"WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?": THE ROLE OF 24 VILLAINS FOR REINFORCING THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF U.S.A EXCEPTIONALISM

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to analyse some events taking place in the television show *24* as to identify if and how they respond to the master narrative of U.S.A. history, values, and nationalism. More specifically, the study focuses on the depiction of Arab, Russian, and Chinese villains as to analyse how they are constructed and, as such, what these representations might mean. With the theoretical framework brought by Said (1979), among others, the study identifies how Jack Bauer, the series hero, is not only defined by his actions, but by how they differ from the actions of his antagonists. Interestingly enough, while foreign villains are called fundamentalists due to their religion or blind nationalism, findings demonstrate how the greatest fundamentalist of the series is Bauer himself.

Keywords: Jack Bauer. U.S.A. history. 24

"PARA QUEM VOCÊ TRABALHA?": O PAPEL DOS VILÕES DE 24 HORAS PARA REFORÇAR A NARRATIVA MESTRE DO EXCEPCIONALISMO ESTADUNIDENSE

Resumo: O propósito deste artigo é analisar alguns eventos que ocorrem na série 24 horas para identificar se e como eles respondem à narrativa mestre da história, valores e nacionalismo estadunidenses. Mais especificamente, o estudo enfoca na construção de vilões árabes, russos e chineses para analisar como eles são construídos e, assim, o que essas representações podem significar. Com o aparato teórico de Said (1979), entre outros, o estudo identifica de que maneira Jack Bauer, o herói da série, não é apenas definido por suas ações, mas por como elas diferem das ações de seus antagonistas. Curiosamente, enquanto os vilões estrangeiros são chamados de fundamentalistas em razão de sua religião ou nacionalismo cego, os achados demonstram como o maior fundamentalista da série é o próprio Bauer.

Palavras-chave: Jack Bauer. História dos E.U.A. 24

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Introduction: The United States and the construction of the "Others"

> Jack Bauer: How many people that trusted you lost their life today because you were doing your job? / Nina Mayers: How many died because of you, Jack? (*24*, S1, E24)

Throughout history and historical moments, the idea of who is the villain has proven to be intricate, and profoundly dependent on the perspective one looks at him/her. Sometimes, though it is not even possible to look at villains themselves, since one might not have access to them, at first. This is when stereotypes are need: so to fill in a blank space, to inform us on these people we are supposed to disagree with, to fear, and/or to despise. As Najm (2019, p. 87) puts it, "cultural stereotypes are used increasingly in interactions between ingroups and outgroups and represent the automated processing of our knowledge and past experiences stored in long-term memory". Therefore, as stereotypes are repeated, they are also reinforced and, eventually, we simply expect the villain to fit in that mould that has already been shaped accordingly.

Of course these stereotypes are constructed in a way to privilege a certain side to the detriment of another. In this sense, "positive stereotypes are usually auto-stereotypes associated with excessive self-estimation, while negative stereotypes have a long history of devaluation of other groups" (NAJM, 2019, p. 90). We fear what we do not know and vice versa. In this article, this fictional villain is taken as analogous to the Other: for these are fictional villains invented to the sake of a specific agenda which depends on their caricature. About the Other, Edward Said (1979, p. 5) reminds us that the division Orient and Occident is a man-made one: "Therefore, as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery. and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other".

The Occident depends on the Orient as much as the Self depends on the Other and the hero depends on the villain: these are complementary elements, which are defined by the role played by their negatives. If we take the U.S. case into consideration, the history of the country suggests "that neither Hollywood nor the White House will be able to do without constructing Others whom to run up against. This partly roots in the historical foundations of the United States history" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 22). In a way, U.S.A. nationalism might also be related to an intense loathing and abomination against what is foreign – and against what is simply felt or represented as foreign, even when it is not. The cultural representation of the other, thus, has not only a symbolic role, but a concrete one: at the same time as it reflects what U.S.A. citizens feel regarding the Other, it helps shape and reshape their opinion: guaranteeing a certain idea of this Other.

