups. Three participants in the control group watch the neutral biographical film *Radio* (2003), while three in the experimental group watch the conflict-centered biographical film *First They Killed My Father* (2017). The participants represented diverse academic and professional backgrounds, including Humanities, Communications, Engineering, Law, and Psychology. This disciplinary diversity enhances the interpretive depth of audience responses and ensures a broader range of cognitive and emotional perspectives on the films' themes.

The results of the pre- and post-tests for both groups are displayed in tabular format as follows:

**Table 1***Descriptive Changes of Pre-and Post-tests for the Control Group*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-test Key Points</b>	<b>Post-test Scores</b>	<b>Observed Change</b>
<b>#1 (Male, 44+)</b>	Moderate familiarity with political/historical films (4), low exposure to conflict (2–3).	Scores rose across all items (4→5 range).	Noticeable increase in perceived engagement, understanding, and reflection on society.
<b>#2 (Female, 21–27)</b>	More media exposure and empathy baseline (scores 4–5), but modest knowledge about regional history (2).	Scores stayed around 3–5, showing stable to slightly increased reflection, not drastic change.	Indicates <i>emotional resonance</i> rather than factual awareness change.
<b>#3 (Female, 28–44)</b>	Lower familiarity with historical/political films (2–3). Family exposure to conflict (“Yes”).	Post-test increased significantly (2→5 in some items).	Suggests stronger personal/emotional identification and reflection.

**Table 2***Descriptive Changes of Pre-and Post-tests for the Experimental Group*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Pre-test Key Points</b>	<b>Post-test Scores</b>	<b>Observed Change</b>
<b>#1 (Female, 44+)</b>	Moderate historical familiarity, strong empathy baseline (scores mostly 3–5).	Post-test all 5s – high emotional impact, full engagement, strong peacebuilding reflection.	Significant increase in emotional engagement and moral reflection; deepened understanding of genocide and reconciliation.
<b>#2 (Female 21-27)</b>	Low prior familiarity with Southeast Asia (1–3).	Moderate-to-high post scores (3–5). Clear empathy increase; mentioned women/child soldiers and moral abuse of monks.	Indicates strong emotional response and awareness of human rights violations.
<b>#3 (Male 28–44)</b>	Minimal prior knowledge (1–3 range).	Post scores 3–5; emotional connection emphasized. Mentioned rejection of revenge, empathy for all sides.	Clear cognitive and ethical development; from detachment to moral reflection.

The results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) are presented below. Mild to moderate alterations related to emotional engagement and social reflection are noted in the control group. The participants indicated that their familiarity with political or historical films varied significantly, from low to moderate levels. The focus group discussion indicated a slight increase in perceived engagement, familiarity with the themes, and reflection on human behavior. This was especially apparent among participants with lower baseline familiarity. The film elicited emotional responses concerning kindness, inclusion, and human connection; however, *Radio* (2003) did not substantially enhance participants' understanding of global issues or historical context. The findings from the focus group discussion indicate that the film utilized in the control group successfully elicited personal emotional resonance. Nonetheless, it failed to facilitate meaningful cognitive or historical understanding.

Conversely, significant emotional and cognitive changes were noted in the experimental group. All participants exhibited notable improvements in empathy, historical comprehension, and ethical reflection. This occurred despite all participants coming from diverse backgrounds and possessing limited prior knowledge of the Cambodian genocide. The oldest participant exhibited the greatest increase, reflecting a significant engagement with the themes of trauma, reconciliation, and justice. Furthermore, significant improvement was also demonstrated by the younger participants, especially in relation to scenes depicting loss, child soldiers, the treatment of monks, and moral dilemmas. The findings reflect an increased awareness of human rights issues, structural violence, and the ethical implications of conflict. These findings highlight the significant influence of *First They Killed My Father* (2017) on emotional processing and global awareness.

### Discussion

The control group results show that even a non-conflict, biographical film can stimulate varying degrees of emotional and reflective engagement, though without the sharp cognitive shifts seen in the experimental group. The oldest participant (Male, 44+) demonstrates a clear rise in engagement and societal reflection, suggesting that mature viewers may draw broader social meaning even from a neutral narrative. The youngest participant (Female, 21–27) shows smaller changes. It may indicate that the film resonates emotionally but does not substantially alter historical or political awareness. This is consistent with a story that does not depict large-scale conflict. By contrast, the participant with family exposure to conflict (Female, 28–44) experiences the most significant increase. It highlights how personal background can heighten sensitivity even to non-violent films. All in all, the control group findings illustrate that while *Radio* can prompt reflection on humanity and social issues, it does not produce the deeper shifts in empathy and global awareness observed in the experimental group. It reinforces the unique role of conflict-centered films in shaping peacebuilding-related perceptions.

