Ugly Americans: Past, Present and Future

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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ABSTRACT

The central purpose of this paper is to discuss the common views that foreign nationals have concerning U.S. businesspeople and to consider the reasons why these views exist. These are important factors to consider because they have a profound effect on the success of U.S. firms operating internationally. The consequences which these views may hold are also contemplated and presented. Possible corrective measures and solutions which may be able to reverse these generalizations about American businesspeople are proposed. Ideally, if these suggestions are followed, foreign citizens will develop more positive views of U.S. culture and Americans participating in the global marketplace.
UGLY AMERICANS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Ugly American. This is a phrase that anyone associated with international business has undoubtedly heard. What exactly does this phrase mean and why does it exist? These are questions which need to be considered in order for citizens of the United States of America, henceforth called Americans in this paper, to improve their image in international business circles. If Americans hope to stay competitive in the global marketplace, they must look into the origins of the Ugly American concept and work to dispel this stereotype.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to discover how foreign nationals view Americans and the culture of the United States, and to consider the reasons behind these views and the possible ramifications they may have on American international business.

Specifically, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What characteristics do foreigners associate with Americans? From where do these generalized characteristics get their basis?

2. Do foreign people see an ‘Americanization’ of their own cultures? If so, how do they feel about this invasion by American culture?

3. How do these views and generalizations affect international business for Americans?

4. Do methods exist by which Americans may be able to improve their international image?

In order to answer these questions, library resources were reviewed and sources which contemplated how various foreign nationals view Americans were collected. Next, the various views which foreign citizens hold were extracted. These views were then grouped under general headings. Explanations about why these views exist were then researched and compiled. The ramifications which these views have held and may continue to hold in the future for U.S.
international business were investigated. Finally, courses of action were developed which could help to address the problem areas as viewed by people from countries other than the United States.

AMERICAN CHARACTERISTICS

The first topic which must be discussed concerns the generalized characteristics which foreigners associate with Americans and the culture of the United States of America. This topic is very complicated to consider because there are almost 200 nations on this earth and each is at a different level of economic development. Along the same line, the amount of exposure and interaction each country has experienced with the U.S. also varies greatly. To complicate matters to an even greater extent, every foreigner's individual experience with Americans and the American culture can range from none to nearly total exposure. Therefore, it is important to try to extract a general view from a foreign culture and not focus too strongly on individual perceptions if they are not exemplary of the norm.

This thesis will attempt to take into account these different considerations and will look at views of the U.S. held by citizens of countries ranging from Third World nations in Africa and Latin America to economically advanced countries such as Japan and those of Western Europe.

The concept of the Ugly American abroad is a notion which has plagued American firms and businesspeople competing in the international arena for many decades. This view of Americans has developed over the years most likely due to the lack of cultural sensitivity and ethnocentricity which Americans are infamous for exhibiting when participating in international situations. "For example, national elites of developing countries tend to view U.S. managers of MNCs (multinational corporations) in their countries as 'aggressive, impatient, tense, brutal,
insular, arrogant, and heavy handed” (Rubenstein and Smith 192). This is a common response when questioning foreign nationals who have experience working with U.S. managers in their home country. In *Americans*, James C. Simmons explains that these opinions are often founded as much upon cultural ignorance as they are a true form of ethnocentricity on the part of the Americans. “Furthermore, the stereotype may well serve to turn U.S. MNCs into choice scapegoats for the frustrations of developing countries and their leaders in the event their economic development plans fall short of expectation” (Rubenstein and Smith 192). This source illustrates that more than cultural and personal reasons exist for the attitudes which some foreigners hold about Americans. It is possible, in some instances, that leaders in developing countries fear the entry of American businesses because they may exert too great an influence on the economy of the country. Some of the biggest MNCs have revenues that are greater than the gross national products of some of the smaller nations of the world.

