

The Light and Dark Sides of *Star Wars*

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Edited by

S. Serhat Serter

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

It must have been the winter of 1983. My father took me to the Ari Movie Theatre in Eskişehir and, as I remember, this was the first movie I had ever watched in a cinema. From the opening scene of the film, the yellow lettering sliding into outer space on the screen and the exciting music playing in the background, I was rooted to the spot. As I was nine years old at that time, it was undoubtedly difficult for me to imagine what impact the *Star Wars* film *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) would have on my life. However, over the years I have come to realize that *Star Wars* was much more than just a movie for me to enjoy on a Saturday afternoon.

There is no longer an Ari Movie Theatre and I am no longer nine years old, but *Star Wars*, which is almost the same age as me, continues to increase its impact on people. Forty-three years have passed since the first film in the series, *A New Hope* (1977), and the latest film of the saga, *The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), was released two years ago. Although *The Rise of Skywalker* is the last film to date, those who love the series are aware that the *Star Wars* saga will not end with this film. This is because *The Rise of Skywalker*, released exactly forty-two years after the first film, is not only the ninth of the series and the final link, but also the greatest proof that it cannot be considered as just a sequel. *Star Wars* is one of the most important living elements of cinema history and popular culture with its archetypes, characters, symbols, music, philosophy, mythology, ideology, economy, visual effects, designs, and universal narrative language. The movies therefore deserve to be better understood by their audiences, fans, and readers.

While there are numerous academic books on *Star Wars* from around the world, such a study had never been conducted in Turkey until 2017. Therefore this book, *Star Wars: Readings of the Light and Dark Sides*, is of particular importance for us. This importance lies in the fact that this work is the first academic study written and published in Turkey regarding *Star Wars*. Another fact is that this revised and improved version of our book is the first published in a language (English) other than Turkish. The support and contribution of Cambridge Scholars Publishing in the emergence of this English edition have been indisputably valuable and significant.

This book contains articles written by academics working in film and communication concerning *Star Wars* films and cinema. Because academics have different perspectives on subjects and films, original writings have emerged that interpret and analyse *Star Wars* from different standpoints. In the Turkish edition of this book, I expressed a hope that a subject with such a considerable fan base and audience would be read with the same appreciation, which is evaluated from various perspectives. I think I was right in my prediction, because Cambridge Scholars Publishing, one of the publishers I approached for this publication, expressed the same enthusiasm as myself. Therefore, it fell to me to prepare this first English edition for you, our readers.

In the Turkish edition I express my sincere thanks to all my esteemed colleagues who responded positively to my call and contributed so wonderfully to the book. However, I cannot make this acknowledgement so superficially in this English edition. This is because if Ufuk Küçükcan, Erkan İznik, Fatma Okumuş, Burçin Ünal, Fulten Larlar, Can Dayıoğlu, Ali Karadoğan, Lale Kabadayı, Gizem Akgülçil, George Christopoulos, Yağız Uzunonat, Sevil Uzoğlu Bayçu, and Özgür Kılınç had not supported me with their writing, this English edition you are now holding would probably not have appeared. Therefore, all these writer friends whose names I relate once again deserve a sincere and genuine thank you.

I need to mention others who have supported me in the emergence and publication of this edition. Sedat Demir supported me in seeking permission for the book. Edward McQuaid and Graham Clarke carefully proofread the translated texts. I would also like to thank Adam Rummens and Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their most meaningful support in the emergence of this edition.

However, above all I owe a most special thank you to Ayşe Sönmez and my family, who have given me all their support during this difficult period over the last two years, and who are always there for me. Without them, this book really would not have been born.

S. Serhat Serter
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THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND DARK SIDES: THE IDEOLOGY OF *STAR WARS*

S. SERHAT SERTER*

Introduction

Life and cinema moved out of the orbit of imagination during the years dominated by the Cold War after the Second World War. However, this situation changed on May 25, 1977. Imagination, which had been fast asleep, was awakened by yellow text in a generic font flowing through outer space and a Star Destroyer (The Devastator) entering the frame immediately after. This was no longer unexposed film, but became a part of life again. The effect of *Star Wars* on our individual worlds, social reality, and the film industry is well known. George Lucas's space fantasy was not simply a film series or a product of popular culture.

Star Wars is not just a film, it is a mythology of its time. This legend, with which Lucas's creative mind revived Hollywood – which was on the verge of bankruptcy in 1977 – has become one of the most exciting products of popular culture in our era, with hundreds of different types of licensed products – such as TV series, comic books, video games, books, T-shirts, and glasses – in addition to the films.

As with other mythologies, *Star Wars* has become a history in which the primary narrator's identity is insignificant, and to which many narrators have contributed in many forms of media. These nine films, which came out over a period of forty-two years between 1977 and 2019, became an established legend around the world thanks to mythological elements and archetypes in their stories, and the special effects and marketing strategies used.

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Without question, this is not the only factor that made these films a legend for cinema history and audiences alike. These films are based on two much more universal concepts occurring as a result of Lucas's genius and creativity – ideological and political messages, which seem to belong to the periods when the films were shot and released, and in fact seem so universal, communicating opinions regarding interstate relations and the structure of power relations, and also providing clues about what is acceptable and what is taboo for audiences.