In the 18th century the French and the British had set up a number of (shifting) alliances and/or arrangements with various indigenous North-American Indian peoples; (post-) Revolutionary Americans did not feel committed to maintaining those, opening the way to expansionism and ultimately to genocide. As the process of expansion to the West began, so did the process of denial of the Other. Yet, there was no sound reason for settlers to claim an utter superiority, aside of firepower, over the natives. In fact, Indian natives were one of the most recurrent Others in emerging Hollywood in general, and the Western genre in particular. The United States seems to depend much more on the construction of the Others, mostly for its short history and the necessity of compressing the process by which previous Empires have created their social imaginary in a much more abbreviated span of time. Most of what the United States had to claim their superiority

was, in fact, derived from the European roots they somehow wanted to differentiate from. (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 22)

The incipit of U.S.A. master narrative, then, has allowed the country to be built against different settings at different historical times: against Native Americans, Soviet Union, China, the Middle East, Mexicans etc. Compressing the process by which previous nations have concocted this imaginary of Self versus the Other, a certain approach was necessary for this to work. Therefore, and since mass media provides average Westerners with a direct channel to "know" the Other, "the role of Hollywood depictions of these 'outsiders' becomes essential, as most people do not have other ways to access those cultures but by seeing their representation on the screen" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 12). Be it literature, cinema, series, HQ… many artistic productions are instilled with a perspective on the Other which gives the audience not simply a description, but an explanation for motivations, rituals, and beliefs that are foreign to the Self. During this process, "in a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (SAID, 1979, p. 7).

Understanding Orientalism here as analogous to the villainization of the Other, such flexibility emerges then as not that flexible in terms of cultural superiority and inferiority. When one looks at this issue from a Marxist perspective, it does not become less relevant. On the contrary, it reminds us that there is a reason for everything: and that even the fictional idea of the Other is generally guided by the market. "The Western market economy and its consumer orientation have produced (and are producing at an accelerating rate) a class of educated people whose intellectual formation is directed to satisfying market needs" (SAID, 1979, p. 325). Consumer orientation, in such sense, is deeply rooted in cultural or even ideological orientation, regardless of our being cognizant or not of this silent voice manipulating our behaviour. Still according to Said (1979, p. 325), when one looks at the construction of the Self, "there is a heavy emphasis on engineering, business. and economics. obviously enough; but the intelligentsia itself is auxiliary to what it considers to be the main trends stamped out in the West".

Artistic productions are part of this intelligentsia responsible of generating a fictional pattern to fit in the Occident – and consequently the Orient. Throughout history, "its role [the West] has been prescribed and set for it as a 'modernizing' one, which means that it gives legitimacy and authority to ideas about modernization, progress, and culture that it receives from the United States for the most part" (SAID, 1979, p. 325). To define what is modern, one needs a definition of the antiquate: and the same is true for progress versus declension, intelligence versus ignorance, good versus evil. As such, seeing the Other as the villain, in a linear historical *crescendo*, has given authority and legitimacy to a master narrative that not only privileges the U.S.A., but also animalises its "opponents", depriving them of their humanity and, therefore, justifying their slaughter.

Taking that into account, the purpose of this article is to analyse some events taking place in the television show *24* as to identify if and how they respond to the master narrative of U.S.A. history, values, and nationalism. More specifically, the study focuses on the depiction of Arab[2], Russian, and Chinese villains as to

2 Sometimes, the villains who emerge in the series are depicted as Arabs, Muslims, or Middle Eastern, and very often interchangeably (i.e. in many occasions, the very same villain, with no country of origin, is called Middle Eastern, or Muslim, or Arab and vice versa). Accordingly, in my analysis I simply repeat the information used to characterise them in the scene or episode in question. Even though this might look as generalisation, I have chosen not to "standardise" them by selecting only one of these adjectives precisely because I know they are not synonymic.

analyse how they are constructed and, as such, what these representations might mean. Bokiniec (2010, p. 197) explains how the series works: "*24* has a unique visual and narrative construction. Each season is one day in life of agent Jack Bauer, who has to stop some major crisis or catastrophe (nuclear bomb, third world war, bioweapon attack, assassination of US President etc.) in 24 hours". After one watches two or three seasons of *24*, soon s/he realises another pattern: since the series is rather long if compared those of the same nature (24 episodes), generally there are two great events to be solved (one at hour 12th and the other at hour 24th).