Another possible reason for the negative view of Americans and the MNCs they represent is that the U.S. is considered to be one of the major players in the world economy and often this powerful position can create emotions of envy and hatred among nations that are not in such a strong economic position. Therefore, it is easy for foreigners to take U.S. industry as a whole and form generalizations about the American business world. A French businessman states, “Dominant and secure of itself, U.S. industry is perfectly capable of arousing the hostility of its competitors. But the fact is that manifestations of anti-Americanism in business circles are few and far between to say the least, since the benefits of good relations far outweigh any temptation to find fault” (Lacorne, Rupnik, and Toinet 137). This view that the substantial economic benefits of dealing with U.S. companies outweighs their ugliness is not, however, shared throughout the
world or even throughout Europe for that matter. A German importer explains:

Although U.S. goods are usually competitive with foreign equivalents, he usually buys from non-American firms. . . . Whenever the purely commercial considerations of price, delivery date, and service are not at issue, I cannot ignore that your salesmen speak only English while theirs negotiate in excellent German. (Simmons 39)

This quotation brings up one of the key characteristics which foreigners view in Americans, provinciality. By definition, provinciality is the narrowness of outlook. “Americans are generally ignorant on international matters. People there do not know much of the world outside” (Simmons 39). This ignorance includes both a lack of knowledge about international political matters as well as a deficiency of general knowledge concerning other cultures. This provinciality is seen not only by businesspeople, but by many citizens of foreign countries around the globe. After reading the results of a study which showed that among Americans, Malaysia ranked as one of the least known nations in Southeast Asia, the Malaysian Head of State commented, “It is not difficult for Malaysians, the elites as well as the masses, to link this lack of knowledge about Malaysia among Americans in general to an ignorance on the part of the elites and, specifically, U.S. administrations” (Rubinstein, Rupnik, and Toinet 157). It is easy to see how the people of Malaysia, including those involved in business and government, would tend to have a negative view about anything having to do with the U.S. due to the lack of interest in Malaysia which has been exhibited by U.S. citizens.

Countries which are lesser known among Americans, such as Malaysia, are not the only ones in which the citizens share this view of American ignorance concerning international affairs
and foreign cultures. Paul Hogan, an Australian actor, had this to say about American
provinciality and U.S. knowledge of Australia. "They're both melting pots, both new countries
with the same language. We knew about you, and you didn't know about us, and I find that sort
of offensive" (Simmons 38). It is easy to feel that if citizens of a country do not know about you
that they do not care, which is not conducive to a good business atmosphere.

Another general concept which foreigners commonly bring forth, when discussing
Americans, is the belief that the U.S. has a very low quality of education. Fostering this concept
is the frequently low rank of U.S. students in international academic ratings. So strong is this
belief in the sub-standard quality of U.S. education that one Japanese businessman states, "In
America it is apparently possible to earn a high school or even college diploma and still not be
able to read a map or menu" (Simmons 165). This belief can undoubtedly cause damage to
Americans doing international business. Since a lack of education would hinder one's ability to
make sound business decisions, a foreign corporation would most likely choose to do business
with someone whom it considers to be well educated. Of course a good firm would research all
possible candidates among an international group and thus find the best choice, which may very
well be an American. However, this negative view of the level of education which Americans
receive has created a roadblock more than once for U.S. businessmen. A perfect example is the
German businessman who preferred to do business with people from other nations rather than the
U.S. because their education in a foreign language impressed him.