The main factors that have made *Star Wars* films so immediately popular with audiences around the world are the ideological and political messages sometimes communicated directly or subtly through the films' narratives. The films – whose central story is based on a never-ending struggle between good and evil, dealing with this theme subtly and precisely – would not be so successful without taking advantage of ideology and politics. Undoubtedly, another reason why the *Star Wars* films have become so popular, in addition to the ideology and politics reflected in them, concerns the important roles played by Hollywood's ideology and politics and the social and political environment of the period. However, it would be useful to briefly discuss ideology before taking a look at this.

The Concept of Ideology

The meaning of the term ideology is frequently discussed because different definitions have been proposed for the concept, and each term conflicts with or challenges the others. The fact that different authors and theorists use this term in different ways may cause problems in studies on ideology. Therefore, it is not easy to be sure about the usage of the term in any context. For example, while Nermi Uygur defines ideology as “a concept that almost no amount of thinking or examination can convince one to give up” (1995, 90), Edgar and Sedgwick state that the most common usage of the term may refer to a more-or-less consistent set of beliefs, and as a result the beliefs, values, and main principles of a political party or faction (2007, 180).

The concept of ideology was first used by French philosopher Antonie Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836) in the late eighteenth century to mean the science of ideas (*logos*). De Tracy believed, with the typical enthusiasm of the rationalist Enlightenment, that it is possible for the origins of ideas to be objectively revealed. However, the advent of ideology as a key concept in politics started with its usage in the writings of Karl Marx. The meaning that Marx attributed to the concept is quite different from that in mainstream approaches to political analysis:

In each period, the ideas of the ruling class are dominant ideas. That is, the class which dominates the material power of society is also the dominant intellectual power. The class which holds the financial means of production also controls the intellectual means of production. Thus, in general, the ideas of those who are devoid of the intellectual means of production are subject to the ideas of those who have these means. (in Heywood 2013, 24)

Marx's ideas regarding ideology are predominantly economic. According to him, ideology is a means for ensuring that the ideas of the ruling class seem natural and normal in society. All information is class-based, and carries the characteristics of the class to which it belongs, seeking to transmit the interests of this class. According to Marx, workers will inevitably overthrow the bourgeoisie and create a society in which there is no class domination and a class that does not exploit the majority. However, this has not happened, and it became clear that the revolution in the Soviet Union would not spread to Europe and the Western world (Güçhan 1999, 164).

To explain this situation, Marxist philosophers, such as Louis Althusser, developed a different theory of ideology. According to Althusser, it is an ongoing and pervasive system of the practices of all classes rather than a system of ideas that one class imposes on the other. In other words, ideology is a design for the imaginary relations between the conditions of existence for individuals. Althusser qualifies institutions – such as schooling, religion, unions, law, policy, family, culture, and communication – as ideological devices of the state, and asserts that the state continues its reproduction through this ideological pressure. In addition, ideology acts to construct individuals' subjectivities through this pressure, and, in so doing, allocates definite roles to them within the system of capitalist production (2014, 50–51).

Terry Eagleton states that ideology is an issue related to “discourse” rather than “language.” According to Eagleton, ideology is a matter of the de facto usage of language to produce certain effects among certain human subjects and about “what who says what to whom” and for what purpose, rather than the linguistic features that an expression includes. Eagleton states that people sometimes place each other at the level of gods or insects, and that ideology causes this. According to him, the fact that people fight or kill each other due to valid material reasons (for example, to maintain their physical existence) is easily understandable. However, it is difficult to understand how all these things can be done on behalf of something like an idea, which is obviously abstract (1996, 14).

There may be similar cases in states and nations in terms of the ideological approach between the individuals that Eagleton criticizes. In other words, there may be differences between periods when an ideology represents dissent and periods when it is dominant, for example the differences between the discourses of the bourgeoisie before and after the French Revolution in 1789. As an “ism,” ideology states that another life and another system of human relationships are possible, and that people deserve a position beyond their current situation. When an ideology comes to power and becomes a dominant ideology, it tries to create a discourse that that ideology is best, and that happiness should be looked for and found within the existing system to validate this value (Yılmaz 2008, 64).

In other words, ideology may have progressive characteristics when it is not in power, but when it comes to power (that is to say, when it becomes a dominant ideology) it wraps itself in reactionary characteristics to protect this position, and may become more conservative than in the past. This is a posture related to political ideology.

Political Ideology

Whether conservative or dominant, all kinds of ideologies affect political life in different ways. Above all, ideas and ideologies provide a perspective used to understand and explain the world, because people do not see the world as it is, but rather as they want to see it. Either consciously or unconsciously, everyone adopts a set of political beliefs and values that guide their behaviour and affect their attitudes. Political ideas, however, do not arise in a vacuum or fall from the sky like raindrops. All political ideas are shaped by the political desires that they serve and the social and historical conditions in which they arise.

All in all, political ideas and ideologies determine the objectives which will stimulate political activity. In this respect, politicians are exposed to two different effects. Undoubtedly, all politicians desire power. This situation forces politicians to be pragmatic and adopt policies that will please voters or gain the support of strong groups, such as the business world or the military. However, it is rare that politicians seek power only for power's sake. Politicians also have beliefs, values, and convictions about what they will do with this power when they obtain it (Heywood 2013, 20).