The results from the experimental group who watched *First They Killed My Father* indicate a clear and consistent shift in emotional engagement, ethical reflection, and historical understanding. The oldest participant (Female, 44+) who enters the study with moderate familiarity and already high empathy, demonstrates the most pronounced transformation. All of her post-test indicators rise to the highest level. This suggests that prior empathy combined with mature life experience may amplify the film's impact, fostering deep reflection on genocide, accountability, and reconciliation. In contrast, the younger individuals have restricted regional knowledge, reflecting a younger, internationally mobile generation. Both exhibit substantial progress in emotional understanding and ethical awareness. They reference specific scenes with monks, women, and warriors. Their reflections illustrate how the video

converts abstract historical crimes into concrete human experiences, boosting moral sensitivity and global awareness.

A consistent pattern emerged from the answers of all three participants of the experimental group. Although they are from various cultural backgrounds and academic disciplines, they show heightened empathy, improved knowledge of human rights concerns, and a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and ethical complexities of violent conflict. The film has significantly shifted them from a limited grasp of facts to a more profound awareness of the human dimensions of genocide. It highlights the film's ability to foster cross-cultural understanding and encourage peace-oriented reflection. This substantiates the study's claim that film functions as a potent tool of soft power and peacebuilding. It achieves this by fostering moral imagination and augmenting audience engagement with international crimes.

The comparison analysis demonstrates that conflict-centered films provide a significantly higher potential for cultural diplomacy compared to non-conflict-centered films. The experimental group is a diverse group of volunteers. They were born in Indonesia, India, and Australia, and now live in Canada and Indonesia. Despite their little cultural ties with Cambodian history, they indicated that they engaged both emotionally and intellectually after watching *First They Killed My Father*. Their responses suggest that the film successfully communicated historical memory, illustrated the human toll of genocide, and provoked moral reflection on justice and healing. Conversely, the control group's responses were rooted on interpersonal empathy rather than universal awareness. This mismatch suggests that films depicting past atrocities markedly improve cross-border understanding, aligning with the concept of film as a mechanism of soft power in International Relations.

The findings suggest that conflict-centered narratives cultivate deeper and more transformative empathy than the empathy and global awareness levels of the two groups. The control group demonstrated emotional engagement centered on kindness, diversity, and human connection, although their reflections did not address broader political or international issues. The experimental group demonstrated both emotional and cognitive empathy, including the ability to understand the origins, consequences, and ethical complexities of violent conflict. Participants expressed views on justice, forgiveness, the dangers of authoritarianism, and the lasting impact of trauma on societies. These findings indicate that films portraying genocide or conflict may shift audiences' perspectives from personal empathy to a broader moral awareness. Thus, it offers significant advantages for peacebuilding education and International Relations studies.

## Conclusion

The present study looks at the role of film as a tool of soft power and its impact on promoting peace and reconciliation. By transcending and even bridging cultural differences, and promoting empathy, such films become a unique tool that can at least now resolve psychosocial and emotional sides sometimes ignored by the traditional way of peacebuilding. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the study clarifies how films are at once an emotive and instructional tool for peace.

It can be concluded that the control group's responses indicate that films without political violence can serve as a peacebuilding medium at the interpersonal level. It fosters empathy, inclusiveness, and emotional comprehension. However, a conflict-centered film like *First*

*They Killed My Father* gives stronger impact as it combines emotional engagement with historical awareness and moral contemplation.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the volunteer participants for their willingness to share their perspectives, to Ristumeikan Asia Pacific University for their academic support, and for financing attendance at this international conference. I would also like to thank Professor Steven B. Rothman, my supervisor, for his continuous guidance and support throughout this entire process.

### **Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process**

The author declares that QuillBot, AI-assisted writing software, were used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The author further declares that, apart from QuillBot, no other AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

## References

- Ang, I., Isar, Y. R., & Mar, P. (2018). Cultural diplomacy: Beyond the national interest? In *Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?* (pp. 11–27). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315617985-7>
- Asif, F., & Sangha, J. (2021). Film as a Significant Factor in Fostering Peace and Justice in Society. *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*, 9(8), 362.
- Baylis, J., Smith, S., & Owens, P. (2020). *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Oxford University Press.
- Bloodsworth-Lugo, M. K., & Flory, D. (2013). *Race, philosophy, and film*.
- Bowling, B. (2014). *Research Methods In Health: Investigating Health And Health Services*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Bräutigam, D., & Xiaoyang, T. (2012). Economic statecraft in China's new overseas special economic zones: Soft power, business or resource security? *International Affairs*, 88(4), 799–816. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01102.x>
- Carroll, B. (2016). *Feeling Film: A Spatial Approach*. Springer.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2016). Thematic Analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298.
- Duarte, P. A. B., Gupta, A., & Delvaje, B. C. (2024). Multilateralism and Soft Power Made-in-China: (Re)Adjusting Role Conception to Meet International Expectations. *East Asia*, 41(4), 325–345. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-024-09424-0>
- Erlil, A. (2018). Media and the Dynamics of Memory. In *Handbook of Culture and Memory* (pp. 305–324). Oxford University Press.
- Esack, F. (2018). Progressive Islam – A Rose by Any Name? American Soft Power in the War for the Hearts and Minds of Muslims. *ReOrient*, 4(1), 78–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.13169/reorient.4.1.0078>
- Fjelde, H., & Höglund, K. (2011). *Building Peace, Creating Conflict? Conflictual Dimensions of Local and International Peacebuilding*. Nordic Academic Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.919487>
- Forster, M. (Director). (2007). *The Kite Runner* [Video recording]. DreamWorks Pictures.
- Gallarotti, G. M. (2011). Soft power: What it is, why it's important, and the conditions for its effective use. *Journal of Political Power*, 4(1), 25–47.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.557886>
- Galtung, J. (2007). Introduction: Peace by peaceful conflict transformation — the TRANSCEND approach. In *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Routledge.

