

On Anglopolis and the mechanics of partway Americana

An essay, by ptrfs

To give you a short biography:

I grew up in a cul-de-sac in the city in live in for a period that I cannot remember. I then gained consciousness when my parents moved us into the car-ridden suburbs with only a mall and sprawling highways to give us comfort. The two times I was sick for more than a day was when I had COVID and only months later had to go surgery for another ailment, which my mother had to bear additional cost my insurance did not cover.

Since I moved to the suburbs and got cable television, I used to spend each waking day either at private school I was at or at home, watching Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, both owned by American corporate giants. When we started paying for internet at our house, I started to watch American Youtubers like *Unspeakable* and *PrestonPlayz* or other content creators playing on the American Hypixel Network. When my grandmother said (at age 9) I should stop watching "those cartoons all day" I spent time away from the computer watching the American *CNN*. At that time, Wolf Blitzer, Manu Raju and Jake Tapper where the on-screen presenters I can remember. Smerconish was on weekends. I watched the first impeachment proceedings of Donald Trump die on the house floor before I understood linear algebra.

I can name almost all 50 states. I understand what goes on in the NFL and NBA. I felt strange euphoria when Zohran Mamdani won the New York primary and general election, even if I do not live in that city. I can explain, in fine detail, the general situation in American politics, the two-party system, the essence of this second Donald Trump administration and its rancid flavour of populism. I read and understand the mechanics of Amtrak and the (lack of) federal funding it gets, and why it cannot expand. I indulged myself with the waves of videos of the new stations of the Los Angeles D line. I talk with Americans online and most content I see apart from YouTube and twitter is American. I have made myself popular in some circles, and how some of the values that left wing Americans do. I can understand their gripes and issues with the bourgeoisie and the roads and the lack of activity apart from working in the rural heartland of America. I sometimes write about American issues.

Yet, I am not an American. I am an African.

I have been living in the Chitungwiza since I gained consciousness and I intend to move to Harare when I am older. I speak enough Chi Shona to be passable, and intend to learn French to visit North Africa. There is a dwindling amount of people in the United States who are bilingual, much less willing to learn a *third* language. Yet, some of you may have the impression, from these previous paragraphs that I am American. Why is that?

I believe that over the course of innovations in communication technology, the itch of the social ability of humans has expanded in hunger. With the advent of capitalism requiring companies to

go across borders to achieve a larger market and therefore a larger amount of people to buy their product, communication went global. By consequence, this communication of people and product globally would increase and had in essence, by the mid-80s and especially with the late 90s when globalisation was becoming important, to create its own *culture*. The invention and widespread adoption of the internet in the 2000s in developed countries and 2010s in developing countries had reinforced and solidified this mystic culture that was across the English-speaking internet. We now come this point that there is an English-speaking transnational monoculture that acts as a complementary culture to the local one. For the sake of brevity in the article, I will call this culture the *Anglopolis*.

The first and most important question to answer is why this culture is centred on the United States. A reason, though as important as the others, is that the United States is a whole subcontinent of a country. One would find only a handful of countries that has more than two *major* time zones, and the United States is one of those countries. Furthermore, unlike countries like Canada and Australia, most of the land that is arable is still untapped. Hell, most of the United States looks like a cornfield. This capacity allows for such a large amount of people who speak in English to be on the internet that it makes more than half of the first-language English-speaking peoples on the internet. Naturally, this would allow for it to be able to dominate the internet, and would have a larger chance of producing Anglopolis exports than any other country. Unlike India and Nigeria, the United States was able to build the infrastructure and have the demand for its first compared to other countries.

This is coupled with the fact that the United States was the first country to offer commercial civilian internet service. The world-wide-web existed and built by the Swiss at CERN, but the people who first used the internet en masse were the Americans. Without impediment, the country managed to cement their foothold on what the make-up of anglopolic culture. They were able to set the definitions of this nascent monoculture; they built the boundaries of acceptable action and business *around themselves*. This allowed for them to dictate and lead the negotiation on what is deemed acceptable in the actions of the corporations of the politician. One of the political exports of the Anglopolis is the formula of populism that was used in the MAGA campaign in 2016, and was exported and repurposed in countries like Poland and Italy to propel the existing far-right parties.