> Each episode presents one hour in "real" time and in order to follow different narrative threads the screen splits, usually into three or four panels, showing what characters in different places are doing at a given moment. The time pressure is further emphasized by the clock ticking on the screen. (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 197)

Time, then, is of the issue. Running out of it to stop a bomb, or a military attack, a deadly virus, or the deadline given by a villain, Jack Bauer takes us with him through his many errands so that we do not get bored with this "real" time mode. Regarding the villains, each season brings a different array of them. As one could have imagined, though, for *24*, the Middle East is the main source of evil. As Najm (2019, p. 96) reminds us, "Arabs have for a century been portrayed as bad, evil terrorists causing explosions, shallow, silly, naive, lustful and extravagant, far from civilisation, inseparable from their tents and camels, arrogant, nervous, rich, and stupid in Hollywood movies". In *24* this is not different. The Arab family is toxic, the Arab villain is guided by selfish reasons and does not think twice before killing innocent lives of even his wife or children if needed. As a matter of fact, one of the most recurrent sentence coming from the mouth of Arab villains is that: "no one is innocent".

Nevertheless, and even though the number of Arab villains is the greatest in the series, the villain who is present in most of the seasons is Chinese: Bauer's torturer, Cheng Zhi. Regardless of his problematic depiction, it is commendable that Zhi is played by a Chinese-American actor, Tzi Mia. After all, "Hollywood has a habit of indiscriminately casting any Asian actor in any Asian role; a Chinese actor may portray a Korean character, and vice versa" (PABER, 2018, p. 8). As it happens to the stereotypical idea of the Muslim villain, or the African villain (who by the way is there in Jack Bauer's film, that is not analyzed in this article), one is provided thus with the stereotypical idea of the Asian villain. "This perpetuates the idea that Asia is a monolith with interchangeable cultures even though Asia is made up of dozens of countries, each with their own different culture and traditions" (PABER, 2018, p. 8).

Both the Middle Eastern and Chinese villains are there to "replace" (or better complement) another classic villain, that has appeared in Hollywood after the Native Americans and remained for a long time: The Russian villain. Once they were all around, but, as the communist threat was over, they had to share their spot with other enemies of U.S.A., in this case Middle Eastern, Chinese, Mexican, African etc. As Walters (2012, p. 37) sets forth, "in the current era, there has been a resurgence of films with Russian characters or themes involving Russia. This clearly marks a resurfacing of interest in storylines involving Russians which had dropped immediately after the end of the Cold War". Seemingly, after one gets into Western imaginary, it is not easy to leave.

2. Discussion: "Stay the hell out of my country"

If the identity of the Other is built as opposed to that of the Self, before looking at 24's villains one must reflect a little bit on Jack Bauer: the series hero. Like most popular tele-

vision shows of its time, the protagonist is characterized as much better than the other characters, who easily give up, turn to corruption, go rogue, die etc. As such, he is morally superior, capable of saving victims in situations that seem hopeless or willing to make impossible sacrifices (e.g. exchanging his life for the welfare of the U.S.A. even after he is abandoned by the government to suffer torture for almost two years). Emotionally superior, functioning effectively even when his wife dies, or he is forced to kill a partner, or his daughter is kidnapped. No torture breaks Bauer and no challenge beats him. As a matter of fact, the most competitive struggles of the series only happen because his opponent is given an advantage over him – e.g. his hands are tied, he is not able to see, he is suffering from a heart condition or something else.

Jack Bauer goes through everything, gets nothing in return and, even though, is always willing to die for this greatest purpose: protecting the U.S.A. and U.S.A. citizens. There are several occasions when, for a single detail, his life is saved at the last minute. This provides us with emotional moments when he talks to people who he loves and when, once again, he shows no weakness or selfishness. As Bokiniec (2010, p. 195) puts it, because the archetype of U.S.A. idealised series protagonists are characterized "as main, most developed characters around which the whole story evolves, we automatically adopt their point of view and want them to succeed in whatever it is they are doing, although they sometimes do horrible and unacceptable things". The audience is gradually guided to agree with Jack Bauer, notwithstanding what happens because, even when he is inflicting pain on someone, that "person", the villain, has already been completely dehumanized beforehand.

It is true that, from season 1 to 6, an array of different villains from varied countries are presented to those watching *24*. However, given time and space constraints, in this analysis I shall focus here on season 4, 5, and 6 (2005-2007) as to understand how the Arab, Russian, and Chinese identities seem to be consciously built in parallel to the historical contexts wherein these seasons belong. Moreover, it is in the last 3 seasons that the series gain elements of complexity unseen beforehand. Nevertheless, a brief summary of what happens before them might be relevant.

