Redrawing the Boundaries of American Studies

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American Studies arose in the 1930s as an interdisciplinary field incorporating disparate and diverse elements from literature, sociology, political science, economics, and history among others in order to understand the uniqueness of American culture and experience. In the beginning it combined the methodologies of literary criticism and historical research but gradually incorporated theories using gender, postcolonial, Marxist, poststructuralist, postmodernism, and cultural studies. In the last seventy-five years the methodologies used in American Studies have gone much beyond the judgment and expectation of its founder Vernon Louis Parrington who enunciated its precepts in his two-volume work *Main Currents in American Thought* in 1927. Now American Studies stands at a point in time when it must question and expand its methodologies and redraw its boundaries.

We find ourselves at a historical moment that is both bewildering and critical. Since 1991 America has emerged as the most powerful nation in the world, and its indubitable might is felt, for good or for ill, by both the American people and peoples in most parts of the world. This has far-reaching consequences not only in the realm of foreign policy, but also in all other areas of human endeavor—from political values and civil liberties to social sciences and literature. The various disciplines within American Studies have not been able to adequately address these issues, partly because they lack the requisite ‘tools of inquiry’ and partly because we lack the social will. As we confront the present crisis in world history it becomes obligatory for American Studies to expose the underpinnings of politics, history, economics, culture and civilization by seeking new “avenues of inquiry” and asking “new questions.” Edward Said articulated some of these questions and concerns in his works, especially the intricate workings of political empires, the subtle relationship between knowledge and power, and the terrible conjunction of culture and conflict. Even as we miss his presence we may still be able to use his ideas to energize modern disciplines.

After the Second World War the United States emerged as a global power with hegemonic ambitions in the politics and economies of other nations. The Cold War collisions with the Soviet Union
strengthened American resolve to market American exceptionalism more aggressively. Government support to American Studies gave credence to the idea that American Studies was a part of American hegemonic intentions. Metaphors of American innocence, the virtuous American Adam, the American Dream, consensual American mind gained importance in understanding American culture and character. These metaphors pulled out the pre-war concern for social betterment and its associated themes such as the Progressive and New Deal. The principle of self-improvement gave significance to America as an ongoing democratic project based on an engaging self-criticism of its problems and triumphs. American Studies, therefore, supported two contradictory assumptions about America—a messianic America, leading the world towards a superior civilization and a divided America revealing its contradictions and Cold War biases.

The violent and often traumatic conflicts in the latter half of the last century, within and outside America, have encouraged American Studies to question notions of American exceptionalism and cultural hegemony. The Civil Rights Movements of the Sixties and the protracted Vietnam War of the Seventies brought to the surface the multicultural problems America faced and a new international role it ought to play in the future. A self-questioning of the American cultural ethos emerged in tandem with the rise of feminism, ethnicity, and models for conflict resolution and cultural diversity. The emergence of cross-cultural contours in American Studies was modified abroad by foreign Americanists to suit their own cultural and social conditions. These studies have raised valuable questions for American Studies such as politicization of American culture and popular perceptions about America abroad.

The ongoing projects of globalizing American Studies need to take cognizance of an increasingly polarized world, and consequently, if it must succeed, negotiate the intersection between Western cultural imperialism and Islamic religious resistance. The American gung-ho approach of representing American Studies from within its territorial boundaries must give way to a mature and expansive acceptance of non-American approaches constructing American culture and civilization from the outside. Americanists from abroad must be
encouraged to provide a non-American point of view of American Studies, realigning a somewhat parochial representation of American nation, culture and civilization.

The processes of globalization in the last decade have both impeded and transformed societies and cultures eliciting negative or positive reactions from nation states. The resistance that American Studies encounters as it leaves American shores and the transformation it undergoes in alien lands, acquire significance for Americanists both in America and abroad. The changing ethical-political horizon, the new methodologies of representation, the Foucauldian epistemological analysis, feminist critiques of gender and sexuality, post-colonial and subaltern perspective, post-structuralist theory, new historicist practice, narrativizing historical techniques, globalizing theories, whiteness studies, politics of location and concepts of alterity and race have all redefined the taxonomy, ideologies and methodologies employed in American Studies. And in a climate where local histories are valued, competing perspectives find expression in global media and politics of location privileges perspectives, MELUS India and MELUS chapters outside the United States provide valuable interpretations of American Studies that need not clash but can, with some adjustments, coexist.\textsuperscript{v}

\textbf{U.S. Hegemony and American Studies}

Though in recent years American foreign policy, based on the Bush Doctrine might not have much to do with American Studies within the United States, it nonetheless affects its dissemination through the activities of institutions and scholars it funds abroad.\textsuperscript{vi} In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attack on New York and Washington, the dramatic successes of the U.S. Air Force in Afghanistan and Iraq and subsequent terrorist attacks on American civilians in the Middle East and South Asia, American funding to American Studies abroad has dramatically increased. U.S. administrators see a ray of hope in American Studies providing a better understanding of American values and a rationale for U.S. presence abroad. This could help alter the misperception of American "hegemonic" ambitions and reduce hostility to American national interests.
Since American foreign policy has a strong bearing on the promotion of American Studies abroad, American Studies must be encouraged to recognize differing perspectives of America within and abroad. When Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi derided Islamic culture's supposed backwardness while praising the cultural superiority of Christian civilization, he quickly found himself isolated not only by the United States but also by European allies such as France, Britain and Germany. None of these countries can afford to fan an overtly rightist sentiment in Europe and naively believe that they can live comfortably with a large and growing Muslim population at home. vii There is a growing awareness in the United States of non-American views that the recent attack on American symbols of wealth and military power were a consequence of American misguided foreign policy in the Middle East. American critics trying to understand the cause of terrorist attack on America are now looking into the suggestion that constant American support and endorsement of Israel's position against Palestine's right to self-determination could be the real reason.

Many Asian and European critics were quick to realize the inherent cause behind the attack on America, as both have had experiences of the defeat of European imperialism and the insidious impact of American hegemony sidestepping the apparent political institutions of the Empire. Perhaps a new awareness, that American foreign policy has gone wrong somewhere, prompted Bush's administration to force Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to renegotiate a peace settlement with the late PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. The gradual withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the electoral victory of Hamas have created new uncertainties in both the countries and the rest of the world. The political turmoil in the Middle East after the decentering of Hamas in Palestine and the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon between 2001 and 2007 has shown that a military solution to political and cultural problems may not be so easy to find.

America has slowly begun to realize that, though European leaders have pledged strong support for military action, her citizens are more interested to explore other non-military options. Now in Europe more weight is given to American cultural arrogance and capitalism defiantly seeking revenge and perpetuating oppression on the Third
World. American legislators are recognizing the exploitative nature of American imperialism speeded up by global capitalism and powerful media. Countries such as India reacted angrily to sops for U.S. support and lifting of democracy sanctions, while failed dictatorial states such as Pakistan greedily accepted economic aid.

The U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy underwent another process of nationalization in the last few months due to funding counter-terrorism and an impending economic recession. Contentious issues on the foreign policy agenda stuck for a long time, such as free trade agreement with Jordan, payment of overdue to the United Nations and China's WTO membership, were all cleared without debate. Economic sanctions slapped on India and Pakistan, after both nations turned nuclear, were withdrawn in return for their support to the U.S. to fight terrorism. The national crisis in the U.S. took the power from the U.S. Congress and gave it to the President. Powerful lobbies within the U.S. Congress directing foreign policy collapsed within weeks. It is common knowledge that since the 1990s, powerful business or ideological lobbies in the Congress privatized U.S. foreign policy. As such it was not at all surprising to find that of the 120 unilateral sanctions imposed on different countries in the world since World War I, nearly half of them were passed between 1992 and 1998. It is awesome to see how so few people in the U.S. Congress could decide the fate of so many in the world by controlling and imposing sanctions. Everyone seemed to have forgotten about the missile defense project so enthusiastically pushed by the Bush administration earlier.