However, sometimes these beliefs and values may be shaped in a way that each class does not want to adopt or prefer. The dominant ideology may be in the form of a reactionary movement that is enforced or adopted by

individuals living in that society. Mussolini's fascism and Hitler's national socialism are good examples of such political ideologies. Both rejected values and aspirations that Western civilization had developed over a thousand years and imposed practices of warrior states which denied human dignity and legitimized a fear that is difficult to express. To make matters worse, these primitive impulses were represented by leaders who could not tolerate any opposition or control (Baradat 2012, 285).

Both Hitler and Mussolini described society within the concept of conflict. According to them, the good fight against the evil, the strong against the weak, and purity against corruption. As people in society are in competition for power, nations have to struggle for domination until the strongest nation settles on top of all the others. Hitler and Mussolini claimed that states and state wills are not equal, and that it is just for the strongest state to achieve superiority over other states. Expansionism (dominance of a nation over other nations) became a major mission for both societies. Mussolini argued that the most advanced form of natural regulator, which he called the demand for power, is expansionism, and that, "The highest expression of human power is Empire" (in Baradat 2012, 311–12).

The "empire" mentioned here is one of the key concepts of the ideology in the *Star Wars* films. Eagleton says that the most effective oppressor is one who can convince those under their command to adopt, accept, love, desire, and identify with them (1996, 14). The person exercising this influence in the *Star Wars* films is the Emperor, who plays a key role in the ideological and political discourse of the series. It would be useful to first look at Hollywood to see how the Emperor and his extensions politically and ideologically reflect this in this mythological and legendary fictional world. Of course, when the subject discussed is *Star Wars*, George Lucas and Joseph Campbell are the first two people in Hollywood who should be looked at.

Ideology of Hollywood: Campbell and Lucas

The American doyen of mythological narration Joseph Campbell calls George Lucas "my best student," because *Star Wars* is one of the most successful examples of his "universal" form applied to screenwriting, taking the theme of the "hero's journey" which Campbell considers common in mythologies of different cultures. Lucas says the following in a 1999 interview he gave to *The New York Times*:

The story being told in *Star Wars* is about heroes who have the ideals that we as a society would like people to possess. It's a terrible thing to say, but there's a certain part of society that would like everybody to be cynical. But at the same time, another segment of society needs to have heroes; to have somebody of whom they can say, "This is the kind of person that we should aspire to be."

In 1977 George Lucas created the character Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars IV: New Hope*, in which he portrays the journey of an ordinary farmer's son to becoming a Jedi, and the film's worldwide box-office success proves that audiences needed an old-fashioned hero. Perhaps the films became successful because, even under the worst conditions, heroes do not give up fighting, hoping, and imagining in this mythological and political fictional world created by George Lucas.

The first *Star Wars* trilogy (*A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*) came out between 1977 and 1983. As mentioned, Lucas said that the reason for the first trilogy's success was that people were in need of heroes in America during those years, where there was a movement for change that began with Ronald Reagan. Reagan restored stability to American society with his changes. The feminist and anti-war movements and the struggles for civil rights, equality, and freedom were marginalized in exchange for law and order. The ideal of personal development superseded that of social development (Akkartal 2015, 34).

Ironically, the fact that people care about the hero's journey in Hollywood, which Joseph Campbell revealed, coincides approximately with the same period. As it is known, the myth of the hero's journey constitutes the main theme of the *Star Wars* films. In fact, it gives the audience an idea about Hollywood and the ideological approach of the film. Campbell tries to explain this idea and much more in an interview he gave to television journalist Bill Moyers on Lucas's farm, called Skywalker Ranch:

The fact that the evil power is not identified with any specific nation on this earth means you've got an abstract power, which represents a principle, not a specific historical situation. The story has to do with an operation of principles, not of this nation against that. The monster masks that are put on people in *Star Wars* represent the real monster force in the modern world. When the mask of Darth Vader is removed, you see an unformed man, one who has not developed as a human individual. What you see is a strange and pitiful sort of undifferentiated face.

Darth Vader has not developed his own humanity. He's a robot. He's a bureaucrat, living not in terms of himself, but in terms of an imposed

system. This is the threat to our lives that we all face today. Is the system going to flatten you out and deny you your humanity, or are you going to be able to make use of the system to the attainment of human purposes? How do you relate to the system so that you are not compulsively serving it? It doesn't help to try to change it to accord with your system of thought. The momentum of history behind it is too great for anything really significant to evolve from that kind of action. The thing to do is learn to live in your period of history as a human being. That's something else, and it can be done. (1991, 181–2)

The cruel system that Campbell talks about here and the idea of trying to live as a human within it are portrayed in the *Star Wars* films in the best way. The special status of Hollywood in those years directly affected the success of these films. When the first film was released in 1977, studios in Hollywood wanted to go back to the imagined the “good old days” before the Second World War. They planned to bring film genres (musical, comedy, crime, and thriller) that people loved during those years back to the screen and return to the golden days of cinema. The American public, who were not pleased with the economic crisis and the Vietnam War, and were disappointed due to the protests of 1968 and the politicians (just as in the Great Depression of the early 1930s), were interested in this escapist cinema (Thompson and Bordwell 2003, 522).