On a more positive note, openness and honesty are characteristics which are commonly
exhibited by Americans in the eyes of people around the world. One would think that these traits
would be looked upon favorably by foreigners. After all, who wants to deal with a business
associate whom you feel may be dishonest or trying to hide something. However, these traits are not always looked at in such a positive light and the reason is culturally based. For instance, in Japan, saving face is a very important part of culture. Japanese executives would be much more likely to say "that would be very difficult" than to give a direct answer "no," which would be viewed as a loss of face and lack of respect for the person with whom they are dealing. To an American, this may seem to be a roundabout and confusing way to do business, but that is how many cultural differences are viewed by uninformed people. Americans doing business with Japanese firms would put themselves in a bad position if they did not know how the Japanese conduct business and simply gave an answer of "no" or "it cannot be done" when conducting negotiations with their associates from across the Pacific. Therefore, a lack of cultural awareness may turn seemingly positive traits against American businesspeople. Even when these characteristics are viewed in a positive way, they take a back seat to other things that are commonly associated with Americans and the culture of the U.S. One British actor made the following statement regarding the U.S. characteristic of honesty. "We need your openness, your honesty and your French fries--especially your French fries" (Simmons 26). Although this may seem to be a rather trivial example and more of a joke than anything else, it typifies the way that many foreigners view the U.S. and what things are best and most valuable about the culture of the United States of America.

The way in which Americans present themselves to others is also an important issue in the minds of people from other cultures. One source noted that "it is extraordinary how confident and articulate Americans are. I cannot recall ever meeting one who was at a loss for words or who gave the impression of being shy. They must all be educated from an early age in the arts of
social intercourse and self-projection” (Simmons 28). As with all of the other characteristics
which have been discussed, this strong projection of self confidence can be viewed in a number of
ways according to the norms of various cultures. This difference in attitude concerning self
confidence is even evident when dealing with the U.S.’s southern neighbor, Mexico. “Americans
in Mexico often appear overbearing, arrogant and insensitive—characteristics magnified by both
the visitors’ affluence and innocence of Spanish” (Rubinstein and Smith 45). An American
expression of confidence may be viewed as overbearingness in some cultures and, consequently,
anti-American feelings may originate from both economic and cultural differences.

The American concept of time is another cultural aspect which is commented upon by
foreigners. Many foreign nationals view the American lifestyle as being too fast-paced. One
Australian businessman observes that, “It is an American characteristic not to stop running even
after you have arrived” (Simmons 26), while a German proverb explains that “In America an hour
is forty minutes” (Simmons 91). These inter-cultural differences in temporal perception have a
tremendous effect on the speed of business dealings and are thus very important in the
international business arena. For instance, an American businessperson who has traveled to
Mexico to conduct business negotiations may be on a tight time schedule. Therefore he/she will
want to focus on business almost as soon as he/she arrives. This is the exact opposite of what the
Mexican counterpart will want to do. Getting to know the American and developing a personal
relationship will be the main concern of the Mexican businessperson while the American will
simply want to do business and forgo the personal relationship because of the time constraints.
As a result, the American will appear rushed and pushy to the Mexican, who will not view these
characteristics as being positive, and the negotiations may be jeopardized.
Closely related to the fast-paced lifestyle of Americans is their supposed lust for the almighty dollar. People from some countries seem to believe that everything about the American culture is based on money. "Americans relate all effort, all work, and all of life itself to the dollar" (Simmons 92). This causes others to view Americans as greedy and selfish. Many foreign businesspeople feel that Americans will only conduct business on a win-lose basis with the Americans being the winners. As a consequence, foreign firms search for partners who look for a win-win situation in which both parties gain something. Canadians state:

We were among the first to deplore and spurn the Americans' materialism, their pragmatism, their love for the dollar. However, if we examine the real state of affairs, we see that we suffer from the same ills. But to heap one's own shadowy terrors upon others is a common exorcism . . . (Purdy 138)

According to this statement, while American materialism is a widely accepted evil in the eyes of foreigners, this view may also sometimes stem from a nation's own fears and economic problems. This materialism, as viewed by foreign peoples, also portrays itself in the physical stereotypes which are held about Americans. Obesity is often viewed as being an American characteristic. A citizen of India explains:

Ten years ago if you were told in India that an American was coming to visit you and you didn’t know what he looked like, you would probably conjure up an image of a large man--'beefy' is the word--who wore a baseball cap and ate most of the time. When he was not eating hamburgers, he was chewing sugar-coated gum. (Simmons 89)

Although many believe that every American is overweight and unhealthy, one Japanese
businessman does not attribute these characteristics to the greedy nature of American society, but to another aspect of the society. "The answer here, it seems to me, is that the diet is, in many ways, similar to the rest of their culture. Everything is for sale. Therefore everything is designed for the mass market..." (Simmons 88). In this way, the things in America are viewed as being mass produced and thus having no individuality.