All this does not mean that Pax Americana has learnt its lesson and that American triumphalism is now in retreat. On the contrary American oil interests are zealously guarded and its intervention in Israel-Palestine imbroglio unassailable. America has taught a lesson to the world and in teaching this lesson that American hegemony will not break down. The only thing that has changed is the keenness to explain its position, to keep a broad coalition going on and to reduce malevolent anti-Americanism in the Arab world.
Postmodernism has destabilized a transcendental center into which multiple discourses could return; it has also discredited the faculty of reason and common corporeal experience as the basis for judgment. Though postmodernism theory does not celebrate diversity it does provide grounds for negotiating alterity without laying down criteria for legitimating divergent claims. When difference or alterity is constructed in terms of non-criteria, it does not allow room for translation as it blocks the future of dialogue.

After the 11th September attacks, political language in the U. S. tried to construct America as a "privileged site of universal values." Therefore, there were no terrorisms in countries that had suffered in the last thirty years but only regionalism, separatism or civil unrest masquerading as terrorism. Only, one single “grand terrorism” threatens to destroy the teleological and eschatological force of American values in the grand historical narrative and that terrorism is Islamic terrorism. And the need to punish the perpetrators making it a spectacle is Foucauldian in nature. Foucault had once claimed that, “…justice no longer takes public responsibility for that violence that is bound up with its practice.”xi The theatrical display of legitimate disciplinary powers to return to normalcy is another ruse of modernity. Legitimate display of power is also an attempt to displace the pain Americans feel as victims and the relation they bear to others who have been in the same situation. What kind of responsibility they owe to others in a climate where violence replaces politics? A tolerable peace can arise if we acknowledge the fallibility and vulnerability of human beings in history that need to be constantly negotiated. And herein lies the significance of American Studies to function as a go-between allowing the explication of American values and expression of non-American opinions.

**Globalization and American Studies**
The process of globalization has hastened the spread of American Studies. The origins of globalization may be technological, coupled with postmodernist information strategies, as argued by Frederic Jameson, political and economic as explained by theorists such as Malcolm Waters, Arjun Appadurai, Anthony Giddens, Ronald Robertson, David Harvey, James Clifford, Frederick Buell and Susan...
Stanford Friedman, cultural as understood by sociologist such as Immanuel Wallerstein or as old as two millennia as seen by historians such as William H McNeill and Marshall Hodgson, the fact remains that globalization has become pervasive, is here to stay, and must be dealt with seriously. Jurgen Habermas in his recent book, *The Postnational Constellation* observes that in the new century democracies in order to catch up with globalization have to work desperately to survive “beyond national borders” through “cosmopolitan solidarity.”

The fears of American hegemony in communication and capitalism, the twin arms of globalization, has led theorists like Enrique Dussel to propose a non-Eurocentric historiography that would be compatible with the interest of other marginalized institutions and states. American Studies often seen as a cultural and symbolic manifestation of international capitalism in a postmodernist world. Any enthusiasm in the area is invariably misconstrued as either hegemonic or self-serving. The basis of such misconceptions is not groundless. Since global communication network involve new technology, the information traveling on it continues to be harnessed from the world of advertisement, publicity and propaganda either modernist or postmodernist. Jameson argues that when communication—such as American TV programs and sleazy Hollywood movies—travels the digital pulse of technology it acquires a specific cultural significance that inadvertently suggests a world culture. This tendency is understandably viewed by most hitherto colonized nations as another form of colonization.

Though the concepts of globalization and post-globalization have been loosely defined they undeniably reflect a more comprehensive system of communication and flow of market that the world has known till now. Frederic Jameson saw it as a postmodern phenomenon that after nearly a decade remained “unclassifiable” though it affected every aspect of life—from culture, sociology, medicine and information to ecology and consumerism. Lacking a *locus standi* or a “privileged context” globalization, post-globalization and anti-globalization constantly slipped from one discipline into another, being appropriated by each and belonging to none. As globalization developed it
realigned itself with national and transnational interests creating a new social situation hitherto not encountered by academic disciplines rooted in the nineteenth century reality. Both terrorism and counter-terrorism ride this wave. The electronic flow of economic capital to finance terrorism, the use of Internet emailing services by the terrorists and the freezing of economic assets of terrorist organizations as part of counter-terrorism, all go well with the globalization of capitalism and fundamentalism of one stripe or another.

American Studies equally partakes of the dynamics of global expansion by participating in the production of a global culture. Ronald Robertson's definition of the dynamics of global expansion as “the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular” can be applied to American Studies as well. And as grand narratives fail, radically incommensurable paradigms (Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) prevail where neither the particular nor the universal paradigms may be argued convincingly. Living in an increasingly fragile and precarious world we now get a heady mixture of fundamentalist politics propelled by distorted dogmas and equally jingoistic nationalism, both making fervent appeals to history to validate their exaggerated universal claims. The situation gets further complicated as the processes of globalization come in contact with national and local identities. On the one hand this interaction gives rise to antagonism and tensions, and on the other creates unique situations, in which all the identities involved, define themselves against each other and seek a new direction. Some politically entrenched nations like the United States make universal claims, while politically emerging nations like India or China construct a cultural national identity. Such imaginary constructions of identity (symbolic or cultural), resorted to by nation states, would be impossible without the help of international channels of communication or global economic pathways. It is still argued whether globalization can be viewed just as mere “transnational domination” or possesses inherent strength to liberate local cultures from state and national domination.

It would be naïve to believe that globalization could so easily be reduced to American hegemony as convincingly argued by Arjun
Appadurai in *Modernization at Large*.xvi Theories of cultural change must themselves be somewhat complex if they are to understand the complexity of globalization. The emerging post-global reality finds local cultures getting transformed by Western life styles and products while at the same time transforming Western products to suit their own needs. In this way a unique form of culturalism—“the process of naturalizing a subset of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity”—now reconstitutes identity to a large extent, shaped by mass media and consumer culture. James Clifford argues that as culture travels trans-nationally on the wings of globalization it becomes deterritorialized and hybridized.xvii Appadurai points out that deterritorialization “creates new markets for film companies, art impresarios, and travel agencies, which thrive on the need of the deterritorialized population for contact with its homeland” creating transnational identities.xviii

Globalization has given rise to a sort of cultural pluralism, which Robertson interestingly believes originates in Japanese religious eclecticism and in a way privileges Japan technologically and economically. Some theorists further argue that globalization has given a definite presence, if not provided a clear identity, to marginalized groups, races and thereby opened spaces for subaltern and silenced peoples of the world. However the fact remains that national economic markets are getting rapidly assimilated into world economic systems from which separation or “delinking,” to use Samir Amin’s phrase, becomes outright impossible. The entry of cable TV (American sleaze and music) into conservative urban Indian homes has transformed both values and lifestyles of teenagers. By directly entering conservative Hindu homes, globalization has done what the British colonial rule could not do in one hundred and fifty years. But the localized benefits of globalization have left a large segment of world population dissatisfied.

The anti-globalization movement in Prague (before the annual meeting of IMF and World Bank in September 2000) marked a strong protest against the imposition of Western normative standards advocated by the triumvirate of economic deregulation, national economic management and market liberalization. Globalization became
synonymous with the Clinton administration, indirectly helping multinationals to takeover indigenous industry and agriculture, destroying local knowledge and preventing groups of people and sovereign nations to control their destinies by reducing them to large geo-political areas. The neo-conservatives under Bush are happy to outsource to Asian countries such as China and India exhorting its own working class to develop special skills where they will not compete unsuccessfully for low-paid jobs with skilled foreign labor. After its initial success, globalization met with a series of losses—the Asian economic crisis and the collapse of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) project in 1998. If the project had passed, it would have allowed corporations the right to sue governments if the latter failed to remove labor and environmental restrictions on free trade.