In world cinema history, one of the most competent examples of this escapist cinema is the *Star Wars* series. It will be useful to briefly look at the history of this saga before talking about the ideological and political reflections in the films.

A Short History of *Star Wars*

Senator Palpatine, taking over as elected chancellor of the Galactic Republic, under the pretext of ending the disorder caused by separatist planets and systems, takes “state of emergency” powers through the chaotic environment he created in the senate and declares himself the first galactic emperor. In fact, Palpatine's real intent is to eliminate the Jedi and dominate the galaxy alone without the threat of opposition.

Most of the planets and systems in the galaxy are managed by the Senate in the Galactic Republic under the principles of separation of powers and representative democracy. However, the central authority of the Senate is weakened. Meanwhile, when one of these representatives and a mega-corporation, the Trade Federation, occupy the peaceful planet of Naboo, which cannot agree to capitulation, the situation causes a power vacuum

within the Senate. Planets and systems included in the Senate as separatists are strong trading bodies, advocating an end to corruption, decreasing taxes, and shrinking the state. In this galaxy, the duty of the mystic Jedi Order is to act as a guardian of peace and justice, as well as advise the supreme chancellor leading the Senate.

Supreme Chancellor Palpatine declares an empire by promising to suppress separatist movements organized by himself through the identity of Sith Lord Darth Sidious. In fact, his aim is to strengthen the Republic to once again levy taxes on all star systems on the trade route. The Jedi Order is then liquidated, and a witch hunt starts against them. When Luke destroys the first Death Star, the Jedi become an organized armed resistance and a pro-Republic resistance. Therefore, Jedi doctrine encounters a significant dilemma in separating discourse from action, as protecting the Republic, which is a victim of regime corruption, and protecting peace do not always have the same meaning.

Ideological and Political Reflections in the *Star Wars* Films

The first *Star Wars* film, *A New Hope* (1977), tells the story of rebel freedom fighters' battle with an evil empire, and for this reason includes political elements. The film, which presents a typical and archetypal political situation with insurgents fighting against tyranny, also alleges that twentieth-century American and world politics are still valid.

In the first *Star Wars* trilogy (1977–83), the Empire was morally symbolic instead of politically important, because it examines how as an individual a person is ruled by hate, anger, and fear of the “dark side.” These totalitarian (statist) visualizations in the films generally identify the Empire with fascism, and especially Nazism.

Unsal Oskay defines *A New Hope* as idealistic, romantic, and epic – in a word, heroic. According to him, even though this film seems to be a simple production based on an insufficient and stereotyped narrative, it is enriched with imagery. The final scene of the film, in which Luke, Han Solo, and Chewbacca walk together on the parade route to receive their medals, recalls *Triumph of the Will* (1935), a famous Nazi propaganda film by Leni Riefenstahl. The way these three important characters are depicted and the film's mise-en-scène directly evoke the image of Hitler, Himmler, and Lutnin walking towards the Nuremberg Monument, overshadowing the message of democracy that Lucas tried to communicate (2014, 172).

Although Lucas states that he had not seen *Triumph of the Will* for fifteen years before producing *Star Wars* and that “the end of the film shows an award being given to a large group of soldiers all together,” the composition of the shot is remarkably similar to Riefenstahl’s documentary about the Nuremberg Nazi Congress. Even setting aside the apparent similarity with historical fascism, the rebel victory setup is surprising. The medal ceremony becomes a ritual, uniform and regular (Brooker 2014, 116).

When Luke infiltrates the Death Star to annihilate it, he hears the voice of his master, Obi-Wan: “Use the Force, Luke. Let go, Luke. Luke, trust me.” Luke believes in a more mystical and effective way than science, and follows his master’s instructions, launching proton torpedoes and annihilating the Death Star. It appears that there is an unapproved reaction under the futuristic display of the film (Rubey 1978, 13).

Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones (2002) received perhaps the most political criticism of the series. In fact, this is clear in dialogue from the film. For example, at the beginning, Obi-Wan expresses the unreliability of politicians in the following words: “It’s been my experience that Senators are only focused on pleasing those who fund their campaigns, and they are more than willing to forget the niceties of democracy to get those funds.” Another example is dialogue between the Trade Federation and separatists when they intend to go to war against the Republic: “Signing this contract will bring you profits beyond your wildest imagination ... completely free trade.” This reflects the film’s views regarding contemporary politics and business.

In the film, the romantic relationship between Anakin and Amidala is less important than the political and ideological design created. On planet Naboo, the following conversation occurs between the young couple who are having a romantic moment with a magnificent view of the surrounding nature:

Amidala: You really don’t like politicians, do you?

Anakin: I like two or three, but I’m not really sure about one of them. I don’t think the system works.

Amidala: How would you have it work?

Anakin: We need a system where the politicians sit down and discuss the problems, agree what’s in the best interests of all the people and then do it.

Amidala: That's exactly what we do. The trouble is that people don't always agree. In fact, they hardly ever do.

Anakin: Then they should be made to.

