

Admiration to Resentment in Nanoseconds: Any way out for America?

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Many minds in the U.S. government are working unusual overtime these days trying to figure out a seeming dilemma.

How can the United States be doing so much for the world, yet continue to be so unpopular? How is it possible to welcome U.S. products, and yet hate the U.S. government? There may be no easy answers yet, but any solution mix that emerges must include high dosage of cultural exchanges that genuinely reconnects Americans to the world.

Not too long ago, American youths wanted to be like Mike. It's hard to believe that this kind of admiration for all things America did not begin with the basketball star. Sometime ago, without much government urging and hype, youths all over the world wanted to be like JFK. Even down to the hairstyles.

A central question to ask is what has happened over the years that turned strong admiration for the United States to strong resentment. Where has all the goodwill for America gone?

Without flogging the issues, it seems that once America won the ideological war, she climbed and sequestered herself on the hilltop only to reemerge with a stick, intent on beating the world into shape. That was not the America that won the ideological war, that wasn't the America that won the world over to capitalism.

That America identified with the pains of the less fortunate peoples all over the world, and encouraged the building of extensive infrastructures of exchange programs that prioritized cultural connection between peoples. That America was sensitive to global needs. That America prioritized the meeting of minds and peoples. That American won the day.

That America won admiration and respect despite rampant accusations of sometimes mixing subtlety with subterfuge because people saw hope, opportunity, and chance for self-determination in the American way. America in turn won the hearts of people who believed that by embracing the society's underlying principles, someday they would be able to turn their relative poverty to prosperity.

Ironically, the new America that inherited that ideological victory won primarily on championing the cause of competition, now appears to be suffering the effects of lack of competition. Rather than persuasion, this new America must have her way, whatever the cost. And, egged on by unimaginable might, she promises and delivers "shock and awe." Tough luck, if you are on the receiving end.

The dilemma of the moment appears unending; it is troubling, but certainly not insurmountable. The global groundswell of goodwill for America can be rescued, but it will be revived neither by might nor by hucksters. America may yet end up saving the day.

Everyday normal Americans have a lot to offer the world. Americans' stories of honest toils, failures, and successes in the face of numbing obstacles can inspire. The world needs to know what genuinely makes Americans tick.

Peoples of the world harried and harassed by their governments need to learn about empowerment. They can gain a lot of perspective from Americans who daily hold their governments, at all levels, accountable for that promise of justice, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The U.S. government needs to revive those neglected cultural infrastructures that helped the nation gain global credibility and endorsement from peoples of the world.

Sometime you get the feeling that we are back in 1915 and powerful America is the Old John Rockefeller. The old man's humanity was successfully rescued by a public relations program that counseled him to hand out dimes to the poor as a way of showing his philanthropic instincts. This America has more than dimes and hucksters, but those alone may not work to repair the reconnection path to the rest of the world. At this time, Americans may be America's greatest untapped assets. It's time to set the stage for their genuine reconnection with the world.

Sure, God bless America. But, renewed admiration or continued resentment for America depends on how the most powerful nation decides to spread her blessings.