In season 1 (2001), Jack Bauer manages to stop the plans of the Serbian antagonist Victor Drazen, who wishes to assassinate both David Palmer (a presidential candidate) and the protagonist himself due to a past grudge specifically against these two characters. In season 2 (2003), Jack Bauer fights an Oil consortium conspiracy which tries to benefit from the attempt of militant Islamic fundamentalist Syed Ali, who tries to detonate a nuclear bomb in Los Angeles. Although the terrorist alleges he has worked alone, this role season revolves around a fake recording implicating his nation (Afghanistan) – which would justify military action against it and, as a result, "be good for business". In season 3 (2004), Bauer infiltrates Mexican Salazar drug cartel, but fails to fulfil his mission: intercept the sale of a bioweapon which ends up in the hands of a British former MI6 agent looking for vengeance against the U.S.A.

From season 1 to 3, it is already very easy to have a clear idea of who this Jack Bauer person is. Best shooter, best fighter, best agent, Bauer is a personification of U.S.A. national idealisation of heroism. Moreover, and even though he seems to be guided by an unflappable moral compass, "Jack maintains a perverted version of civil disobedience, as he sometimes justifies his disregard for protocol and orders of his superiors with 'because it was a bad decision' phrase" (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 201). Sometimes this means going against blackmailing orders from terrorists who threat to kill his family, sometimes this means ignoring clear instructions from his superiors – and even the president. "Jack breaks the law for the sake of at least some kind of his own morality: morality the basic rule of which is 'saving the innocent'. The problem is

that he puts himself in the position of deciding who is innocent" (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 201). The series helps him with that, by making the innocent U.S.A. white and beautiful children, women who are spanked by their terrorist associates (who they wish to scape from), or the best president the United States has ever seen (later to be replaced by the worse).

The antagonists are likewise categorically stereotyped. These are so savage, so cruel people, that the audience goes through a cathartic moment when they watch Jack Bauer torturing them. About these tortures, which bring Bauer a lot of headache as his government starts judging him for his acts (what an idea!), it is important to understand how, again, the series manipulates us into agreeing with the protagonist. One of the greatest illustrations of that is the characterization of Senator Blaine Mayer, who conducts an investigation of human rights violations committed by U.S.A. agents. This very senator ends up killed by the foes that Bauer is chasing, and notwithstanding the latter's attempts at stopping them. Again, it is worth reminding that *24* is broadcasted in a very specific time of U.S.A. history: the precise moment when it is undergoing the effects of 09/11 in its political, social, and ideological movements.

> In the age of terrorism, the question of human rights has been debated, and during this debate the basic, core values as to which there seemed to be a wide consensus, have been undermined, as the more primitive emotions took over. The new kind of TV shows seem to answer to this newly established ambiguity, sometimes having a huge ideological input (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 195)

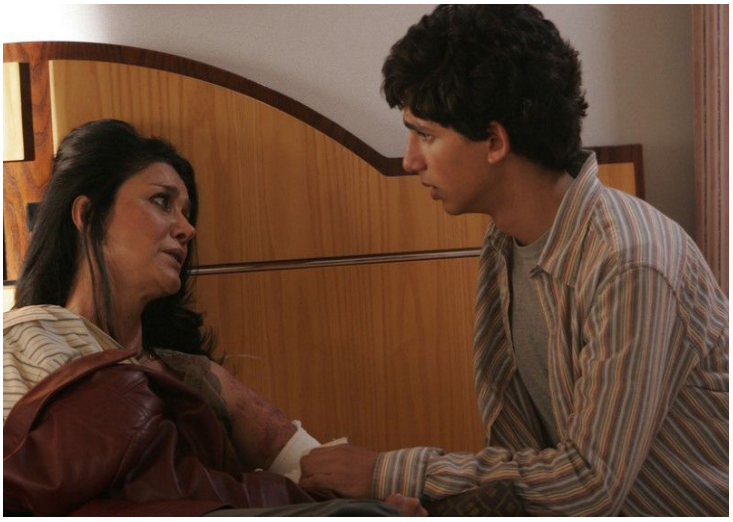
It even sounds like a provocation that the most prominent figure against human rights violations when it goes to national security suspects is murdered while Jack Bauer (the greatest violator) is only trying to protect him. If this outcome is taken into account, it is difficult to conclude that the senator was right while the agent was wrong: and that is precisely the point. "In his defense, Bauer does not commit these crimes because he's a sadistic psychopath; he breaks laws to save the country from terrorists bent on using nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons on U.S. soil" (YIN, 2008, p. 279). In this sense, maybe the series success is justified by its idea to bring nuclear bombs (S2 and S6), lethal viruses (S3) and nerve gas (S5), nuclear power plants melting and shooting down of Air Force One (S4). Thereby, "the threats in the 24 universe are not purely hypothetical. They run the gamut of terrorism fears of the American public" (YIN, 2008, p. 279). Following 9/11 attacks in 2001, 24 benefits greatly from U.S.A. nationalism and Islamophobia.