Next is probably one of the most well known stereotypes about the culture and society of the U.S., the prevalence of violence in both entertainment and real life. "A first key contrast and complement, an individualizing cultural pattern of Europe and America, is: violence. The popular image of America in Europe is of a frightfully violent society..." (Kroes, Rydell and Bosscher 222). One European businessman states, "The best thing about Americans and their violence-oriented country is the fact that the Atlantic is between us" (Simmons 35). One of the main reasons that the U.S. is viewed as such a violent society is due to the worldwide popularity of action-adventure movies produced in the U.S. Furthermore, this view of U.S. society has also been propagated by the military actions which the U.S. has taken in the past, such as those in Vietnam and Latin America. In most cases these actions have been criticized as being unnecessary and actually outside the realm of U.S. concern and jurisdiction. The U.S. government's willingness to use force has created the opinion that "Americans are more responsive to the language of weapons, which they consider more efficient. It is this same efficiency complex that will destroy the United States..." (Purdy 143). Some believe that this violence has a very deeply rooted base which extends from the very origins of the United States. "Americans have a streak of lawlessness... It is to be expected. In the first place, they are bred from parents who had enough individualism, anarchy, guts, or whatever you like to call it, to
emigrate. They are not bred from stay-at-homes. They are bred from rebels who burst out” (Simmons 38). The historical foundations of the U.S. population have not, however, been viewed as an excuse or acceptable reason for the violent nature of the United States, but merely as a possible explanation as to why the U.S. society is the way it is.

“Pitted against these flaws, however, are the good things about the United States of America and Americans: their generosity, their friendliness, their overwhelming love of life” (Purdy 92). These are traits which are commonly viewed positively by foreigners. Closely related to this generosity and friendliness is Americans’ willingness to lend assistance to those in need. A Russian author’s view on this point makes it clear how he feels about this trait. “One of Americans’ most important personality traits is ‘the readiness to feel compassion and sympathy for whoever is in real trouble, whoever is powerless and cannot cope with misfortune alone...’” (Simmons 28).

Another topic that is talked about a great deal among people from other nations when discussing American characteristics is that of reaction to criticism. The United States is subject to a great deal of criticism because of its high profile position in world economics and politics. The Americans’ reaction to this criticism has frequently been commented upon by citizens of other nations. Businesspeople from France feel that “it is criticism per se that is regarded as anti-American, because, leaving aside praise and admiration, the Americans themselves challenge not only reproach but also any attempt to observe them objectively. Analysis they regard as an attack” (Lacorne, Rupnik, and Toinet 220). This hatred of criticism is seen to be purely American in nature. “Indeed it is astounding that the United States should be the only Western power towards which one cannot have an attitude of frank and loyal opposition without being dubbed an
anti-American...” (Lacorne, Rupnik, and Toinet 220). Even though Americans are often viewed as being unable to take criticism from outside sources, the strong internal criticism in the U.S. society is often admired. “The redeeming feature of Americans is their capacity for self-criticism” (Purdy 158). Undoubtedly, the right to freedom of speech, one of the foundations upon which the United States was built, is one factor which has led to internal criticism and in-depth analysis within the U.S.

One subject which has been widely critiqued in both foreign and domestic circles concerning the U.S. is racism and ethnic prejudice. The problems which the U.S. has had with this matter have been heavily commented on and do indeed have an effect on relations with foreign countries and businesses based in those countries. This is no more readily apparent than with the nations of Africa. “Clearly the treatment of blacks in the United States is a major issue in defining the character of the United States for African leaders” (Rubinstein and Smith 173). The rather bad reputation of the U.S. along racial and ethnic lines does not enhance its attractiveness to ethnic groups from other countries, especially African countries. “The U.S. is perceived in African elite circles as pursuing interests that frustrate the goals of African dignity and material progress...” (Rubinstein and Smith 171). Such a perception about an entire country causes need for concern among the businesses of that country. It may be extremely difficult for U.S. businesses to be considered as partners with foreign firms knowing of America’s racism.