It is commonly believed that globalization as an economic model has failed to live up to its promise. It has increased the income gap between the rich and poor both in the U.S. and poor countries and empowered large organizations at the expense of ordinary citizens. Only countries that had employed globalization together with protectionist state policies, such as China, Malaysia and India, survived. China rejected globalization, Malaysia did not follow IMF and India used selective globalization.xix

Propelled by a terribly materialistic value of wealth accumulation and profit, globalization and its cultural byproducts have generated some anxiety amongst intellectuals. Amartya Sen argues that in a post materialist civilization heralded by globalization the maximization of gains by companies seems utterly foolish. He believes that companies should be motivated by “commitment and sympathy” to people rather than self-seeking material gains. Large corporate houses should protect the environment, human rights, culture and nature and not just concentrate on making profit. The powerful economic, though at times inhuman, forces globalization unleashes makes internationalization of culture and its artifacts somewhat suspect. The occasional resistance to American Studies in certain developing countries is spawned by these concerns.
Internationalizing American Studies
If we locate globalization of American Studies in this intellectual, political and social context, issues relating to its reconstruction, redefinition and re-conceptualization acquire a new focus and significance. The recent ongoing debate in American academia epitomized by an entire issue of *PMLA* 2001 devoted to the valorization of globalizing American Studies, may be seen with renewed enthusiasm within the U.S. but is viewed with some skepticism amongst scholars outside the U.S. Within the United States it might be seen as a new nation-building project but outside it is seen as characteristically Eurocentric riding the ship of American capitalism.

Obviously conceptions of American Studies within and outside the United States differ. In the 1960’s American Studies abroad was synonymous with American literature, especially the study of canonical white male writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allen Poe and William Faulkner. Later, a few mainstream white women writers such as Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty and Willa Cather were thrown in with a couple of Jewish-American male writers such as Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow and Philip Roth to suggest sexual and cultural diversity. The study of American culture, based predominantly on cultural aesthetics, was divorced from social, political or economic concerns.

The lack of a long-standing tradition that American Studies is heir to and the fast pace of internationalization it is witnessing now creates complex problems and offers new opportunities to it. Sixty years ago American literature, and later American Studies, arose from relative obscurity in departments of English and began to carve an identity alongside well-entrenched subjects such as English and indigenous literatures both in the U.S. and abroad. The speed of globalization and the supremacy of the U.S. in political and economic areas in the last decade have given American Studies a preeminent though contentious position in the world. Since American Studies outside the United States is not seen as separate from American hegemony, many studies by non-American scholars have now focused attention on cultural dominance and control, cultural adaptability and deterritorialization, rupture and identity politics. Within the United States literary theorists
such as Stephen Greenblatt, Giles Gunn, Edward Said and others have already suggested fundamental changes in American Studies especially in literary studies, literary history and ethical-political horizons. Islamic religious resistance, anti-globalization movement and a redefinition of a post-materialist ethics are altering taxonomic approaches and leading American Studies in new directions such as environmental issues, human rights, ecology, jurisprudence and border studies.

The reconstruction of American Studies within the United States that began in the 1970’s was reflected in a general sense of frustration by U.S. organizations funding American Studies abroad. Organizations such as the USIA or USIS began suggesting that they were getting “no returns” from weak-minded thematic studies abroad. Within American bureaucratic circles it became increasingly difficult to justify grants to scholars working on predominantly literary themes. American administrators wanted non-American intellectuals to focus attention on new and emerging areas in American Studies such as information technology, management, environment and business protocol. And the reconstruction of American literary studies further directed attention to issues such as gender, ethnicity, rupture and race. The ever-expanding conception of American Studies incorporating new ethical-political perspectives within the United States and the thought of globalizing American studies in the last few years, have not only generated new inter-disciplinary studies but also altered the taxonomy of traditional disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, literature and economics.

The multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of American Studies has allowed it to easily adapt to the changing needs of the time. As Americanists realized the inadequacy of traditionally defined approaches to understanding the complexity of American culture and society they crossed and redefined boundaries and created a multidisciplinary approach. The internationalization of American Studies in the last two decades has further expanded its intellectual and institutional character making scholars see American culture and society in a global context. Americanists transcending nationality and
culture have directed their gaze on American culture and society bringing out its variety, paradox and strength.

Joint collaboration in mathematics and pure sciences has a long-standing tradition but in American Studies it is of recent origin. Early in the last century private and public funding of American Studies stimulated interest of foreign scholars in America—related themes popularizing American culture and tradition. American-funded programs in American Studies during the 1940s, sponsored by Fulbright Foundation and the United States Information Agency aided in creating an international movement for American Studies. Fellowships, grants and exchange programs involving American scholars going abroad and non-American scholars traveling to the United States gave American Studies a varied and comparative perspective. Recently, the American Studies Scholars Program (ACLS), East-West Center Hawaii, Salzburg Seminars and U.S. Embassy sent non-American faculty and students to the U.S. to study American culture and society and occasionally to teach for short duration at universities.

International conferences conducted by various associations of American Studies, such as the ASA and MELUS, not only stimulated interest in American Studies but further diversified areas of research. In the last decade ASA annual conferences have integrated papers by non-American scholars within thematic panels and not grouped them in a separate slot. This has given foreign scholars an opportunity to interact with American scholars introducing new perspectives and stimulating broader areas of study. In the 1980’s international participation at ASA conferences was largely from Europe, but in 1990’s scholars from Asia and Africa also presented papers or attended the conference. In 1994 nearly thirty-six scholars from fifteen countries attended the ASA conference. The increasing globalization of American Studies has prompted many foreign associations or affiliated associations of American Studies to invite U.S. Americanists, officially or personally, to conferences on American culture and society to present papers and chair sessions.
In the last two decades U.S.-European collaboration in American Studies has widened to include Latin American, Australian, Asian and African scholars. This cooperation is evident in some books published in American Studies in the last decade. David Nye and Mick Gidley (universities of Odense and Exeter respectively) co-edited a book of essays on the influence of American popular culture on post-war European society based on research material from The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In 1995 Amritjit Singh (Rhode Island College) Max J. Skidmore (University of Missouir-Kansas City) and Isaac Sequeira (Osmania University) published a collection of essays from New Delhi entitled *American Studies Today: An Introduction To Methods and Perspectives* that provides new vistas of American landscape in a cross-cultural context. All the three Americanists have, sometime or the other, been associated with the American Studies Research Center (ASRC) now renamed the Indo-American Centre For International Studies (ACIS) Hyderabad. The establishment of regional American Studies research centers in Germany, United Kingdom, India and Japan has not only globalized American Studies but also given a new boost to cross-cultural perspectives.

Joint collaboration between foreign and native Americanists has focused attention on non-American analyses of American culture and society from colonization to the present. Foreign observers of America, such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Bryce are increasingly used in understanding American culture and society. Now Latin American, East European, African, Mid-eastern and South Asian observations in American Studies have acquired a respectability that was hitherto denied to them. Foreign observation about America itself has become the subject of research in graduate courses at various universities in the U.S. All this has been possible with the sudden collapse of powerful regimes in the last part of the twentieth century and the sudden demise of meta-narrative of historical necessity. Jorge Luis Borges belief in the Jewish historical position of engagement and detachment gives validity to ruptured narratives—to be able to “act within that culture” and at the same time not to “feel tied to it by any special devotion” seems quintessentially English and French. As the belief in multiple identities, rupture, blockage, marginalized voices, impurities of
language gain a new sanction they become central in re-mapping literary histories.