But now, let us look more specifically to events taking place in season 4. Set eighteen months after S3, here Jack's enemy is Habib Marwan, who controls a series of Middle Eastern terrorist cells launching coordinated attacks against the U.S.A all at the same time. Oddly enough, "Middle Eastern" here is taken as a broad term but every characters seem to be extremely similar in their beliefs and behaviour to one another. A curious and symptomatic case is that of the Araz family, formed by Navi Araz, Dina Araz, and Behrooz Araz.

Involved in the plot to launch the attacks on U.S. soil, the family relationship starts to devolve when Behrooz girlfriend Debbie (who is not a Muslim, which is something the family does not take very well) interferes by following him to a secret location (S4, E2, 28:25-30:04). Even though he tries to keep that from his parents, they are told by an associate. As a result, Dina Araz invites her for a visit, and, after a drink, precisely at the moment Behrooz tries to scape with her, he finds out his mother has poisoned the girl (S4, E4, 28:09-29:34). Even though Behrooz suffers with Debbie's death, his parents are in consonance, until Navi decides the boy is also a threat: and, therefore, he needs to die (S4, E6, 24:42-25:16). This is when Dina changes her behaviour and, as time passes, she

goes from a secondary character to a crucial one to help Jack Bauer and the other agents stop the attacks.

Image 1: Behrooz takes care of Dina



S4, E9, 08:02

What is interesting about the Araz family, in what regards the representation of Muslims, is how easily they dismantle. If, at the beginning, they are nonchalant about the things they believe in, at the first difficulty everyone turns against one another. In order: The mother decides to kill her son's girlfriend, the father decides to kill the son, the mother decides to betray the father and finally the father starts chasing both mother and son as to kill them both. Compared to Jack Bauer's family, values, and followers, it is evident how weaker his opponents are: which reinforces the idea that there are not simply two sides, but a righteous one, and an equivocate one. As such, we have the Araz family as the Other.

About this, it is important to bear in mind that "not every representation of the Other is 'useful', neither in Politics, nor in movies" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 13). Which is to say that it is no good to present Muslim as "normal people", inasmuch as U.S. identity depends on emphasising its superiority over "theirs". "We should also take into consideration that when we talk about a common use of Otherness as a 'nemesis' we are referring not only to some Other destined to be feared, condemned, and fought; but also to someone to be fascinated about" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 13). This is why even though we have the Other as the enemy, we also have it as the ally: Bauer's Mexican love affair, the Muslim agent sent to help him etc.

Even if it were an isolate case, the stereotypical portrayal of the Araz family would be a problematic one given the context of Islamophobia in the United States. This idea of the Muslim-American neighbor as a terrorist, has generated a lot of violence triggered by the feeling that terror "could be next door". Nevertheless, there is another case – and an even more shocking one. At the end of the first episode in season 6, we meet a U.S. family formed by the parents Ray, Jillian, and the boy Scott Wallace. While they are discussing the attacks that occurred early in the day, the family realises that Scott's friend, Ahmed Amar, a Middle-Eastern neighbor across the street, is about to be assaulted by Stan, who breaks into his house asking him to "stay the hell out of my country" (S6, E1, 26:56).

Pressured by Scott, Ray intervenes and defends the Muslim boy from his attacker. So far so good, but, at the end of this very episode, there is a conversation between the Muslim terrorist Abu Fayed and Ahmed: and here we find out that he is, indeed, a threat to the country. At this point (S6, E1, 41:35 onwards) we fear for the Wallace family, since they have invited Ahmed to stick with them until things calm down a little. In the next episode, after a sentimental speech from Scott about friendship, Ahmed goes home to pick up a package to Fayed. What he does not know is that Stan is waiting for him. For some minutes, then, the audience sees itself cheering up for this intolerant neighbor who, notwithstanding the lack of proof, is actually beating up a very dangerous terrorist. This is coherent with Bokiniec (2010, p. 195) assumption that, by manipulating our feelin-

gs towards despising or cheering up for certain characters or even outcomes, the show "undermines and distorts the traditional and common sense differences between heroes and villains" (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 195). At the end of this very scene, however, Ahmed picks up a gun, kills Stan, and reveals himself to Scott, making him (and later his family) his hostage (S6, E2, 31:32-33:33).