- George, T. (Director). (2004). *Hotel Rwanda (2004)* [Video recording].  
<http://catalog.afi.com/Film/63109-HOTEL-RWANDA>
- Gupta, A. (2022). Panda Power? Chinese Soft Power in the Era of COVID-19. *PRISM*, 10(1), 40–56.
- Harman, S. (2019). *Seeing Politics: Film, Visual Method, and International Relations*. McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP.
- Huish, R., & Darnell, S. (2024). Solidarity, Counter-Hegemony, and Development: Exploring New Dimensions of Cuba's Sport-Based Internationalism. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 36(71), 139–164.
- Johnston, R. K. (2020). Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in and Through Film: The Case Study of Rwanda. In J. Mitchell, G. Vincett, T. Hawksley, & H. Culbertson (Eds.), *Peacebuilding and the Arts* (pp. 305–321). Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17875-8\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17875-8_15)
- Jolie, A. (Director). (2017). *First They Killed My Father* [Video recording]. Netflix.
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846–854.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>
- Kimani, T. (2023). The Impact of Cultural Diplomacy on Perceptions of Foreign Policy. *Global Journal of International Relations*, 1(1), 1–12.
- Krueger, R. A. (2014). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Lake, D. A. (2003). International Relations Theory and Internal Conflict: Insights from the Interstices. *International Studies Review*, 5(4), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1079-1760.2003.00504008.x>
- Lobasz, J., & Valeriano, B. (2015). Teaching international relations with film and literature: Using non-traditional texts in the classroom. In *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations* (p. 399). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Lustig, C. M. (2016). Soft or Hard Power? Discourse Patterns in Brazil's Foreign Policy Toward South America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 58(4), 103–125.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/laps.12004>
- Memduhoglu, H. B., Kotluk, N., & Yayla, A. (2017). The Effect of Focus Group Discussions on Pre-Service Teachers' Teaching Experiences and Practices: A Mixed Methods Study. *International Journal of Instruction*, 10(4), 273–292.
- Mozaffarian, D., Blashek, J. A., & Stavridis, J. (2015). Learning from soft power. *BMJ*, 351.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h4645>

- Nye, J. (2004). *Power in the Global Information Age From Realism to Globalization*. Routledge.  
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203507292/power-global-information-age-joseph-nye-jr>
- Nye, J. S. (1990). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*, 80, 153–171. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>
- Pajtinka, E. (2014). Cultural Diplomacy in Theory and Practice of Contemporary International Relations. *Politické Vedy*, 17(4), 95–108.
- Pakanati, R. (2023). Teaching International Relations Through Films. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 11(2), 335–341.
- Paradise, J. F. (2018). [Review of *Review of CHINA'S SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH ASIA: Myth or Reality?*, by B. M. Jain]. *Pacific Affairs*, 91(4), 786–788.
- Premaratna, N. (2021). Dealing With Sri Lanka's Demons: Using Documentary Film for Peacebuilding. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 16(1), 39–54.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316620985756>
- Rothman, S. B. (2011). Revising the soft power concept: What are the means and mechanisms of soft power? *Journal of Political Power*, 4(1), 49–64.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2011.556346>
- Sharp, P. (1999). *For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations*. 1(1), 33–57.
- Sobocinska, A., & Purdey, J. (2019). *Enduring Connections?*  
<https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17502001>
- Storr, W. (2020). *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human and How to Tell Them Better*. Abrams Press.
- van Munster, R., & Sylvest, C. (2015). *Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility*. 16(3), 229–245.
- Walker, R. A. (2004). *Multilateral Conferences*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230514423>
- Wartenberg, T. E. (2006). Beyond Mere Illustration: How Films Can Be Philosophy. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64(1), 19–32.

**Contact email:** [sebastiandarminto@outlook.com](mailto:sebastiandarminto@outlook.com)