The study of American civilization as a democratic and multicultural experiment has led to comparisons with other civilizations of the world testing the strength and weakness of American as a nation. Such research has given American Studies both a comparatist and international perspective and led to globalization of its subject matter. Though it has generated some suspicion outside the United States, where American culture becomes synonymous with American imperialism, it has also spawned a whole new series of studies such as Immigration Studies, Diaspora Studies, Border Studies, Cultural Studies, Social Arrangement Studies, Immigration Studies and Media Studies. Immigration Studies analyse demographic patterns of immigration to and from the U.S. and bring an increased awareness and appreciation of immigration-related issues. Diasporic Studies understand cultural continuities and changes in ethnic groups living in America through sub-themes such as social and cultural assimilation or conflict. The “new immigration” in the 1960’s especially from Latin America, South Asia, Middle East, Far East and Africa made immigration studies once more topical. A new area of interest associated with immigration is Border Studies stimulated by renewed attention on the geographical intersection of Mexico and the United States. Border Studies received a boost from colonial and post-colonial discourses of theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, Aijaz Ahmed et. al. International cultural perspectives, ethnic studies, literary studies feminist theory have also contributed to border studies and globalization of American Studies.

Internet and electronic mail have accelerated the dissemination of American Studies at a rate unparalleled in the history of communication since the introduction of the printing press. Access to information and international cooperation takes place without much financial inputs. Free electronic newsletters and email services allow the dissemination of American history and culture at a much faster pace, reaching people beyond the boundaries of the United States. Both Connections (published jointly by the Organization of American Historians and American Studies Association) and ASA Newsletter
(published by ASA) provide a forum for international scholars to participate in academic projects and access information about faculty positions, prizes, scholarships, fellowships and grants in American Studies. H-AMSTDY started by Jeff Finlay of New York University is another electronic network on American Studies dealing with research and teaching projects on American Studies.

The mid-1980 saw a steady increase in international participation at ASA annual conventions as American Studies widened its scope to include the Americas and its multicultural identities. The 1989 ASA annual convention was held in Toronto Canada with a challenging theme “Americas ‘89” that went beyond the borders of the United States. Not only were Canadian scholars, members of the Program Committee but papers were presented in French and Spanish apart from English. Many American Studies associations abroad sought, and were granted, formal affiliation with ASA such as European Association of American Studies and American Studies associations in India, Japan, Korean, Brazil Canada, Australia, Italy, Germany, Great Britain and some Scandinavian countries. The end of Cold War era in 1989 and a more liberal political restructuring in Poland, Hungary and Romania gave impetus to American Studies in these countries. They also became formally affiliated to ASA utilizing its facilities and programs to further deepen their knowledge of American Studies. They now attend conferences, subscribe to journals, receive newsletters and become members at subsidized rates.

**Empire Studies and American Studies**

Since the 1990s evident notions of American supremacy in world affairs has made the word ‘empire’ together with the phrase ‘homeland security’ more acceptable, contradicting the metaphors of melting pot and boundless mobility in the rich tapestry of American democracy. This new emphasis on the term “empire” brings into focus the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the violence of subsequent American overseas possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific Empire also redefines the twin ideas like territorial expansionism and American imperialism long-separated and decentered in the context of US democracy. Though recent centrist and revisionist studies of the empire see American exceptionalism as distinct from European imperialism of the nineteenth century, they still see globalization as a decentered form of
American empire. The process of remapping and redefining the term ‘empire’ has given rise to new field of studies called ‘empire studies’ that by revising and redefining American studies and allied disciplines is trying to institutionalize the term empire.

America has always been an “empire in denial” that “dare not speak its name” and this denial has been the ideological cornerstone of American imperialism and an important aspect of American exceptionalism. When Henry Luce in 1941 coined the phrase the American Century he was in effect denying the geographical spread of America as an empire by claiming a temporal identity. He saw the American Century as the inevitable destiny, a natural consequence of certain historical forces of progress and change. The growth of American power is directly linked to the structures of imperialism, capitalism and modernity. David Harvey sees the growth of American power from 1870-1945 as the strengthening of “bourgeois imperialism” while that from 1945-1970 as the growth of “postwar American hegemony.” This creates an uneven history of American political and economic interests vis-à-vis Europe, Asia and Africa. For Harvey there is no easy accord between the “politics of state and empire” and the “molecular processes of capital accumulation in space and time.” The masking of the notions of an empire through the rhetoric of democracy Harvey calls an abstract universalism.

American scholars no longer see the notion of the American Empire as just a “left-wing polemic.” It is an assertive imperial identity of the neo-conservatives celebrating American manifest destiny on a global scale, declaring a war against terror, against the Muslim world in self-righteous terms. “America’s entire war on terror,” writes Michael Ignatieff, “is an exercise in imperialism. This may come as a shock to Americans, who don’t like to think of their country as an empire. But what else can you call America’s legions of soldiers, spooks, and special forces straddling the globe?” Even if the term empire might seem elusive within America it is impossible to ignore the frightening growth of American “empire of bases” as Chalmers Johnson argues in The Sorrows of Empire. Critics argue that the Bush imperialists and the Bush administration have given a new twist to the term neo-imperialism by taking over the functions of imperial governance through its tactics of “stealth, politesse, and obliquity.” Amy Kaplan sees this new American narrative encompassing the perennial notions of time and space as the immortality and global invincibility of the empire. Now
within the discipline of American Studies scholars feel a sense of urgency to expose the “racism of empire” and understand the method by which the Arabs and Islam are “racialized” within the U.S. and outside in Guantanamo and Abu Gharib detention centers. xxxiii

The modern reading of history by the neoconservatives in the United States in the phrase “war on terror” reduces the rich interactions of America with different cultures of the world to a Machiavellian conflict “to rid the world of evil.” Obviously, America today is the most “indispensable nation” in the world to use Madeleine Albright’s succinct phrase. Everyday, people around the world see the workings of the U.S. imperialism. Already the U.S. is referred to as the American Empire in public discourses, something that was dismissed as left wing polemic a decade ago. xxxiv America is seen as the repository of universal values, human rights, liberalism and democracy. Today revisionist historians like Niall Ferguson exhort the U.S. to accept the white man’s burden and not continue to be “an empire in denial.” The concept of the Empire emerges with an array of political words like terrorism and homeland security. Amy Kaplan warns us to go beyond the “racism of empire” and reveal the way in which Arabs and Islam are “racialized.” xxxv

At a point in time when the ideological landmarks in America are once more reconfiguring its cultural and literary landscape it is important to hold up the US “to its own professed ideals.” xxxvi America has always been a pluralistic society right from its conception. The national motto of the United States embodied in the Latin phrase e pluribus unam (out of many one) adopted in 1776 not only refers to the unification of the 13 independent colonies but also the pluralistic nature of America both through colonization and immigration. To claim a new identity of America as an aggressive imperialist abroad and a champion of democratic values within would be difficult to endorse. Kaplan rightly argues that “judging American actions by its own ideal standards” not only has a long-standing history but also can have a devastating effect. As Mark Twain once argued in “To the Person Sitting in Darkness” that there has to be two Americas—one that frees and another that enslaves and dispossesses. xxxvii The condemnation within the US of torture inside Abu Gharib prison was also an expression of betrayed American ideals. If American ideals can go beyond the concepts of nationhood and encompass transnational and global notions of human rights, international law and universal ethics then this can rejuvenate American studies and American
literature per se. And this after all should the immediate goal of Amerianists and American studies scholars at a time when civil liberties are under duress.