Image 2: Ahmed Amar reveals himself

S6, E2, 32:06

Even though, when it goes to villains, Muslim characters are the vast majority in 24, they are not alone whatsoever. Before that, let us just go back to Bauer's need to "go dark", because this is relevant in terms of understanding for how long he is chased by his opponents. Seasons 1 and 3 are the only seasons that, at the beginning, Bauer is actively working for C.T.U. (The fictional Counter-Terrorist Unit). At the beginning of season 2 (2003), due to the death of his wife Teri, he is no longer an agent, although he is reinstated. In season 4 (2005) he is working as a bodyguard for the Secretary of Defense (released from C.T.U. because of a heroin addiction resulting from his infiltration in the Mexican cartel).

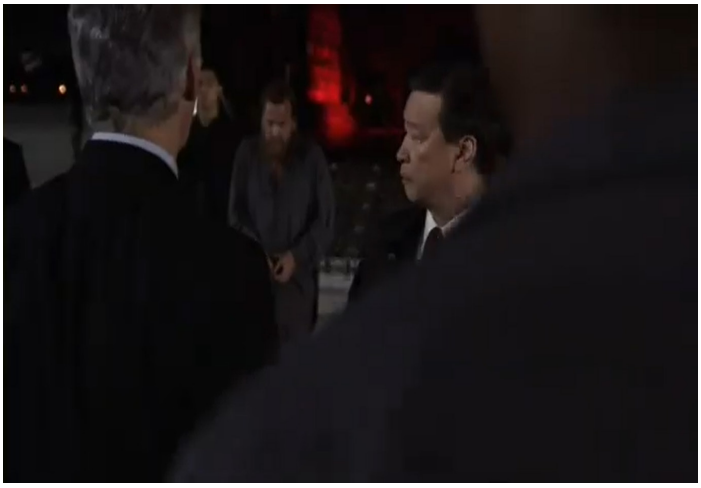
During this season, Jack invades the Chinese consulate to capture a suspect and a collateral damage of his visit is that the Chinese consul is killed. Consequently, Chinese government wants to take him to a Chinese prison – and, because of that, U.S.A. agents sent by the White House attempt to kill him as a security measure, given he was an asset carrying sensitive information. Aided by his team, he manages to escape; and, when season 5 starts (2006), we find out he has been renamed Frank, and pretends to work with civil construction. Reinstated again, he is automatically put on the spotlight; and, after saving the world two more times, he is abducted and taken to China, where he remains for almost two years before a deal between the two countries takes place at the beginning of season 6 (2007).

From the accidental death of Chinese consul until the series finale, the obsession of the Chinese government with Jack Bauer is relentless. Cheng Zhi appears as a minor rival in season 4 (2005), but, after he tortures Jack during his time in China, he grows as a villain in the following seasons. After the Middle Eastern stereotype, now we get, thus, to the Asian one. In the words of Paber (2018, p. 27), "Asians are also plagued by the 'model minority' stereotype, which parade them as an example for people, showing them to be intelligent, overachieving, and technologically savvy". Even though, at first, this does not look exactly as a negative thing, "this stereotype can undermine the struggles of Asians who do not fit this 'model minority', or contribute to the idea that they are antisocial, awkward, and lacking proper communication skills, which could lead to peer rejection" (PABER, 2018, p. 27).

First of all, it is important to remember that, even though the Chinese agree to release Bauer, they secretly keep Audrey Raines (Jack's girlfriend, and the daughter of the secretary of defense) captive to use her as leverage later. On his own, Cheng Zhi "exaggerates" in the plots he concocts, reason why even the Chinese government wants him arrested. As a result, he feels betrayed by his country and works intensely to cause a war between the U.S.A. and China, as vengeance against both. Again, we see how

betrayal is a common thing for Jack Bauer's enemies who share a very weak moral compass, in opposition to Bauer himself who loses his job and credibility, is persecuted by his own government, has to watch three love companions die and, regardless, is always fighting at the righteous side.