Amidala: By whom? Who's is going to make them?

Anakin: I don't know ... Someone ...

Amidala: You?

Anakin: Of course not me.

Amidala: But someone.

Anakin: Someone wise.

Amidala: That sounds an awful lot like a dictatorship to me.

Anakin: Well ... If it works ...

These comments from Anakin about how a dictatorship works more effectively for general needs when compared with democracy are reminiscent of *The Sound of Music* (1965), where the threat of Nazism approaching Austria provides the background to the film. For this reason, Anakin's political tendencies are critically related to the environmental conditions. The dialogue that Lucas presents in this scene is not a romantic fantasy or realism, but rather a political comment. However, above all, the film tries to communicate that "political naivety is a dangerous thing; it may potentially direct people towards dictatorship" (Lancashire 2002, 237).

In the film, another scene in which ideological and political reflections are shown takes place before the new queen of Naboo. Amidala is queen for ten years and then abdicates. The new queen wants her to become a senator and to represent them in the senate, and she accepts this. Now, Amidala and Anakin are before the new queen of Naboo. Naboo's governor, Sio Bibble, is with them. They have the following conversation:

Amidala: If the Senate votes to create an army, I am sure it is going to push us into a civil war.

Sio Bibble: It's unthinkable. There has not been a full-scale war since the formation of the Republic.

Queen Jamillia: We must keep our faith in the Republic. The day we stop believing democracy can work is the day we lose it.

Amidala: Let's pray that day never comes.

Political subjects mentioned in this scene are not only elements that constitute the plot but thematic meanings for the general narrative structure of the film. The words said by the new queen of Naboo in this scene foreshadow the slow transformation of the Republic into a dictatorial empire.

Meanwhile, Count Dooku gathers separatist leaders around him and prepares an army of clones. His aim is to take over the galaxy, lead the senate, and get rid of all Jedi. In fact, Count Dooku is a former Jedi, but he serves his new (and secret) master, Darth Sidious. He became an apprentice of Sidious after the death of Darth Maul.

While Obi-Wan is learning all these truths in the middle of the film, Count Dooku talks with representatives of the Trade Federation and other business leaders on planet Geonosis. The Trade Federation will give economic and military support to each politician promising it profit. Other authorities join them, and all of them support Count Dooku, who is described as a political idealist at the beginning of the film. Meanwhile, Obi-Wan is captured by Count Dooku on Geonosis. They have following conversation:

Count Dooku: What if I told you that the Republic was now under the control of the Dark Lords of the Sith?

Obi-Wan: No, that's not possible. The Jedi would be aware of it.

Count Dooku: The Dark Side of the Force has clouded their vision, my friend. Hundreds of senators are now under the influence of a Sith lord called Darth Sidious.

Obi-Wan: I do not believe you.

Count Dooku: The Viceroy of the Trade Federation was once in league with this Darth Sidious, but he was betrayed ten years ago by the dark lord. He came to me for help. He told me everything. You must join me, Obi-Wan, and together we will destroy the Sith.

The Trade Federation is a key element in the second trilogy, which clearly represents economic and political ambition. Secret unions between ruling and economic forces are frequently encountered nowadays, especially in the Western world. Political powers need such agreements to continue their domination in a capitalist world. However, the secret agreement that the federation president makes with the diabolical Darth Sidious in pursuit of

power will soon cause the death of democracy (the Republic) in the galaxy and the rise of a political dictatorship.

Before coming to power, Hitler procured an advantage over his opponents after a series of rapid and determined actions and provoked people by convincing them that communists and Jews were preparing to seize power. Ultimately, Hitler succeeded in these plans and was elected as president with a large majority in 1933 as a result of the people's belief in him, gathering under the Nazi flag in droves (Baradat 2012, 294).

Palpatine uses the same method. When the Senate thinks that separatist states in the galaxy want to overthrow the Republic he starts negotiations immediately, and it is proposed that the Senate give Palpatine emergency powers to swiftly solve the crisis. When all states and members in the Senate support him enthusiastically, Palpatine is elected chancellor of the Republic as the only candidate. In fact, the members of the Senate do not in reality know what or whom they support because this crisis has been created by Palpatine, just as Hitler did in 1933.

In the *Star Wars* universe, the Empire is favoured by the Senate. Determined by a so-called democratic election, the Senate becomes a political tool created by Darth Sidious (Palpatine) for the benefit of his own interests through violence and trickery. The emergence of one-man management and a leader culture is a familiar situation in liberal capitalist democracies. As a result of this, the tendency to abolish the separation of powers (from which Lucas took inspiration) has been encountered in world history, from Caesar to Hitler and Napoleon to Hezbollah, and is still a persistent phenomenon. The *Star Wars* universe has the potential for self-destruction (Akkartal 2015, 33).

Palpatine, elected by the Senate as supreme chancellor unanimously, makes the following speech:

It is with great reluctance that I have agreed to this calling. I love democracy. I love the Republic. The power you give me I will lay down when this crisis has abated, I promise you. And all I ask in return is when my current term of office is over, you allow me to retire and live out my life in peace.