**Literary Studies and American Studies**

Most non-American scholars in American Studies trace their primary grounding in scholarship in literary studies. It is not at all surprising that most foreign Americanists come from departments of English literature, introduced early in their academic experience to popular white male writers understood as part of the American experience. As literary theory questioned this representation of American literature and introduced texts by women and minority writers, foreign scholars too began to reexamine the somewhat biased construction of American literature. Non-American scholars trained in the U.S. applied interdisciplinary approaches to arrive at a fresh understanding of American culture and society, at times exposing its paradoxes and prejudices. In the 1980’s the influence of multicultural, feminist, popular culture and media studies have not only exposed literary anomalies but also activated a transnational dialogue between U.S. and non-U.S. Americanists.

Attempts to incorporate transnational and cultural influences in literary studies are not new. The construction of comparative literature as a discipline to study cross-national, pan-cultural, generic and historic influences, interactions and transformations is relatively old. These studies gained momentum by the initial invention rather than discovery of America by the Europeans in rhetorical terms seen in the rise of chronicles of invention such as Christopher Columbus’s *Letter to Lord Raphael Sanchez, Treasurer to Ferdinand and Isabella, King and Queen of Spain* (1493) to Walter Raleigh’s *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1595). Though these chronicles tried to give legitimacy to an Eurocentric perspective of America—by emphasizing historical invention and European triumphalism—they also attempted to erase Native American knowledge. But in doing so they became entrapped in a colonial identity, which once again had to be reconstituted to develop a New World identity. The questioning of postcolonial texts—beginning in the 1960’s with works such as *On Heroes and Tombs* by Ernest Sabato (1962), *One Hundred Years of
Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1967), The Mimic Men by V.S. Naipaul (1967) and continuing in the 1990’s with works such as Lucy by Jamaica Kincaid (1990)—revealed a new neo-colonial reinvention and triumphalism. Giles Gunn in his recent essay “Globalizing Literary Studies” in PMLA 2001 wonders if this third wave of colonial reinvention can “do something” by way of revealing the hidden assumptions and divergences of texts other than become just “another layer of fabrication” in a scholarly cultural production.xxxviii

The internationalization of American literary studies in the last decades has been both wide-ranging and procedurally diverse. The literary protocols of conducting analysis has dramatically altered as evinced by the introduction of new concepts and terms such as subaltern, alterity, rhizome, politics of location, Diaspora, hybridity, mestizo, transcultural, Eurocentric, imagining race and deterritorialization. The pluralization of national traditions has given legitimacy to all literatures written in English from Southeast Asian to Caribbean causing enormous confusions in departments of English not only in the U.S. but also in other countries as well. Lack of expertise or disinterest in new areas has led to neglect or half-hearted attempts at teaching newly legitimized literatures. Though cultural and economic globalization has increased global per capita income, given impetus to human rights, environmental movements and nuclear disarmament it has clearly done so somewhat arbitrarily strongly favoring the United States. The politics of location privileging discourses originating in the U.S. have marginalized voices located outside its boundaries.

Since globalization involves cultural and symbolic exchanges and transformations as argued by Arjun Appadurai, it challenges, weakens and alters, if not destroys the construction of English studies built around homogenous national literatures. Globalization has increasingly demonstrated the transnational flow of culture and ideology thus shifting the grouping of literary texts from normative to functional similarities. From this point of view nationalist narratives are not seen as continuous but from time to time broken and inter-mixed with other tendencies. The old hegemony of traditional literary histories characterized by arbitrary political and aesthetic assumptions has been increasing under attack. It has been argued that traditional literary
paradigms, propelled by an aesthetic ideology substituted “taste for rights, subjects for citizens, nostalgia for progress, and essentialism for historical contingency.” Greenblatt minority critics have argued that, “the old literary histories routinely erased multiple differences, enshrining the triumph of the center over the margins, substituting a false vision of unity for a reality that was and is ever more multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural.”

A shifting narrative paradigm begins with culture wars of the 1980s and results in a weakened emphasis on English literature of Great Britain and introduction of hitherto non-canonical literatures by writers such as Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison and Derek Walcott in departments of English. The impurity of literary studies especially English and American studies, (recognized since the late seventeenth century, refer to Greenblatt) the weakening of national narratives and cultural narrativizations through literatures written in English by progressives from New Delhi, Capetown or Antigua have given rise to what Linda Hutcheon calls “interventionist literary histories” and allowed people to reinvent their past and re-imagine their future. However employing the same tactics as used by older historical narratives to give legitimacy—evolution, teleology and continuity—modern historians employ the same method though condemning it in others. But the internationalization of American Studies as Greenblatt argues is not just a recent phenomenon based on Internet or Apex fares and international capital. Greenblatt writes:

A vital global cultural discourse is ancient; only the increasingly settled and bureaucratized nature of academic institutions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, conjoined with a nasty intensification of ethnocentrism, racism, and nationalism, produced the temporary illusion of sedentary, indigenous literary cultures making sporadic and half-hearted ventures toward the margins. The reality, for most of the past as once again for the present, is more about nomads than natives.

If the global nature of cultural discourse is essentially nomadic and not native, then it becomes imperative to track the “restless and often
unpredictable movements” of expatriates as scholars and artists refurbishing and altering literary discourses.

Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* provides an excellent glimpse of transnational mobility in the Jewish protagonist Abraham Ben Yuji from Tunisia, through Egypt to India. Mobility studies provide a peek not only into a transient reality but an altered reality. It makes us aware, even if for a brief moment that things could have been otherwise; that life could have been lived on another plane, in another world. Literary history now takes into cognizance the negotiation of multiples identities and has shifted, as Denis Hollier states in *A New History of French Literature*, “from the assertion of borders through literature and the presentation of a literature within borders, to a questioning that results in the proliferation of these borders.” In other words literary history “both constitutes and undoes literature.”

**American Studies in India**

Literary history has also taught us that there is a strong connection between academics and politics. “Scholarship like trade follows the flag.” The origin of American Studies in India in the early 1960s is no exception. The American Studies Research Center, Hyderabad was established in 1963 through the initiative of and funding by American agencies like the Ford Foundation and USEFI to promote the teaching of American history and literature in Indian universities hitherto dominated by British literature. ASRC soon became an “academic refuge” for Indian teachers and scholars who began to study American literature and history without evolving a clear Indian methodology. MELUS India too has been largely dependent on ASRC and United States Information Agency for funding its international conferences. However with the shift in bilateral relations between the U.S. and India funding to both MELUS and ASRC is drying up. Therefore after four conferences MELUS-India has shifted its focus to more Indian themes by hosting an international conference at ASRC in January 2006 called Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World (MELOW) with a strong emphasis on India.

Most Americanists working in India felt the need for an expansive category that included world literatures and at the same time
emphasized the uniqueness of the Indian experience. The MELUS-India conference in January 2002 at Hyderabad under the theme "Politics of Location in Literatures of the Americas" that brought together 90 Americanists from around the world echoed a deconstructive and neo-historicist theme of "no fixed boundaries" and reiterated the need for a global perspective. Scholars acknowledged the inexorable march of the history of ideas and felt that reconstituted structures made the study of literature in isolation almost impossible. The study of diasporic and marginalized literatures, the commercial aspect of cult figures like Madonna, the critique of knowledge, power politics, the reestablishment of a canon, the green tradition, reconstitution of American literature syllabi in India, globalizing American studies, emergence of literary identities, and literary adaptations were some of the themes discussed at the conference. Issues of English formalism, symbolism, imagery in literary works, quite popular in the 1970s and 1980s, were largely missing from the conference.