As one can see, a variety of characteristics are associated with Americans by foreign people. From arrogance to violence to a low level of education, Americans are viewed by others with these stereotypes in mind. But foreigners see other things in Americans too, such as unparalleled generosity and openness. It is very interesting to see how these characteristics can be
viewed in either a positive or negative manner depending on the norms of the particular culture in which a person lives. It is these very differing cultural norms which prove to be important to persons conducting international business and must be constantly monitored.

WORLD-WIDE AMERICANIZATION

The next step in this paper is to examine the effect that the culmination of these characteristics, in essence the very culture and society of the United States, has had upon other nations. First, it is necessary to discuss an important term: Americanization. Americanization refers to the manners through which America exerts its influence on other cultures.¹

Americanization is almost always viewed negatively by foreigners. "America pervades almost every culture in almost every conceivable fashion" (Purdy 60). An industrialist from Hungary provides the following reaction about Americanization:

Living in a small, remote country, Hungary, I have since my childhood been aware of the influence and radiation of the giant overseas power. The cultural kitsch emanating from your country has colonized the youth of mine. The generation of 12-22 year olds, brought up on cartoons and dum dum music, have relinquished their own culture and individuality. American society, based as it is on self-interest and profit, educates selfish and individualistic people. (Simmons 70)

Many Canadians also feel overwhelmed by the invasion of fast-food restaurants and American television programs and music. They even feel that "The development of [their] country is subordinated to the views and to the needs of the United States of America" (Purdy 59). Even though so many prominent figures and intellectuals speak out against the Americanization of their cultures, the phenomenon continues. "So many of the externals of
Japanese culture have become effectively Americanized that sometimes it would appear to the casual foreign visitor that Japan seems hell-bent of transforming itself into an ersatz America” (Simmons 148).

Since a common cultural heritage is often what unites the citizens of a number of countries, the spread of Americanization causes great alarm among the people of foreign nations. It is, however, possible for foreigners to see this American invasion in a different manner. “One beauty of this phenomenon is that it raises both hackles and national pride in the smaller nations” (Purdy 60). The anti-Americanism in other nations is used as a sort of rallying point for the enhancement of their own cultures.

When dealing with the spread of Americanization, one cannot always point the finger at the Americans. Canadian critics feel that:

Canadians are themselves largely to blame for permitting this pressure to be so effective. . . . We are halfhearted in our support of Canadian magazines, films, painting, music and literature and then have the nerve to complain that we are swamped by American products. We tend to import the worst of contemporary American culture and to ignore the best. (Purdy 156)

Another point of view removes some of the blame from the shoulders of America, it’s citizens and culture. “If place is made for fast food, violent movies and tv, rock’n’roll and American English, it is because these things bring something new which people like and choose” (Kroes, Rydell, and Bosscher 225). In one particular case the American culture has even been considered to be a unifying agent. “Of course American culture has conquered our country, the wonderful things and the terrible things. Jews came to Israel from Europe and from the Arab countries with two
different cultures that were very far apart. I think American culture has become a bridge between them because everyone likes it and both sides have copied it" (Simmons 70). Statements such as these make it evident that the spread of American culture cannot be blamed solely on American businesses that push so hard to enter foreign markets. Nations which become Americanized must also accept a great deal of responsibility for letting Americanization occur. No one is being forced to watch American television programs or movies, eat Big Macs or buy Levi's jeans. They are doing so by choice.