Predictably, Palpatine never returns his authority. On the contrary, he makes plans to seize full power in the future and begins secret and illegal actions to overthrow the Republic and democracy, and to terminate the Senate and the institutions protecting it (Jedi Council), in which he is mostly successful.

The army established through Palpatine's instruction attacks Geonosis under the leadership of Jedi Council president Yoda, and wages a war with Count Dooku and the Droid army. In this war, in which Obi-Wan, Anakin, Amidala, and other Jedi participate, Count Dooku is defeated and escapes. While escaping, he takes plans for a secret war machine with him to deliver to his master. The plans are for the Death Star, which audiences will encounter in part four of the series.

The end of the film clearly reveals Lucas's political and economic criticism and anti-war stance. Count Dooku travels from one hellish place (Geonosis) to another (a city-planet similar to one portrayed in *Blade Runner*), and meets his real and secret master, Darth Sidious. The count reports to his master that the desired war has started. Sidious replies: "Excellent. Everything is going as planned."

In the next scene, we see Palpatine, who is supreme chancellor of the Democratic Republic, standing with his assistants and watching the parade of the Clone Army and the war machines from a high balcony. The music in the background of this scene is from *The Emperor Strikes Back* (1980). Lucas gives a secret message to the audience about Palpatine's journey towards the evil Empire with the music choice.

Fukuyama (1999) states that the most remarkable development is that dictatorships that seemed to be very strong showed weaknesses that shook them to their foundations in the last quarter of the twentieth century, whether right-wing authoritarian dictatorships or left-wing communist totalitarian systems. Governments in many places, from Latin America to Eastern Europe, from the Soviet Union to the Near East and Asia, assumed to be strong, have fallen over the past thirty years. According to Fukuyama, stable liberal democracies have not replaced them. However, all the different regions and cultures around the world stand in front of a single, clear, politically liberal democracy (1999, 9).

Liberal economic principles have enlarged the free market and led to unprecedented material prosperity in developed industrial countries. While the liberal economy prepares global development for more political freedom, the economic freedom gained with the liberal economy has followed political freedom. The development of modern natural science has led to many technical changes. The demand for the most advanced level in weapons technology triggers technical developments. These developments have both affected the weapons industry and increased economic production possibilities (Bravo 2006, 52).

With reference to the abovementioned information, it can be said that “war” and “war machines” (the clone army) in *Attack of the Clones* (2002) are used as tools which are supported by large commercial organizations chasing profit to convince political leaders that they can achieve power and dominance over others, and will draw crowds to follow them by portraying them as fearless leaders.

The second *Star Wars* trilogy recalls today’s political and economic world with its language belonging to contemporary American and international politics and business (senate, republic, trade federation, joint-stock company, bankers, free trade, profit, etc.). Another political and ideological message in the film is that nations may be drawn to the dark side with feelings, such as ignorance, hunger, anger, and fear, as individuals. Political idealism (Count Dooku) and passion (Palpatine) are equally dangerous, the latter taking advantage of the former, with both causing war.

Attack of the Clones shows the Republic creating the army of the Empire. In the last scene, the camera quickly passes over clone soldiers, totally similar in every respect, which is reminiscent of the medal ceremonies in *A New Hope* and *Triumph of the Will*. It is obvious that the New Republic will not be very different from the Old Republic which created the Empire. The systems have very little difference worth mentioning, with their tendencies towards a common hierarchy and rank within monarchic and spiritual orders and the military, as shown by the identical troops with their orderly symmetrical rows (Brooker 2014, 120).

The individual actions and feelings of the characters in *Attack of the Clones* are placed in a political context that is brought to the forefront from start to finish, and are always shown to have political results. For example, Anakin, Amidala, and Obi-Wan’s mythological search from youth to maturity includes not only their personal moral development but also that of the Republic. The political results of their thoughts and actions attract much more attention than their personal actions.

Lucas strongly directed the second trilogy towards a political realm that served the individual stories of the characters, including more archetypal and political messages than the first. These films imply that humans yearn and fear. If a person who yearns and is afraid combines this potential with ignorance, which is idle and beyond measure, then this situation not only leads to the individual’s breakdown but also turns democratic nations into tyrannies. Political administrations will rise and fall periodically and over time as the level of wisdom and attention of their citizens rise and fall.

Choices in life not only include individual morals and honesty but are also the subject of national and international political morals and honesty (Peters 2012, 126–30).

However, such political and ideological concepts are discussed differently in the first trilogy. For example, in *A New Hope* Han Solo is portrayed as a character who is greedy and addicted to money, and who pursues material interests, whose only concern is money, and who sold out his friends in the last war, but when he returns to help his friend Luke at the end of the film he is welcomed as a hero.

In *The Empire Strikes Back*, “responsible leader” and “businessman” Lando Calrissian, Han Solo’s friend, exhibits a similar change. At first, Lando sells out Han Solo and Princess Leia (in exchange for Luke) to protect his economic and political interests. However, he feels sorry for what he has done, leaves his commercial interests aside, and helps Leia and Luke to save Han Solo in *Return of the Jedi* (1983).

