

James Bond and today's UK

I was gripped by the latest James Bond movie through its action packed twists of plot.

The film is a statement to the world that UK derived brands and cultural icons can fill cinema seats and entertain millions in many different cultures and countries. I wish it commercial success as it helps the traditional cinema revive after lockdown.

What kind of image of the UK does it project? Whilst viewers would be wise to see it as drama not documentary and will appreciate many of the unrealistic conventions of the 007 genre, there will be those who take away a message about the UK from it.

I was surprised to be warned that the film contained moderate violence. There didn't seem to be anything moderate about a series of mass murders, mass sanctioned deaths of arms carrying criminals, the use of explosives to enter and control populated buildings and missile strikes on an inhabited island. The story centred as before around the actions of the UK secret services on the world stage. The Head of the service was happy to authorise killings anywhere in the world in pursuit of dangerous global criminals. There was no reference to the National Security Council and only once was it thought a good idea to mention to the PM some of what they were doing. So it was clearly not a representation of the legal process, rule of law and democratic controls that apply.

Leaving aside the unrealistic idea that officials in the UK can authorise machine gun fights and dangerous car pursuits leading to the death of drivers in overseas countries, the film gave a very positive view of the UK in three crucial respects. The senior officials were very loyal to our country. Our country stands for right and the defeat of evil worldwide criminal gangs throughout the movie. The officials could summon up precise force, equipment and clever innovations to win any war against a criminal gang however violent and resourceful they might be. Whether it was in Scandinavia or near Japan, people could be quickly deployed. What's not to like, unless you are a criminal.

Just as the film overdid the lack of legal restraints on UK counter action, so I fear it flattered government in its portrait of speed, resource and innovation. Let us hope our senior officials study the brave and inventive officials we see in the drama to see how we can increase our success in the struggle against violent serious global criminals within the rule of law.

In many ways the cars were the stars. Aston Martin emerged victorious, though its vintage vehicles got lead roles and its latest machine a bit part. Range Rover was present in force. Shrewd product placement should help some UK brands in a competitive luxury market. One of our naval Destroyers also appeared in action, reminding the world that the navy gives us the capability to intervene anywhere where there is a sea to sail.