Image 3: Jack Bauer is released by Cheng Zhi



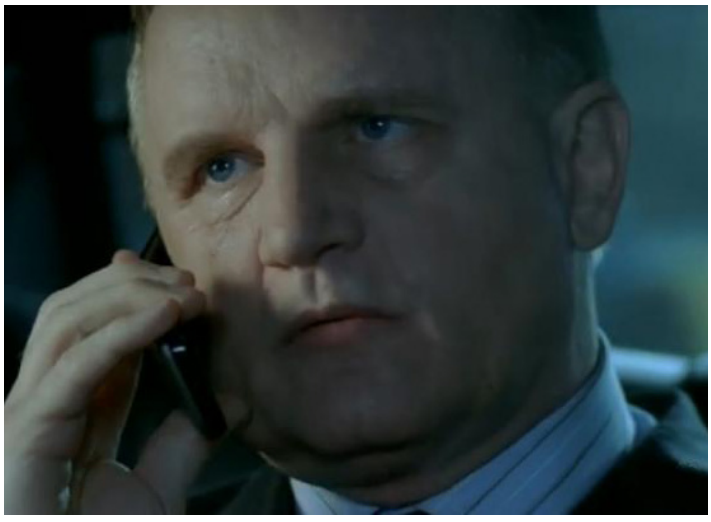
S6, E1, 09:12

Prior to that, in season 5 (2006), the narrative revolves around President Charles Logan preparations to sign an Anti-terrorism treaty with Yuri Suvarov, the Russian President (S5, E3, 09:03-09:25). At first, the president is seen as another victim of his compatriot Vladimir Bierko (S5, E9, 19:16-19:54), who is eager to launch biological attacks both in the U.S.A. and in Moscow in a terror campaign. Suvarov, on his turn, seems to have a close relationship with the U.S.A president Charles Logan. When he is informed that the Russian consul Anatoly Markov was withholding information about Dmitri Gredenko, another ultranationalist terrorist, the president aids C.T.U. and even agrees with Jack Bauer's breaking into the Russian consulate and torturing Markov (S6, E13, 38:30-39:45).

Later, however, when Suvarov finds out that the the U.S.A. is also planning peace treaties with the fictional country called Islamic Republic of Kamistan, he fears that this would weaken Russian economic influence in the Middle East. Therefore, he is behind the assassination of the President Omar Hassan, the sale of nuclear fuel rods to Middle Eastern factions, and the murder of Renee Walker (another one of Bauer love associates). Again, we are given a clear glimpse on the weakness of Bauer's enemies, who move from partnership to conflict without showing any sign of doubt or remorse.

The Russian as the Other might seem to be a rather outdated cultural approach given the period when 24 is broadcasted. According to Walters (2012, p. 3), up to this time "many Cold War era Americans had never met a Russian, their entire experience with Russian culture is based on what they see in the media, meaning that in large part films from this period were not just a mirror of society's views, but the primary source". In a nutshell, 24 is evidence that we are still dealing with the debris of Cold War stereotypes on Russians.

Image 4: Suvarov ordering Markov to surrender



S6, E13, 39:04

As set forth by Marcos and Colón (2016, p. 19): "the mechanization Hollywood used as an argument to degrade the Soviet enemy becomes a Friendly reasoning with which they belittle the underdeveloped Arab Other, who

has nothing to do with the hyper-technological American Self". During many moments of the series, the audience may have this impression that, regardless of the enemy, s/he always seems to represent something more "vintage" in comparison to the U.S.A. When families get together they look far too traditional, too male chauvinistic, too fanatic about religion or their nation. At the same time, they lack technology. The only thing that antagonists seem to do better than the U.S.A. is to deceive and to betray (even among their own).

Of course given the nature of this analysis, the whole construction of each enemy of U.S.A. became a little bit superficial. However, done separately, and with every particular and minor element taken into account we would see how the many characteristics converge. "Thus not only is the Other mutable, but the arguments that are used to despise them are too; and this could seem normal, as they are presented to be so from both the politico-ideological (White House) and the cultural (Hollywood) environment" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 19). It is not simple amusement: 24 is part of a whole effort to justify many things, such as violence against the weaker, the hegemony of the U.S.A. in relation to other nations, and the idea that laws can be bent depending on the situation.