American products, American fashion, and the American lifestyle itself have been making their presence felt at an increasing rate throughout the world, and arguments dealing with both the positives and negatives of this invasion have been presented. One of the areas of the world which has voiced the strongest opposition to Americanization is Europe. One of the main complaints of the citizens of this continent is that the American culture is simple and mindless. They see no intellectual validity to the American culture. Stephan Palmie offers this reason as to why he feels Europeans have such anti-American views:

Again, as far as Europe is concerned, I suspect that a good deal of such ill feelings . . . has less to do with the inauthentic nature of such cultural items, than with the realization that Europeans, as former treasurers of symbolic capital of the West, have not only lost control over the directionality of the global flow of symbolic matter, but are, at times, at a loss to justify to themselves the naive enthusiasm with which they handle such borrowed cultural capital. (Kroes, Rydell, and Bosscher 272)

RAMIFICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
The ideas about how foreign peoples view American businesspeople, the common characteristics which they share about American culture and people, and the possible reasons for these views have been presented. In an objective manner, both the positive and negative sides of the Americanization coin have been brought forth. The possible ramifications which these generalizations may present for U.S. international business will now be considered as well as possibilities of how this image may be changed to improve the position of American firms in the global marketplace.

Although the somewhat negative attitude held by many foreign businesspeople does not always hinder their willingness to do business with Americans, due to the positive economic potential, it still does prevent negotiations with Americans in some instances and has contributed to the less than spectacular performance of some American businesses in the international marketplace. One obvious sign that the U.S. is not performing well internationally is the trade deficit which the country constantly maintains. "The U.S. trade deficit brings to question the effectiveness of international marketing strategies of American firms" (Wills, Samli, and Jacobs 1). Included in these marketing strategies should be the cultural considerations which are vital to the success of promoting and selling a product. "The U.S. is in danger of losing its leading position in the world economy to foreign competitors" (Herbig and Milam 15) who not only provide products of equal or better quality, but who also take cultural differences into account when conducting business. Thomas Karier explains that:

U.S. corporations are gradually losing their competitiveness in the international market. . . . The declining competitiveness of U.S. companies seems to be the result of their apparent reluctance to compete with the same intensity their foreign
rivals exhibit. Among the possibilities given to explain this lack of inclination to compete are U.S. firms’ preference for short-run profits and immediate returns.

(43)

Objectives such as short-run profits are culturally-based objectives. Therefore, it may be prudent for many U.S. firms to improve their international focus and image among other nations. Otherwise, they risk losing ground economically to firms from other nations.

METHODS TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE

One problem which is consistently noted by foreigners is that Americans doing business internationally do not even attempt to learn about the foreign cultures with which they are dealing. This is probably due to an ignorance on the part of the Americans that, in many foreign countries, business dealings are based more on personal relationships, trust, loyalty or other cultural factors than on economic considerations. In order to expunge this stereotype of ethnocentricity, American businesspeople and educators must take it upon themselves to increase their knowledge of foreign cultures and those which they deal with in particular. “Enhancing the competitiveness of U.S. products and services in the world marketplace is dependent upon improving the quality of the education provided in U.S. schools of higher education” (Focer 14). With the increasing internationalization of business and the interdependence between the economies of the world, every businessperson will have to deal with an international aspect of business whether it be foreign competitors, importing and exporting or overseas investments or operations.

“The proliferation of multinational corporations and other international business concerns requires the improvement of business education. The scope of business education must include theories and practices of international business networks and alliances which cater to global
demand" (Sharma and Roy 8). A program should therefore be installed in the universities around the country which would promote cultural awareness and knowledge about the international aspects of today's business environment. Even "the prestigious Harvard Business School is facing criticism that it is out of touch with the current global marketplace. In answer, Harvard Business School overhauled its MBA program, with more emphasis placed on international programs..." (Economist 69). Such a program would give the future businesspeople of the United States at least a minimum idea of what to expect and how to deal with cross-cultural situations as well as raise general awareness about the increasing importance of international business. John C. Ries provides the idea that "regional studies, defined as learning about specific geographic areas or countries, are an integral part of successfully managing/operating abroad... Regional studies provide context to international business and management courses" (Ries 18).