In the last three years the socio-political reality both in the United States and the world has undergone a racial change. Some of the major concerns in American literature shifted from identity and ethnicity to cultures and conflict. To add to this bewildering change American funding to American Studies was virtually stopped as ASRC was seen by Washington as “a den of leftists.” Before ASRC closed down completely the Melus India 2006 Conference was held in January. It brought together some 67 Americanists under the theme “Dialog Across Cultures: Bridging Differences in American Literature” where scholars debated about the commensurability or incommensurability of dialogue across cultures. Most participants spoke on lesser known American writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Carl Van Vechten, Irvin Morris, Louise Erdrich, Cynthia Ozick, Luis Valdez, Jessica Hagedorn, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Irena Klepfisz, Naomi Shihab Ny, Diana Abu-Jaber, Jhumpa Lahiri, Julia Alvarez, Rudolfo Anaya, Jade Snow Wong, Monica Ito Sone, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Edwidge Danticat while only a few on mainstream writers like Walt Whitman, William Faulkner and T.S. Eliot. Some even spoke on American and Indian versions of Shakespeare, Dalit women and Oriya Diaspora in the United States. These concerns of scholars
highlighted a shift in American scholarship from mainstream writers to minority and lesser-known writers. Also there was a greater preoccupation with nationalism and regionalism as demonstrated by the MELOW International Conference on the 7th January 2006 under the title “Dialog Across Cultures: India and the World.” Many scholars employed methods used in cultural materialism, Marxism, lesbian and postcolonial theories to draw conclusions.

In recent years there seems to be a heightened awareness to critical theories, which have allowed scholars of American Studies in India to transgress boundaries that exist between traditional disciplines such as literature, history, anthropology and philosophy. As methodologies proliferate new themes acquire importance amongst non-American scholars working in the areas of American Studies. It is now possible to read scholarly essays on themes such as 'memory lost in transition,' 'looking for a homeland abroad,' diasporic intimacy, enclosures and erasures, 'a woman must write herself,' 'your body must be heard' (apropos Kamala Das), political interference, history and identity politics, racial discrimination, hybridized transnational/national identities, multiculturalism and borders of categories.

This has also affected the teaching of English in Indian universities as well. The smug complacency and near sleepy ambience of departments of English in the 1970s and 1980s that were teaching canonical British texts, have given way to a new enthusiasm at restructuring undergraduate and postgraduate syllabi in English. This restructuring involves introduction of new Indian writing in English, reclaimed American and British literatures and their new critical practices, Continental and other literatures such as Australian and African. But as with most restructuring, this too is not free from teething problems. Literary texts, critical material on them and even faculty willing to teach the texts are hard to find. Many professors complain about subaltern politics/Marxist agenda/feminist lobby legitimating one methodology or the other. Apart from these there are lobbies of Americanists, Germanists, Francophiles, ABVP-backed revisionists, Nehruvian socialists and campaigners for Stephanian novelists who want to privilege their own favorite texts.
Remnants of the reformed school of New Criticism constantly debunk the new reconstitution in academic syllabi and the new critical procedures in literary methodology, discouraging students from accepting a new course. Indian publishers too find the reconstruction a little bit confusing. Scholars are somewhat diffident or shy to write about new critical theories or procedures. These are some of the problems experienced on campuses of Delhi, Hyderabad and Chandigarh universities. Provincial and state universities in India are so intellectually dispossessed and their libraries economically starved that they are incapable of handling these issues at all.

Methodologies impacting upon the disciplines of American Studies are also affecting the adaptation of American writing in regional languages and the writing of fiction per se. Translators and novelists and scholars in American Studies in India are now recognizing the importance of what Foucault calls the "discontinuities" of history and its multiple time spans. It is possible to see the emergence of what Linda Hutcheon calls the study of "historiographic metafiction" foregrounding the intricate relationship between history and a socio-political context in India. The fictional quality of history or the palimpsest of history has been made popular by writers like Salman Rushdie (Midnight's Children, Shame and The Satanic Verses), Carlos Fuentes (Terra Nostra), Milorad Pivic (Dictionary of the Khazars) and Gabriel Garcia Marquez (A Hundred Years of Solitude and Milan Kundera (L'Insoutenable legerette de l'etre and L'Immortalite). In an essay, "Palimpsest History" Christine Brooke-Rose distinguishes between different varieties of palimpsest histories made possible in the 1980s by the above-mentioned writers and by writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, Umberto Eco and others. And in recent years there has been a significant rise in the study of the above-mentioned writers using emergent methodologies in deconstruction, subaltern, post-colonialism and feminism.

**Changing Trends in American Studies**

A steady decline of Cold War ideologies and a growing dominance of multiculturalism and pluralism in the United States have brought down ideological barriers to communication between American and international scholars. A greater emphasis on ethnicity and diversity in
American universities is easily associated with a subaltern approach to history in Asia and Africa that valorizes non-elitist or popular culture. Let me quickly add that not everybody in Asia or Africa is a subaltern, just as not everyone in America is a multiculturalist. Nonetheless it is hard to ignore the new emergent perspectives. American Studies in an era of globalization will get a new lease on life and attract a wide cross-section of scholars and intelligent laymen in American history, culture and foreign policy. xliv

Post-World War II globalization has given a new direction to international economy. Sir Anthony Giddens at the Reith Lectures in New Delhi insisted that contemporary globalization is characterized by a greater independence of societies and not just economic institutions and economies.¹ He argued that economic influence during the Internet and WTO era was more complex and the flow of capital and information faster than in the world economy up to World War II. Since American companies and entrepreneurs are the key players in the world of information technology, globalization has been dubbed in some quarters as Americanization. Studies about the social and cultural consequences of information technologies on postmodern and diasporic communities are already quite advanced in the United States. In the next decade, interest in these areas outside the U.S. would most likely be a part of American Studies. li

Recent international exchange programs between U.S. and foreign universities in Europe and Asia will increase in coming decades taking American Studies beyond the confines of its national boundary. Many exchange programs make it mandatory for undergraduate students to spend a semester or a year at a U.S. university and complete its American Studies program. The United Kingdom has over ten programs in American Studies and most programs require students to complete one year at the University of North Carolina, University of Minnesota or the University of California at Santa Cruz. Rutgers University and Brown University have exchange programs with St. Stephen’s College, India. The University of Wyoming has international exchange programs with Denmark, United Kingdom (Nottingham) and Utrecht. Keio University at Shonan-Fujisawa Campus (Tokyo) has language and American literature summer programs with Stanford.
University and College of William and Mary. These student and academic exchange programs not only provide students and faculty from foreign universities to study in the U.S. but also give American students and faculty a chance to understand their own country from a foreign perspective. The globalization of American Studies will involve a new partnership between American and non-American scholars enriching the very nature and scope of American Studies. Many universities are now evolving their own programs in American Studies. In September 2000, St. Stephen’s College Delhi started the American Studies Program (ASP) with the active support from United States Information Service (USIS) and the U.S. Embassy. The Program has enrolled twenty-five students who will study American History, Culture, Literature and Political Science from the faculty of St. Stephen’s College who will be doubling up as teachers in their own respective departments. Periodic visits from U.S. Americanists will give both direction and focus to the ASP.

Popular perceptions and cultural caveats about the U.S. that seemed immutable during the Cold War era have surprisingly altered today. The United States and countries such as China, Japan, Korea and India have understood the need to cooperate with each other in the area of e-commerce, information technology, nuclear non-proliferation, ecology and intellectual property rights. Since individual enterprise has begun to compete with corporate and state-controlled enterprises, individual initiative has acquired a new significance. This is true of American Studies as well. For instance, the establishment of ASA in Japan and MELUS in India has been primarily the result of individual initiative. Similarly, the return of ASRC, Hyderabad from the brink of extinction has been due to the sustained efforts of its director. It is possible to say that individuals with an understanding of American Studies can prove instrumental in raising local funds and encouraging American Studies in the twenty-first century outside the United States.