3. Final remarks: The fundamentalist hero vs. fundamentalisms

As expected, the analysis demonstrates how the Middle Eastern, Russian, and Chinese villains of 24 play a significant role for reinforcing the master narrative of U.S.A history and protagonism. As highlighted by Marcos and Colón (2016, 0. 23), "Hollywood has systematically vilified groups of peoples as part of the business, with clear ideological bonds/repercussions". This process is not fixed: as U.S. rivals change, so does villains representation in U.S. films and series. The Russians, for instance, "have been both evil and redeemed partner, according to the exigencies of times, and their Asian counterparts have coped Otherness in a good share of Hollywood's movies, especially when addressing the Vietnam War" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 23). Not much later, still according to Marcos and Colón (2016, p. 23), Russians are replaced by the Arabs, who "impersonated vilified roles from Early Hollywood cinema".

As suggested during the study, 24 seasons and its array of villains impersonating the foreign threat, in parallel with U.S.A. leadership in stopping evil to spread throughout the world, are successful in compressing a political agenda. Marcos and Colón (2016, p. 23) reinforce that this sort of representations provide the U.S. with "a set of ancient, modern and latent threats that reassure the identity of this hastily built country. We may even go further and affirm that these Others are, somehow, the American identity itself". Jack Bauer, the U.S.A. hero, is not only defined by his actions, but by how they differ from the actions of his antagonists. Historically, this has been working rather well, and the U.S. has been able to convince nations overseas about this master narrative: about the fact that it has always been in the right side of history.

The villains, on their turn, have always served their role to guarantee that one would look at them with the needed despise to justify U.S.A. actions out of the screens. "In the times in which it was about forming a nation, the Indians served as the opposite force; when it was the prevailing power in the world that was emerging, it was the turn of the Russians then the Arabs to take up that role" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 23). As a drug that generates addiction, this dependence on a stereotypical villain became an obsession, something that, seemingly, the U.S. can no longer live without. "In the end, it seems unlikely that Hollywood machinery will be able to live without these recurrent Others, fresh fodder for stereotypes, degradations and, ultimately, obliteration" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 23). Sympto-

matic Imperial nations require fear and hate to be periodically administered into the minds of their members, and this becomes easier with we have a clear image of the invisible threats that surrounds us.

As such, and again, it is evident that everything 24 is saying about these foreign characters so ridiculously misrepresented says more about the U.S.A. than it says about them. "The United States have historically created a cast of enemies who are already part of themselves, by stressing the bonds of the states by identifying common fears and threats" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 23). These villains, very similar to one another regardless of their region or agenda, are at the same time never capable of carrying out their plan because of this godly hero who stops history from happening: or, better, who makes sure it happens in the way it is supposed to. In this sense, "Hollywood's role in the process is not only undeniable; but possibly vital and indispensable, too" (MARCOS; COLÓN, 2016, p. 23). Alone, and abandoned, Bauer fights conspiracies greater than he had imagined and ends up defeating presidents and senators who grimace like monsters when revealing their selfish and cruel deeds.

As Bokiniec (2010, p. 210) puts it, Jack Bauer is represented as "the ultimate judge of who is to live and who is to die, and his constant demand of trust brings to mind the 'leap of faith', he takes on himself the Christ-like mission of saving humanity (i.e. 'innocent' American people) and sacrifices himself frequently". To ensure the audience that Bauer has a manifest disadvantage in relation to the villains he fight against, he needs to operate in the dark: constantly being persecuted by his own government, agency, and co-workers. The reason for his loneliness is almost always because "no one else can be trusted": again, if you disagree with Bauer's actions, you are probably siding with evil. However, the hero does not fight exactly unaided: "He has a circle of believers who trust him unconditionally and are ready for anything to follow their prophet" (BOKINIEC, 2010, p. 210).

Interestingly enough, while foreign villains are called fundamentalists due to their religion or blind nationalism, the greatest fundamentalist of the series is Bauer himself, who believes in U.S.A. supremacy in almost a spiritual way. At the same time, he depends on a handful of colleagues to "follow" him (one or two, generally to help with satellite information) based on no evidence that he is right, and against all recommendation. If the villains often change their minds, turn against one another or against their own country, Bauer and his followers are inflexible; and they "only kill those they must". As such, Bauer's group proves to be the real threat, for they are the only ones who believe unconditionally in a single truth. There is no nationalist greater than Bauer: no other person who could do more for an imaginary community. Paradoxically, then, one could say that there is another, more effective way we can look at the series construction. With minor foreign villains popping up here and there, it seems the most terrifying one has been present from the first to the last episode: The U.S.A. itself.

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