This has created a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the United States is simultaneously one of the largest countries by population and the most innovative, it would have very deep capital institutions. NVIDIA, an American company, is worth more than the collective GDP of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Eswatini and Lesotho, the main Southern African countries in the Anglopolis. If the United States controls the Anglopolis, then companies would have lower risk in investing in the United States tools of culture expansion. Putting money into Hollywood is less risky than putting it in Nollywood. This creates the capital and the power for the United States to control the Anglopolis, as its media, content and infrastructure would be simultaneously the biggest and best available across the world. The availability and abundance of such resources would make it easier for companies like banks and venture capital firms to invest in companies in the United States, along with the availability of large capital institutions and the free trade area America presents creates a perpetuating cycle of American-born innovation and dominance in the Anglopolis.

The only other major nations that influence the Anglopolis is, paradoxically, Japan, but that is mainly due to their capitalist institutions being saturated in their home cultures. Japan, along with other parts of Asia that did not have to experience prolonged colonialism and occupation, were able to make their home culture and internet culture roughly the same. This allowed for Japanese corporations and media to develop independently and quickly saturate their home markets while developing their institutions to be able to compete with the United States unencumbered. Japanese corporations, still required to satisfy capitalism's lust for growth, would enter other markets and cultures, with the Anglopolis, apart from the Spanish and French-speaking internet, being the easiest to enter. With the proliferation of media like Anime which were already popular in their home cultures, these companies were able to compete with the United States on resources and capital runway and would cement their place in the Anglopolis, even if they were part of fundamentally different markets and cultures.

Nigeria and India present a fascinating paradox, therefore; if they are natively part of the Anglopolis, and have the capital institutions and the demand to create the media and infrastructure to compete, why have they not? One of the reasons for this could be that Nigeria and India were still developing their media cultures and institutions while the United States had existing foreign media that would have helped create a positive perception of the country. As I will explain later in this essay, America's media is not thought about in the context of the nation as a whole, but as the output of singular entities and corporations. American movies, television, books and music were a major export before the internet. Media from the United States became a baseline without any prejudice of which upon other media would be judged. India and Nigeria, with their colonial past and regressive dictatorship in the case of Nigeria, were not able to compete with the United States at this time. When these countries came onto the internet en masse, even with their sheer amount of people, members of the Anglopolis outside of these two nations, due to the nature of the aversion to the unfamiliar, were not treated with the same neutrality the United States was. American media was already trusted even before the internet, so even amateur or shoddy media and content from the states was approached with a more open mind than other contemporary nations.

The Anglopolis has metastasised in different ways. The most obvious and most pervasive is the media and pop culture. Of the top of my head, asked to name 10 celebrities, there is a chance that 7 of 10 of them are foreign, and a further 5 of 10 are American, and the other two would also have ties to the States. While means and methods to be rich and famous appear in different ways, it has shown itself in a very material American way across cultures, even in people who claim that they try and espouse local culture in every step they make. For anglopolic culture is very clever in its way of craftiness, it manages to keep the local culture intact but alter how humans feel, interact and show their culture, which aligns with anglopolic norms.

People who may not be living in the states will have that euphoria of seeing a person from their country on a non-American stage. People will support others online or offline for the mere fact that they are from their country, not even for their views or ability. This nationalism is a key part of the Anglopolis, as it helps companies in the culture sell more products, as they can perceive and show humanity in their corporate inhumanity through nationalism, as emotion sells. Alas, this nationalism is not always shared across all people in the Anglopolis, and that is most shown with Americans themselves. As Americans are more likely to see other Americans online, they are more likely to search for other local culture's activities, and will see the ill will most people at

times have to America's *foreign policy*, which makes them distance themselves from being American.

If one is outside the United States, the inverse occurs. Non-American Anglophones would continuously understand and be a part of this culture that they see all around the Anglopolis, and will, in part, try to *become* American. They do understand that they cannot be a citizen of the United States, but can act online in a way to be in part perceived as American. A part of this identity is trying to act as an alien to America, but not too much that people would perceive them as alien to the Anglopolis. Being perceived as American is to have components of the Anglopolis, as one is allowed to be seen as oblivious to Americanisms in the sphere, but would be villainised if they were alien to the Anglopolis. A Filipino must act in part as Filipino in the Anglopolis, but also must act in other part as American. If the parts of American identity in this person are replaced with Filipino, such like not being adept at the English language, they could not be *perceived* as Anglophone, even if they are. At the same time, if they could not bring out their Filipino eccentricities as well, they are seen as pretending to be American and may not be considered Anglophone as well.

