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'Conclusion' attachment

-- The China aspect is vital: over the past decade or so, Beijing has made great efforts and expended vast sums to enter/acquire Hollywood studios and US cinema chains.

The aims are to influence/shape US entertainment outputs, the tone of the debate in the US re the Chinese Communist Party, and to neutralise the effectiveness and powerful reach of the US entertainment industry. E.g. films critical of Beijing/China's past or present policies are not as easy to make anymore or, if they are made, they won't now be carried by Chinese-owned US cinema chains. If studios know their bottom-line is going to be affected by taking on politically sensitive projects, they will self-censor. Job done.

'Memorandum' document

-- Though it has always been the case to an extent, US-made films are increasingly driven purely by financial considerations - e.g. sequels and re-makes of older originals mean less and less actual originality as time goes by. So we have somewhat of a paradox here:

to improve US and foreign 'responses' to authoritarian tendencies worldwide, US-made content needs to be subtler, more focused, for e.g. so as not to come across as government propaganda. Yet some audience segments are no longer receptive to or interested in such content. So we (liberal democracies) definitely have to try and reverse this trend with better, more relevant content i.e. these audiences won't know if they like/don't such new content until they consume it. But this leads us to another paradox:

will 'liberal' Hollywood/other US entertainment players be able/willing to adjust outputs that to a certain extent reflect their own values and outlooks? Enough to make messaging more relevant/attractive to growing numbers of socially-conservative consumers (or who at least identify as that - there's a VAST difference between the two)? And in turn, will 'conservative' audiences trust what they may regard as 'liberal' and biased content that lacks objectivity? (I.e. Forget polarised - who trusts what/whom in an increasingly atomised world?)

We'll need to go beyond old-style military 'romps' and get entertainment 'outputs' that draw out the nature of 21st-century conflict: diffuse, across society, without clear boundaries at times. That's the real fight we're fighting; we can more than hold our own on the military side of things (just!)

How to use

-- get actual experts like e.g. Martha Bayles and Nick Cull (a terrific Brit out at USC Annenberg) to articulate how US and other global entertainment powerhouses, either on their own or in collaboration, can improve and 'coordinate' so that output messaging converges to bolster shared democratic values but with locally-relevant content, etc.

It would be a grave oversight, I feel, to focus exclusively on the USA.

In a global entertainment and media market valued at ca US\$1.8 trillion in 2016, some players are far bigger draws in certain markets. In the Anglosphere, the 'Five Eyes' countries - US, UK, Canada, Australia, NZ - have unrivalled influence. But's let's not forget other core players worldwide: e.g.

France and Italy (film, TV)

Scandinavia (film, TV)

Japan (film, TV/cartoons)

Nigeria (film, TV - i.e. 'Nollywood')

India (film, TV - i.e. 'Bollywood' - annual output and viewership often exceed Hollywood's)

South Korea (film, TV/cartoons)

Mexico, Brazil and Argentina (film, TV/soap operas)

Even Russian and Chinese entertainment communities should not be out of bounds for 'Western' support - e.g. the fantastic Russian film 'Leviathan' - though great care has to be taken not to place local directors/actors/crews in jeopardy.

However, one key challenge that North American and Western European countries will face in several of the above regions will RU and PRC influence on policy and culture these days. Post-9/11 we focused almost exclusively on countering terrorism the Middle East and AfPak, taking our eye off other equally

important regions from a strategic point of view: e.g. Western Hemisphere (America's so-called 'backyard'), Sub-Saharan Africa. RU and PRC have used the past 15 years to make considerable inroads.

-- get experts like Martha, Nick and others, publicly or privately, before relevant government committees in the core markets above. They should present a clearly articulated vision of why we need to refocus and reenergise 'Western' entertainment to combat increasing authoritarianism and illiberal tendencies worldwide, how to go about doing so BUT without it being 'propaganda'. In reality, anything consumed can be seen as that - it's the old trope 'to inform is to influence'.

- and where the US entertainment community is concerned, let's not just focus on outputs but also on the vast surrounding network of events, institutions and sub-communities. Think of the global reach/impact of e.g. the Oscars, the Grammys, the Brits, the BAFTAs, the Film Academy, etc.

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