And the education should not stop at the university level. It should continue throughout the careers of American businesspeople. "Executive education is evolving in response to the changing instructional needs of companies... Executive education is... becoming more international, as evidenced by the rising number of foreign executives participating in U.S. programs and of American managers participating in programs overseas" (Wines 29). The continuance of internationally focused education would be a key maneuver in improving the image of American businesspeople, as well as Americans in general, in the eyes of foreigners.

Another factor which contributes to the view of ethnocentricity which Americans exhibit is that English is the language of international business. At first glance, this would seem to be an advantage for Americans, but in many ways it is not. Americans are able to speak their native language in many business transactions while foreigners must speak English, which is usually a
second or third language. Because of this, many American businesspeople do not feel any pressure or necessity to learn a foreign language. Foreigners often see this as laziness or a lack of interest, on the part of Americans, in their culture. Since English is the language of international business, the education of Americans is also marred. As a general rule, students in the U.S. feel no need to study foreign languages and cultures. This aspect is especially striking when one considers that many nations teach their children at least one foreign language more or less from the time that they start school. This puts business personnel from other countries at a distinct advantage over those from the U.S. They simply have an extra ability that many Americans do not “and an American lack of foreign language ability is portrayed as naïve and arrogant” (Thorne and Meyer 112). A greater emphasis needs to be placed on the study of foreign languages in the U.S. beginning at the primary education level. This would help to improve U.S. people in the eyes of foreigners while bringing them up to a level at which the rest of the world is already located.

MOVING FORWARD

In fact, the businesspeople of the U.S. are already beginning to improve their international image. The ugly American view is indeed diminishing among foreigners as far as international business is concerned. Richard Reeves, an American journalist, discovered these views about Americans while touring Europe:

It seems to me that there are very few ugly Americans abroad these days. There are, however, more than a few stupid ones at home. Or at least that is how it seems to friendly foreigners who find us almost awesome in our openness and generosity, but can’t understand why we seem so determined to destroy or
communism. (Simmons 196)

So the outsiders' view is shifting from an individual focus to more of a political and societal focus. Therefore American society needs to take steps to ensure that U.S. businesspeople move forward and improve performance in the international marketplace.

The fact is that Americans are losing business abroad due to the stereotypes which others hold about them. Some may argue that this loss is due to jealousy on the part of foreigners towards Americans' wealth, and some say that they merely want to halt the Americanization of their culture. What everything really points to is the fact that all of these generalizations are representative of a lack of understanding, on the part of both Americans and foreign people involved in international business. People around the world are quick to judge others' actions as being disrespectful or rude without taking the time to understand the reasons behind these actions. It is the exchange of information that will help to end these misunderstandings. The mutual exchange of information is increasing at a rapid rate in this age of technology and creating, in essence, a type of world culture in which all cultures are converging towards one homogenous culture. "This culture is an overlap of language and customs. It is particularly evident only in the last two decades. . . . It is immensely facilitated by mass tourism and the personal computer which allows the easy synthesis of America and Europe" (Kroes, Rydell, and Bosscher 226). As the transfer of information continues to accelerate, so will the amount of cultural awareness and the number of misunderstandings will ideally decrease. Americans will know more about foreigners and their cultures, and foreign nationals will have a greater understanding of U.S. culture. With this greater understanding will come quicker and more easily negotiated international business transactions. Americans will have their place in the new, knowledgeable
international business transactions. Americans will have their place in the new, knowledgeable global business community.

Although the Ugly American view is still held by some foreign people, it is not nearly as prevalent as it has been in the past. The reasons why this concept still exists are known and Americans need to address these issues in order to continue to maintain or even improve their global position in business. Specifically, cultural awareness, the increasing importance of international business, and foreign language skills need to be the central focus for improvement if American businesspeople want to be on an even level with the rest of the world. As these problem areas are dissolved, so will be the Ugly American concept which the generation that is about to enter the work force has inherited.
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