This would give the United States immense soft power, but they are unable to use it. If the United States government was to use this soft power, it would prove admission of sameness and break the pillar of low capital investment risk. In actuality, the hostile foreign policy the federal government of the USA exhibits benefits the sustenance of the Anglopolis. This makes an American one of the few people that are not given opinion based on the actions of their state. When the United States continued the war on terror, it gave Americans the leeway to dissociate from their government ("*I didn't for them*"), which provides an avenue to control the Anglopolis. People are more likely to indulge in American media neutrally than British media because they less of the American state's aspect to that media, and more the corporation or even the people in said media. The British do not have that benefit, as their nation is inextricably tied to their people and therefore their media. If the United States government was to use its soft power, it would tie the government to the media produced in the country, which would reduce the US influence in the Anglopolis.

The idea of Americans side-stepping the shade of the state that is painted by other states on their peoples is determined by the linguistic idea of markedness. Let us say that you watch a timelapse of boxes filling in a white plane. If, for a while, that plane was filled with blue cubes that continuously increased and was always the majority, people would stop thinking about the fact that those boxes are blue as a unique indicator. When a purple cube appears, the blue cubes remain unremarked, while the purple cube's colour becomes the first thing anyone notices about it. The blue cube has become the default condition and is not mentioned, but when a different cube appears that is the most important characteristic. Because of the scale, the first-mover infrastructure, and the media architecture already described, "American" stops functioning, inside this specific culture, as a nationality in the way "Filipino" or "Zimbabwean" or even "British" function as nationalities. A Filipino creator online is always, to some degree, being watched as a Filipino; an American creator is, by default, simply being watched. This is why an American can say "I didn't vote for them" and have it land as a remark about an individual, while a British person saying the equivalent sentence about their own government sounds like someone arguing their way out of what they structurally are.

Britain never reached the critical mass inside the Anglopolis that the United States did, so "British" never stopped being a marked, particular flavour of the culture the way "American" became its default surface. The asymmetry, then, is not that Americans feel less patriotic or less implicated than the British; it is that "American" was never fully operating as a nationality within this culture to begin with — it was operating as the null hypothesis, the coordinate grid everyone else's nationality gets plotted against. And a null hypothesis cannot be held responsible for a government's foreign policy in the way a marked nationality can, because responsibility requires first being visible as a discrete, bounded thing, and the entire trick of dominance at this scale is to stop being visible as a discrete, bounded thing at all. This is also why the US federal government cannot cash in its own soft power without destroying it: the moment "American" is deployed as a deliberate state project rather than experienced as ambient background, it becomes marked again, a specific actor with a specific agenda, and loses exactly the unmarked, invisible status that made it powerful.

In a pure world, the Anglopolis should have eroded all local country cultures by now. In an age where the Anglopolis practically competes with local culture, something would need to give. However, the Anglopolis survives due to the goal it serves. The culture is one of the few unique things that all corporations regardless of size and scope and competition support, as it creates one varied market for trade. Lloyds of London does not need to worry about how ABSA operates, speaks, and values as important, as they are all part of the Anglopolis, and can trade with each other. It is hard to think of another era of world society where such a large group of people were able to converse and trade freely with each other which results in no subjugation through direct forced political coercion. This is because, unlike other systems of global hegemony, it does not serve hierarchy but instead serves corporation. There may be scarce a point where the company needs to interface with anglopolic politics as it will always have room to grow. In this case, it will not need to support political actions like eroding culture as it would inadvertently destroy the anglopolic essence and culture.

The other reason why it cannot erode local culture is due to physical limitations. Online, a Bangladeshi, South African and Irish person are the same. When factoring in passports, transport cost and country perception, they become entirely different people. If no borders existed between Anglophone nations or at least were extremely easy to move between nations, for tourism and otherwise, the Anglopolis would cease to be a culture and become a nation. That shared land and ease of movement would allow for cultures to amalgamate into one big Anglophone nation. However, we do not live in this society, and this means that Anglophone culture cannot truly seep in to local culture and live, as it can only live online. Thus explains the reason why the Anglopolis is dominant online; the lack of borders or digital firewalls between nations in the sphere has created an essence that the Anglopolis is the only culture that truly exists, as it constantly amalgamates other cultures for profit.