American Studies need to develop the vocabulary to analyze the taxonomy of ‘war on terror’ just as it once took cognizance of ‘culture wars.’ It must be able to resolve the competing claims of contradictory metaphors on the American cultural landscape—metaphors such as ‘empire’ and consensual mind or melting pot and homeland security. Though some centrist and
revisionist studies of the empire distinguish between American exceptionalism of the twentieth century and European imperialism of the nineteenth century, they nonetheless see the phenomenon of globalization as a decentered form of American empire. Earlier attempts to understand America as an empire was to deny its geographical expansion by claiming a temporal identity in the phrase the American Century. Today there is an attempt to mask the notions of the empire in the Christian rhetoric of democracy which David Harvey calls abstract universalism. The attempt to understand the term ‘empire’ has now spawned a new area of inquiry called ‘empire studies’, which on the surface tires to redefine American studies but in reality wants to institutionalize the term empire. Now within the discipline of American Studies scholars feel a sense of urgency to expose the “racism of empire” and unmask the methods by which the Arabs and Islam are “racialized” within the U.S. and outside in detention center such as Guantanamo, Abu Gharib detention centers. If American and non-American scholars can go beyond the centrality of the nation and encompass broader transnational issues of human rights, international law and universal ethics, then American Studies and American literary culture can both be rejuvenated.

NOTES

i Many of the ideas in this paper were first presented five years ago at American Studies Association Conference 2000 at Detroit from October 12-15, 2000 under the title “American Studies in the World: An Indian Experience.” Since then many changes have taken place both in the United States and the global reality. This paper has been updated to include ideas relating to the rise of the American Empire and a unilateralist American foreign policy and the effect of both on the discipline of American Studies. This paper was then published in a somewhat modified form in the Journal of General Studies, No. 4, Volume 28, February, 2006, pp.25-48.

ii The sense of bewilderment and crisis is felt both by the American people and peoples in many parts of the world. Today the United States occupies not only Afghanistan and Iraq but threatens other nation states who are either different politically, or who do not endorse its values and priorities. Within the US the government has become more authoritarian curtailing civil liberties, human rights and the freedom of many immigrant communities. The U.S. public has become increasingly disillusioned with the role of America as the policeman of the world and this might lead American foreign policy towards greater isolationism in world affairs. See Francis Fukuyama, “Leaving Iraq and Bush regime.” The Daily Yomiuri, December 11, 2005, p. 4. Fukuyama writes: “A recent poll by the Pew Center for the People and the Press shows that a slightly larger number of Americans now think that the United States should mind its own business than in 1976, right after the Vietnam War. This is particularly true of Bush’s red state conservative base. It is not just the Bush doctrine that cannot be sustained in the light of this reaction to the war; even a return to moderately international foreign policy that seeks more multilateral forms of engagement for the United States will be difficult.”


iv Seymour Martin Lipset, American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword, (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997). Lipset argues that the U.S., founded on a creed set forth in the Declaration of Independence, has always been a country organized around an ideology. And this ideology can be described in just five words, "liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire" (p. 31). Countries see their national identity either as "rooted in history" or "defined by ideology." European national identities are by and large rooted in history (community) while the American national identity arises in "ideological commitment." Lipset reasons that,
"Being an American, however, is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American" (p. 31).

Theories dealing with consensual and adversarial relations within the United States abound. Samuel Huntington, Scavan Bercovitch, Richard Hofstader, Seymour Martin Lipset and Gunnar Myrdal have analyzed adversarial relations in American society, social sciences and history at great length. These adversarial relations become highly contested and invariably acquire intense moral overtones. However with the rest of the world, except parts of Europe, Australia and New Zealand, the U.S. finds itself in adversarial relations.

The Bush Doctrine advocates a benevolent hegemony of the United States in world affairs by spreading democracy and preempting or crushing terrorism or tyrannical regimes. Since Francis Fukuyama, "Leaving Iraq and the Bush regime." The Daily Yomiuri, December 11, 2005, p. 4. Fukuyama’s comments: “What will be left of the Bush legacy in the wake of an exit from Iraq? The so-called ‘Bush Doctrine’ was based on the idea that the United States would use its predominant power to exert a kind of ‘benevolent hegemony’ over the world, acting preemptively to stop terrorist threats and building democratic institutions to guarantee the peace once tyrannical regimes were defeated. The Bush administration could believe this was possible for a brief moment after Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington, when the U.S. public was ready to support costly foreign interventions to protect itself. But the president launched an optional war in Iraq, and chose to govern not on the basis of a broad coalition, but by mobilizing his conservative political base. He has, as a result, no reservoir of good will left now that his policies appear to be failing. There is a real danger that the United States will turn toward greater isolationism in the wake of a withdrawal from Iraq.”

The recent immigrant riots in France are an ample testimony to the fact that the African and Arab immigrants have faced decades of neglect and ill treatment. Now these ‘dregs of society,’ to use Interior Minister Nikolas Sarkozy’s phrase, are expressing their anger and frustration by burning cars, schools and hospitals.

Times of India October 6, 2001, "Angry India 'waives' sanctions waiver,” by Chidanand Rajghatta. Upset by shift in American policy in South Asia after the September 11 terrorist attack India asked America to de-link it from Pakistan in lifting of sanctions being considered by the U.S. Congress. The Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha was so piqued by the U.S. attitude of gratuitously clubbing Pakistan with India under democracy sanctions that he rebuffed Senator Joseph Biden by canceling a meeting on 20 minutes notice and then accepting an interview on CNN. Biden, heading the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a avowed critic of Pakistan's nuclear proliferation did a volte face and proposed a long term alliance with Pakistan pushing for a one billion dollar recovery package for Central Asia. India believes that such a package will be finally used to strengthen a weakened Pakistan in the hope that it will not support terrorism against the U.S. Rep. Tom De Lay was critical of American participation in the U. N. Sen. Phil Gramm opposed U.S. support to a Middle Eastern ally and insurance giant AIG was blocking China's membership to the WTO.

Fouad Ajami, "The Sentry's Solitude," Foreign Affairs, November/December 2001. Ajami explains thus: “So in thwarted, resentful societies there was satisfaction on September 11 that the American bull run and the triumphalism that had awed the world had been battered, that there was soot and ruin in New York's streets. We know better now. Pax Americana is there to stay in the oil lands and in Israel-Palestinian matters. No large-scale retreat from those zones of American primacy can be contemplated. American hegemony is sure to hold--and so, too, the resistance to it, the uneasy mix in those lands of the need for the foreigner's order, and the urge to lash out against it, to use it and rail against it all the same” (p. 16).


Jürgen Habermas, The Postnational Constellation (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2001), pages xviii and 57. Habermas writes, “The idea that the regulatory power of politics has to grow to catch up with globalized markets, in any event, refers to the complex relationships between the coordinative capacities of political regimes, on the one hand, and on the other a new mode of integration: cosmopolitan solidarity” (p. 57).


