

Evaluation of america's cultural influence on the world

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Abstract

Culturally and politically, America has a strong impact on the world. The works of Matthew Parris and Raja Shehadeh portray offensive behavior by the United States which has impacted younger generations of Palestine and European Countries. Where Shehadeh's work, *What We Think of America (2)*, indicates both an admiration and anger towards the United states, Parris's work, *It's Time We All Signed Up for the Rest of the World Team*, outlines a definitive negative towards the America and what it stands for.

Both articles suggest that the United States had forced its ideals on to the rest of the world. International perception about the United States seems to be generated both by America's power and influence as well as from within the nations themselves. Parris refers to the United States as a hegemonic power that needs reigning in where Shehadeh takes a more intimate approach and discusses a personal exchange concerning a family member's loss of original ethnicity. There are many international voices represented in these works; both positive and negative aspects are explored.

Evaluation The world has a mixed view of America. The United States is often seen as a hegemonic empire that looks to control the rest of the world. American fashion, politics, media, and ideals are captivating to younger generations of foreign countries. The works of Matthew Parris, a South African born British political journalist, and Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian attorney and author on international and human rights and the Middle East, illustrate differing yet complementary views of America's influence on the rest of the world.

While some believe that America has a positive impact on society, others feel that America strips them of their ethnicity and value system. One negative cultural influence that America has had on Palestinians is referenced in the paragraph by Shehadeh which reminisces about country men who leave for America and return stripped of their cultural dress and their ethnic accent. Shehadeh (2002) writes, " The few who come back for brief summer visits parade up and down Main Street in their Bermudas and baseball hats, stopping at the ice cream parlour to reminisce with its proprietor in an old accent that you hardly ever hear in Ramallah today" (pg. 1). Shehadeh portrays admiration for the United States in respect to their advances in transportation and efficient roadways in Ramallah, Palestine, while at the same time discusses the destruction to the states natural beauty and heritage. This is evidenced when Raja (2002) states " Next came the need for new roads to connect them to Israel; not the old British-style meandering roads but American-style straight four-lane highways that cut through the hills that stood in the way" (pg. 92).

Shehadeh (2002) continues to explain that " in the context of the Middle East conflict, roads may seem a small thing, but they have done a kind of spiritual damage. Gone is that attractive stretch of serpentine road that meandered downhill..." (pg. 92). Here, as America pushed its cultural influence upon the Middle East, geographic beauty has been lost and in its place convenience of travel has been placed. Hence, Raja Shehadeh's overall view of America is mixed. Matthew Paris's work can be viewed as extremist. His overall view of America and its cultural influence is negative.

Parris (2003) explains, " Today there is only one hegemon, the United States of America; but there is no less a need than existed during the Cold War for a wary defensiveness towards the appetite, the pretensions, and the dreams of a great and unchallenged power. If the U. S. eagle is to be contained, collective action is needed by the smaller mammals" (pg. 94). Here, Parris is proclaiming that America is a dominating influence over other nations and if they are to come out from under the influence of this overarching power, they must unite or be consumed.

Matthew Parris (2003) furthers his argument by writing that " As America grows more confident and its muscle and command, it will be clashing again and again, not just with old enemies but with former friends-over trade, the environment, " pre-emptive" deference, regime change, international law, extradition... the list is speculative, but let us speculate. " (pg. 96) . Parris uses the example of Britain's own Prime Minister Tony Blair, who sided with the United States instead of standing on his own two feet. Tony Blair thought the bridge could be repaired and that he might be the bridgemaker. Now, he marooned on the other side and will have to take his chances there" (Parris, 2003, pg. 97). Here, America seems to turn its back on Britain by alleviating the bridge that bound them, leaving Tony Blair and his country helpless. America is overconfident that they can repair the bridge when necessary, but for the mean time, make no attempts to do so. Parris also exposes America's ambiguity over the war with Iraq. " It is, however; just possible that failure will be faced.

The peace in Iraq may prove dirtier than the war, and the American people (as distinguished from their Defense Secretary) are ambivalent about

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empire and squeamish about becoming other nations' policeman..." (Parris, 2003, pg. 95) Parris is trying to tell us here that the United States has stepped beyond its bounds and is now responsible to take care of Iraq citizens. He further explains that the U. S. will have more accountability for the well being of Iraq's people because of the actions we have taken to stop the Iraq war.

In conclusion, Matthew Parris is suggesting that the United States needs to be reigned in and that if this does not occur the "hegemonic power", that is the United States will take over and become insoluble. With this, Matthew Parris's view on America's cultural influence on the world is overpoweringly negative. The international perception of the United States as an imposing, and influential power can be seen as either a negative or a positive. Because of its global connotation, it has become a source of analysis and scrutiny.

Negatively, the United States is seen as a "hegemony" that needs taming and "caging". Contrastingly, and on a positive note, the United States is influencing trade, transportation, economy, and education. America is influencing these factors towards other countries to try to enhance their knowledge and to further expose them to the possibilities that can be achieved by taking on the American way. One cannot view America's positives as having no merit. There may be some form of jealousy that is masked by capitalizing on the negative power that is exerted by the United States. In conclusion, America's cultural influence is primarily mixed as seen in the works of Matthew Parris's *It's Time We All Signed Up for the Rest of the World Team*, along with Raja Shehadeh's *What We Think of America* (2).

References

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3. New York: Pearson Longman Shehadeh, Raja, (2002) “ What we think of America (2)” In Keith Gumery (Ed.), International Views (pg. 90-93).
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