In this sense, the political ideology and politics of the first trilogy are presented through the main characters of the films. For example, adventure is a means of political socialization for Luke Skywalker. For that purpose, Princess Leia, a representative of democracy, cooperates with anarchist Han Solo against the fascist technocracy of the Empire. Just as a middle-class citizen of the white race gets to know black people and embraces them, by learning to exist with robots she understands that the human way of life does not consist of using and exploiting technology and nature. Anarchist Han Solo and Princess Leia reflect American political mythology. Han Solo is portrayed as a classical outlaw character flouting the law or the system. However, he is extremely honest in his personal relationships. Princess Leia is a hard-line, humanist, moral representative (Roloff and SeeBlen 1995, 340–1).

A well-designed science-fiction film should normally be about concerns and subjects of the present within a futuristic or fantastic dimension. The generally accepted judgement on the first *Star Wars* trilogy is that films designed as archetypes reflect and interpret political events and movements in real life (e.g. the American Revolution, fascism, the Second World War) because all of the insurgents of the trilogy are either American or non-American democratic allies. The political environment and conditions of the first trilogy are both archetypal and special. Democracy opposes dictatorship in both the general and historical past. Furthermore, for the evil Empire, the

idea or potential for uprising against it exists now and, in the future, (Lancashire 2002, 242).

Ryan and Kellner make detailed political and ideological analyses concerning the first trilogy of the series (1997, 353). They state that the films included in this trilogy support individualism against the government, nature against technology, belief and feeling against science and rationality, and agricultural values against urban modernity. According to them, the Empire represents the breakdown of a trade-based agricultural market economy and disturbance of the natural order of the patriarchal family. Thus, the trilogy shows components of dominant American conservative ideology and culture which resist urban-based rationalist socialist ideals. Within the frame of this ideology, socialism of this type appears as a tacit danger.

A collection of ideological motives is also monitored in the two-way (historical and naturalist) structure of narration. Myths in *Star Wars* benefit from codes belonging to the heroic period preparing for the birth of capitalism in a big struggle for “freedom” against the feudal “tyranny.” In this respect, it is important that Darth Vader is a “lord,” Luke is a “knight,” the enemy is an “empire,” and insurgents are “republicans.” Terminology belonging to the struggle of capitalism against Nazism and the Cold War waged against Soviet Communism is combined by coding the discourse for war with the feudalism of the early capitalist period. For example, Empire soldiers are called “Empire Stormtroopers,” reminding the viewer of the German and Slav races, while generals wear Soviet uniforms from the Second World War. These soldiers, with their uniform size, represent concepts (collectivization and massification) of which conservatives are afraid and which reflect socialism (Ryan and Kellner 1997, 354).

One of the most political elements of the *Star Wars* series are the Jedi. The Jedi are guardians of peace throughout the galaxy and the regime (Republic), which has a tendency towards self-destruction. The Jedi do not want power. However, the continuance of both democracy and the Republic is important to them. It is possible to say that they are as dogmatic as their nemesis the Sith when it comes to defending their ideological side, and they do not refrain from adopting methods like indoctrination by looking at proverbs, such as “as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined.”

For example, in *Revenge of the Sith* (2005) Obi-Wan asks Anakin, who has a close relationship with the Senate President Palpatine, to spy on behalf of

the Jedi. When Anakin does not accept this, they have the following conversation:

Obi-Wan: Anakin, our allegiance is to the Senate, not to its leader, who has managed to stay long after his term has expired.

Anakin: The Senate demanded that he stay longer

Obi-Wan: Yes, but use your feelings, Anakin, something is out of place.

Without a doubt, the Sith are more passionate and dogmatic than the Jedi about these subjects. Palpatine, the Sith lord, tries to win over Anakin, the young Jedi master. He plans to make him his apprentice in the future for the sake of retaining power. For this he exercises his considerable indoctrination and discourse skills. Palpatine calls Anakin during an operatic performance, sends everyone away, and starts to talk to him alone:

Palpatine: Anakin, you know I am not able to rely on the Jedi Council. If they have not included you in their plot, they soon will.

Anakin: I'm not sure I understand.

Palpatine: You must sense what I have come to suspect. The Jedi Council wants control of the Republic. They are planning to betray me.

Anakin: I don't think so.

Palpatine: Anakin, search your feelings. You know, don't you?

Anakin: I know they don't trust you.

Palpatine: Or the Senate, or the Republic, or democracy, for that matter.

Anakin: I have to admit my trust in them has been shaken.

Palpatine: Why? They asked you to do something that made you feel dishonest, didn't they? They asked you to spy on me, didn't they?

Anakin: I don't know what to say.

Palpatine: Remember back to your early teachings, Anakin. "All those who gain power are afraid to lose it." Even the Jedi.

Anakin: The Jedi use their power for good.

Palpatine: Good is a point of view Anakin. And the Jedi point of view is not the only valid one. The Dark Lords of the Sith believe in security and justice also, yet they are considered by the Jedi to be ...

Anakin: ... evil.

Palpatine: ... from a Jedi point of view. The Sith and the Jedi are similar in almost every way, including their quest for greater power. The difference between the two is that the Sith are not afraid of the dark side of the Force. That is why they are more powerful.