James Clifford, “Traveling Cultures,” Cultural Studies. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg et. al. (New York: Routledge,
Most Marxist economists, such as Prabhat Patnaik tend to agree that we need to exercise caution in going ahead with the decade-old economic policy of liberalization given the unique history of framing economic policies and the complex social and class structure in India. He argues that economic policy was framed in the 1930’s during a period of economic nationalism, which though unsustainable now cannot be jettisoned in favor of ‘marketist’ response backed by capitalist forces and agencies such as the Fund and the World Bank. He writes, “Other developing countries like India adopted such strategy, properly speaking, only after independence when the consolidation of the international economy had not progressed far and when the process of internationalization of capital in our sense was still in its infancy.” He believes that though globalization may find supporters within the country in capitalists and affluent middle class, by and large the process, will be “detrimental to the working class, not only transitionally but over a protracted period.” He further elaborates that a “neo-mercantilist strategy is not easily replicated nor as workable in the context of world recession, nor necessarily desirable in the context of India’s extant democratic structures. Is it possible then for an economy like India to evolve a response of its own?” [Prabhat Patnaik, “International Capital and National Economic Policy: A Critique of India’s Economic Reforms,” Economic & Political Weekly, 29, number 12, (19 March 1994), pp. 686-8].

are realized in specific situations. Since he does not possess a composite universal nature it becomes difficult to appeal to a collective ethical core in moments of crisis. We constantly see scapegoats in others and, symbolically or literally, sacrifice them in the hope of eventually exorcising our own phobias, guilt-ridden fantasies and vices. Kenneth Burke, who sees a process of “vicarious atonement” at work here, has analyzed this process of exteriorization and symbolic renewal at length. Burke believes that the scapegoat becomes a “chosen vessel” that is employed by others to “cleanse themselves” by heaping the “burden of their iniquities” on it. The violent intensity with which the ritual of displacement is conducted decides the “curative” power of the scapegoat. The victim and the residual violence become not only instrumental in restoring individual and social healing but fusing with each other in a symbiosis. In other words we first project our guilt, mortification and inadequacy on a person then we malign and ostracize him. In this manner we regain health and well-being. This complex process of identity formation works in the following manner: first to malign difference, then to elevate it to the level of a religious sacrifice, and then feel empowered. Can we escape this process of conceptualization? Is there a way out? Burke suggests that identity may be constructed not in terms of solidarity but in terms of a “fundamental kinship with the enemy,” someone against whom we define ourselves. Self and other can stand facing each other like prismatic mirrors refracting unseen aspects of each other. Even while we are constructing a sense of difference we are inextricably intertwined, sharing somewhat similar histories, undergoing not altogether divergent fates. Burke goes further to suggest that aspects of the self may be seen as aspects of the other and vice versa. This implies in Derrida’s logic to understand and appreciate the ways in which the “other” constructs itself as different aspects of the ego or “I.” Also see Susan Gillman, The New, Newest Thing: Have American Studies Gone Imperial?” American Literary History, Vol. 17, No.1, 2005, pp. 196-7.


xxii See Susan Gillman, The New, Newest Thing: Have American Studies Gone Imperial?” American Literary History, ibid. p. 198. Gillman writes, “The point is that field called empire studies, drawing on the same history of additions and revisions to other, allied disciplines, is now in the process of institutionalization.”


xxiv See Neil Smith, American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Smith argues, Whereas the geographical language of empires suggest a malleable politics—empires rise and fall and are open to challenge—the ‘American Century’ suggests an inevitable destiny...How does one challenge a century? US historical dominance was presented as the natural result of historical progress...It followed as surely as one century after another. Insofar as it was beyond geography, the American Century was beyond empire and beyond reproof.” (p. 20).

xxv David Harvey, New Imperialism, (London: OUP, 2003), pp.42-49)

xxvi Harvey, New Imperialism, ibid, p. 26.

xxvii Harvey, New Imperialism, ibid, pp. 47-50.


xxxii Amy Kaplan, Violent Beginnings,” ibid., pgs. 5 and 12-16.


xxxiv Amy Kaplan, Violent Beginnings,” ibid., p. 5.

xxxvii Mark Twain, “To the Person Sitting in Darkness.” 1910. In Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War, ed. Jim Zwick, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992). Twain writes that, “There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive’s new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kill him to get his land” (pp. 33-34).


xli Greenblatt, 59.


xliii Refer to M.G. Ramanan’s Inaugural Presidential Address at the Melus India Conference, Hyderabad, January 5, 2006.


xlvii Some of the future research subjects related with American Studies may well include some of the “suppressed” forms of knowledge that M. Foucault has talked about.


2 The impact of globalization and information technology on American Studies could allow research scholars to access data on environment, social welfare and labor legislation both from rich and poor nations. This could develop a more balanced approach to environmental norms and blame for environmental pollution. However free access to information could lead to plagiarism more difficult to identify as evidenced through recent newspaper reports on American universities. See “U.S. colleges track down ‘copy-and-paste-cheats” The Japan Times, May 15, 2001 page 9.

3 Amy Kaplan, “Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003,” in American Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 1 (March 2004) Kaplan writes: “A nation of immigrants, a melting pot, the western frontier, manifest destiny, a classless society— all involve metaphors of spatial mobility rather than the spatial fixedness and rootedness tat homeland implies…. How many U.S. citizens see themselves as members of a diasporic community with a homeland in Ireland, Africa, Israel, or Palestine—a place to which they feel spiritual or political affiliation and belonging, whether literally a place of birth or not? Does the idea of America as the homeland make such dual identifications suspect and threatening, something akin to terrorism? Are you either a member of the homeland or with h terrorists, to paraphrase Bush? And what of the terrible irony of the United States as a homeland to Native Americans?” (pp. 8-9). The neo-conservative belief of democratizing the world has been attacked from within the western world by the discipline of anthropology. Clifford Geertz believes that man does not possess universal nature but universal potential that are realized in specific situations. Since he does not possess a composite universal nature it becomes difficult to appeal to a collective ethical core in moments of crisis. We constantly see scapegoats in others and, symbolically or literally, sacrifice them in the hope of eventually exorcising our own phobias, guilt-ridden fantasies and vices. Kenneth Burke, who sees a process of “vicarious atonement” at
work here, has analyzed this process of exteriorization and symbolic renewal at length. Burke believes that the scapegoat becomes a “chosen vessel” that is employed by others to “cleanse themselves” by heaping the “burden of their iniquities” on it. The violent intensity with which the ritual of displacement is conducted decides the “curative” power of the scapegoat. The victim and the residual violence become not only instrumental in restoring individual and social healing but fusing with each other in a symbiosis. In other words we first project our guilt, mortification and inadequacy on a person then we malign and ostracize him. In this manner we regain health and well-being. This complex process of identity formation works in the following manner: first to malign difference, then to elevate it to the level of a religious sacrifice, and then feel empowered. Can we escape this process of conceptualization? Is there a way out? Burke suggests that identity may be constructed not in terms of solidarity but in terms of a “fundamental kinship with the enemy,” someone against whom we define ourselves. Self and other can stand facing each other like prismatic mirrors refracting unseen aspects of each other. Even while we are constructing a sense of difference we are inextricably intertwined, sharing somewhat similar histories, undergoing not altogether divergent fates. Burke goes further to suggest that aspects of the self may be seen as aspects of the other and vice versa. This implies in Derrida’s logic to understand and appreciate the ways in which the “other” constructs itself as different aspects of the ego or “I.” Also see Susan Gillman, The New, Newest Thing: Have American Studies Gone Imperial?” American Literary History, Vol. 17, No.1, 2005, pp. 196-7.


iv See Neil Smith, American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization (Berkley: University of California Pres, 2003). Smith argues, Whereas the geographical language of empires suggest a malleable politics—empires rise and fall and are open to challenge—the ‘American Century’ suggests an inevitable destiny…How does one challenge a century? US historical dominance was presented as the natural result of historical progress…It followed as surely as one century after another. Insofar as it was beyond geography, the American Century was beyond empire and beyond reproof.” (p. 20).


lvii Amy Kaplan, Violent Beginnings,” ibid., pgs. 5 and 12-16.