The Anglopolis has been used as a foundational part of the globalisation that we have in current society. The inundation of American media, political theory and corporations has created an allure for everyone regardless of place, class and situation to see associating with the United States as the peak of personal attainment if they live outside the country. Most celebrities that make it big outside the states will eventually be seen in the United States or supporting

something from the states. While the government cannot benefit from its influence, the people and corporations certainly do. Companies from the USA easily and frequently outsource parts of production, even if it low-paying or even having a negative impact on the people of the host country, because the flag appended to their name and the seal of approval from the American embassy feels like an additional sign of verification. Other companies do not have the same effect, unless if the country they were coming from had large historical influence over it.

Some may have the reflex reaction to try and place cultural sovereignty or even try and remove their countries from interacting with the Anglopolis, but this is short-sighted. Most of these nationalist tendencies, paradoxically, were exported from the mannerisms from the MAGA Republican party, with its 'America First' mantra. As we have seen with the still-present American influence present in the feeds and boards inside the great firewall of China, the goal of the Anglopolis is not to create some sort of American Empire, but to ease friction of global capitalism across the world. By having the Anglopolis, it creates societies and people that are able to respond to the same cultural stimuli, such like patriotism or love or, recently, collectivism. As all companies seek to expand, the Anglopolis has created this common market for all companies to trade and advertise to. Trans-national corporations usually just change the language of an ad when pushing the advertising campaign to other countries. The language may change, but the people, conditioned by the Anglopolis, respond to the same stimuli.

Since no post-capitalist international order has yet displaced the world market as the basic organizing structure of exchange, all countries still need the Anglopolis, or their dominant-language equivalent. We live in an era where the place the company has been established bears no effect on its market or the people it employs, with the advent of commercial aggregators like Amazon and the proliferation of remote working. A company in China can export to Canada as if it were Canadian. While borders and country perception still exists, companies that are able to export and import from other countries on the internet are able to grow and help their own local economies through foreign sales and investment, helping the host country through taxes and employment. Apart from material effects like employment and capital, the Anglopolis creates a common nature all of us can relate to. For millennia, people would treat each other differently or even have prejudice against each other because they did not know about them. This common media and culture to communicate with has allowed us to break down these barriers, creating a more understanding and compassionate world. People pour their hearts out for another person in a country they will never know or go to because through the Anglopolis, they have shown that they share a common humanity with each other.

Like any culture, the Anglopolis has its casualties, and the clearest one is what happens to the people who cannot hold the position it demands of them. To be a non-American inside the Anglopolis is to live inside a permanent, low-grade contradiction: perform enough of the local to remain legible as something other than American, perform enough of the American to remain legible inside the culture at all, and never let either performance resolve into the other. Most people carry this without noticing, the way one carries any background condition of the water they swim in. But for some, the contradiction becomes unbearable rather than ambient — the demand to be simultaneously alien and fluent, particular and unmarked, never quite curdles into a stable identity, and it leaves a person feeling like a petri dish being cultured by forces they cannot name rather than a person with a self. When the tension of holding two incompatible positions at once becomes too much to sustain, the easiest resolution is not synthesis but

collapse: a retreat into whichever half of the contradiction promises to feel whole again, seized upon with the intensity of someone finally putting down a weight.

This is where the pipeline into radicalisation actually starts, more often than people admit. It rarely begins with the material conditions of exploitation — the stagnant wage, the shuttered factory, the arable land now owned by an offshore fund — because those conditions alone do not tell a person who they are. It begins instead with the psychic exhaustion of never being allowed to fully belong to either half of a life split between the local and the imported, and the ideological extreme offers something the Anglopolis structurally cannot: a single, unambiguous identity, marked and bounded and finally at rest, purchased at the cost of everything that made the contradiction bearable in the first place. The tragedy is that the Anglopolis will absorb this collapse just as readily as it absorbed the contradiction that produced it, repackaging even radicalisation into content, into a persona, into something that can still be watched. The only real exit from this loop is not a more successful performance of either identity but a return to the register the Anglopolis cannot simulate at all — people who know you outside the frame, a place that holds you whether or not you are legible to an algorithm, a self that does not have to resolve its contradictions to be loved. Touching grass, in the end, is not an escape from the Anglopolis so much as it is the one act it cannot fully absorb into itself.