In this conflict between the Sith and Jedi, ongoing since time immemorial, politics is a dirty game. While the Sith have always used ideals like peace and justice in pursuit of power (ambition for power), the Jedi defend that balance in the Force can only be achieved by eliminating the dark side completely. While the Sith use the Force to hold the galaxy together and interconnect all livings to apply pressure overtly, the Jedi think that this power should be exercised to “help and serve the needy.” While the Jedi approach each feeling with suspicion, the Sith prefer to encourage all feelings existing in human personalities to be carried to the extreme. While the Jedi are organized in a complex but organized structure like a big state, the Sith have a duality rule where only two Sith may exist simultaneously, a master and an apprentice (McGann 2016, 210–16).

The *Star Wars* films narrate the struggle between good and evil in the pursuit of power, whether regarding the relationship between master and apprentice or the Force’s balance between the light and dark sides. Even though this struggle happens in a different timeframe and universe than today, the subjects are no stranger to us and the era in which we live. The political and ideological subjects discussed in these films have meaning in today’s geography and world, and are interpreted from very different perspectives.

One of these perspectives belongs to John Thompson, who examines whether the *Star Wars* films are a source of inspiration for terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda as, according to him, this heroic tale loses the larger picture behind a galactic profile. In particular, Thompson looks for answers to the following questions: What is really happening between the Empire and the Resistance (insurgents)? Can the Resistance be qualified as insurgents revolting against the government, like Iraqis who objected to the Iraq War between 2003–11, and who lived on that soil during that time? According to Thompson, if the answer we give to these questions is yes then the situation makes Luke, Leia, and their fellows terrorists, in terms of the

Empire (2016, 270–1). It is not known to what extent Thompson's perspective is true or valid, but the Ukraine Internet Party (UIP) can be given as an example to better understand the political and ideological effects that the *Star Wars* films create in people and society. This party participated in general elections conducted in 2012 with a candidate wearing a Darth Vader costume and succeeded in getting three percent of the votes. However, since independent candidates are not recognized by law, their success was not official. The UIP also participated in presidential elections in 2014 with the same candidate, but again could not win (Sharkov 2014).

The example of the UIP draws attention to the fact that *Star Wars* has politically and ideologically strong and distinct effects on people and society. Moreover, the person this party nominated as a candidate is portrayed as Darth Vader, the main “bad” character (or hero) of the *Star Wars* films. As is known, Darth Vader was a successful Jedi master when he was young thanks to his skill. First, he sided with the Force's light and good side, then was deceived by Palpatine and became his apprentice, siding with the Force's dark and evil side.

Although he is the main bad character (antagonist) of the *Star Wars* films, it can be said that Darth Vader is very popular with fans of the series. While there are many characters (Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi) representing the light and good side, the UIP participated in elections with the Darth Vader character, representing evil and darkness. This may be explained by the popularity of this character and the desire to benefit from the effects of ideology on people and the mind symbolized by Darth Vader in these films.

Conclusion

Star Wars is a product of popular culture that has succeeded in drawing the attention of the whole world for over forty years through its films, comic books, and licensed products. A single perspective includes a wide event in a way not understood by any approach or interpretation. Perhaps this is why it has become a phenomenon that fascinates young and old alike, people of all ages, or somehow attracts their attention, and how it has become a legend for some.

It would be wrong to think of *Star Wars* only within the framework of the abovementioned consumer products, because its political, economic, ideological, historical, and mythological universe is too wide to be the subject of any book or article alone. In particular, the ideological and

political universe, as this article has tried to present, is simply very different from the likes or dislikes of an audience for a commercial film.

The main factor which makes the *Star Wars* films so popular with audiences around the world concerns the ideological and political messages that are directly or indirectly communicated through the films' narratives. The theme, which is dealt with and discussed in the films, establishes its main story as a never-ending struggle between good and evil that would not be so successful without ideology and politics.

The struggle and conflict between the Empire and the Republic, the light and dark sides, Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi, and the in particular actions of Senator Palpatine and Anakin Skywalker to deceive the Jedi and other members of the Senate to achieve and remain in power, constitute the basis of the ideological perspective of *Star Wars*.

Palpatine's convincing people and those believing in him about the existence of a non-existent danger, persuading them and thus coming to power, and the character of Anakin Skywalker turning into Darth Vader, are frames of the dominant ideology and politics represented in *Star Wars*.

Ideologies represented by the characters of Palpatine and Darth Vader, portray the fascist-oriented political regimes which emerged after the Second World War, or can be perceived as referring to these regimes. However, upon closer inspection it can be seen that the ideological approaches portrayed in *Star Wars* are still valid in certain countries today.

Today, in various parts of the world, there is still a struggle between the Republic and the Empire and its followers or people, with a senator, Palpatine, who seizes power by convincing those believing in him, the people, about the existence of a non-existent danger. As Queen Amidala says, a political environment in which "freedoms are lost with applause" continues to exist. There are countries in which there is increasing corruption and decay, where indifference, unresponsiveness, and fear are at an extreme level due to the pressure of the dominant ideology.

Although people living in these countries suffer from the repressive rule of the dominant ideology, they maintain their reliance on the Republic and do their best to live in it because they know that everything will end when they lose their belief in democracy. It seems that this struggle between the light and dark sides of the Force will continue to attract attention as long as the world continues to exist.