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**Cultural Beliefs in the Middle East and the US: Is there any  
Exchange? Case Study: Dubai**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

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## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beautiful little family, my loving mother, my dear father, and my three amazing siblings.

To my two best friends, *Merabti Fayrouz* and *Bouafia Ahmed Abd El Hakim*, who made those five years of university feel so special,

To all my teachers, from primary school to this last year of university, without you, I would not be in this position,

To all my friends and classmates,

And finally to myself.

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the cultural exchange between the Middle East and the United States of America. Initially it explores each region closely; their locations, history, and societies then it describes the main features of each culture: religions, languages, values, cuisines, attires, holidays and arts. Moreover, in order to link the two cultural regions, this research describes three important diplomatic ties between the US and the Middle East: the political, economic, and cultural relationships. Soft Power is then introduced into the topic. This latter is an essential part of the research, as it explains the American influential strategies used in the Middle East, these include: the American Cultural Products, Social Media, Exchange and Immigration Programs, the American Academic Institutions Abroad, and the American political values. Each strategy is provided with a proof from the Middle Eastern scene. The research then tackles the Middle Eastern' side of the cultural exchange, through describing the effect of the Arab Muslim immigrants on the melting pot culture of the US. The research then narrows its focus on the city of Dubai, providing a deeper study on the American influence in the region. Dubai is first located, and its history and society are briefly described. Furthermore, an analysis about the Westernized culture of the city decides the significant points of the American influence in the region, including the influence on the architecture, and the influence on the society's: dress, values, language, and traditions.

### المخلص

يتمحور هذا البحث حول التبادل الثقافي بين المشرق العربي و الولايات المتحدة الامريكية. في بداية الموضوع يتناول البحث كل منطقة عن كئب: موقعها ,تاريخها و مجتمعاتها. ثم يصف بالتدقيق السمات الرئيسية لكل من الثقافتين: الأديان ,اللغات ,القيم ,المطابخ ,الملابس ,الاعياء ,والفنون. علاوة على ذلك ، من أجل ربط المنطقتين الثقافيتين ، يصف هذا البحث ثلاث روابط دبلوماسية مهمة بين الولايات المتحدة والشرق الأوسط: العلاقات السياسية والاقتصادية والثقافية. ثم يتم إدخال القوة الناعمة في الموضوع. تعد هذه الأخيرة جزءاً أساسياً من البحث ، حيث تشرح الاستراتيجيات الأمريكية المؤثرة المستخدمة في الشرق الأوسط ، والتي تشمل: المنتجات الثقافية الأمريكية ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، برامج التبادل والهجرة ، المؤسسات الأكاديمية الأمريكية في الخارج ، والقيم السياسية الأمريكية. يتم تزويد كل استراتيجية بدليل من موقع الشرق الأوسط. بعد ذلك يتناول البحث جانب الشرق الأوسط في التبادل الثقافي ، من خلال وصف تأثير المهاجرين العرب المسلمين على ثقافات الولايات المتحدة. ثم يتم التركيز على مدينة دبي بحيث يقدم البحث دراسة أعمق عن النفوذ الأمريكي في المنطقة. يتم وصف موقع, تاريخ, ومجتمع المنطقة بإيجاز. ثم يحدد تحليل النقاط المهمة للتأثير الأمريكي في المنطقة ، بما في ذلك التأثير على الهندسة المعمارية والتأثير على المجتمع: اللباس ,القيم ,اللغة والتقاليد.

**List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AUA	American Universities Abroad
AUB	American University of Beirut
AUC	American University of Cairo
Dh	Dirham (the currency of the United Arab Emirates)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MENA	The Middle East and North Africa
OPEC	The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
UAE	United Arab Emirates
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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## **Introduction**

The world is a home to hundreds of different cultures. Every nation has its own history and civilization, customs and traditions, beliefs and languages, races and ethnic groups. The Middle East and the United States are two important cultural regions in the world. Each shared little to no cultural beliefs in the past, as both nations came from two different environments, histories and mindsets. However, recent decades have led to the creation of connections between the East and the West, and cultural exchange became possible between the two nations.

Starting by the Middle East; the region is a very rich cultural area, it is often referred to as the Cradle of Civilizations, as it is historically proven to have established some of the most lasting kingdoms, these include; Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and others. The Middle East is an important cultural map, its borders cover Western Asia, North Africa and some parts of Europe. Although divided into several countries, the tens of cultures of the region are significantly equivalent, as the majority of the nation follows the religion of Islam. This latter has influenced everything from the people's language, traditions, customs, and even architecture. Islam have influenced other world cultures as well.

The United States of America, however, is a fairly new civilization. Having been in existence less than 250 years ago, this country has brought plenty of change into the contemporary world. The United States is known for being a melting pot of cultures. People of almost all ethnic groups and races exist there; it includes Europeans, Hispanic, Africans, Asians, Middle Easterns, Natives, and others. People of different origins, mother tongues, religious affiliations, customs, and tradition, all melted together in one pot and created the multicultural country. America is very influential in today's world, and its culture is growing vastly due to its strong political powers.

The US has established political, economic, and cultural ties with the Middle East. These have led the two regions to have some sort of cultural exchange, and also influence one another to some extent. However, there seem to be a stronger side when it comes to the influence. America is known for being a dominating force when it comes to power, both Hard and Soft, and the Middle East has been a point of interest for the United States, where both powers have been utilized consistently.

The cornerstone of this research is to tackle the United States utilization of the Soft Power in the Middle East. In his two books *“Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics”*, and *“Bound to Lead”* Joseph Nye, defines the term he first coined, as the “the second face of power”, talks about its significance in today’s politics and differentiates from the Hard version of power. Upon Nye’s books and research, William Rugh, wrote his article about the US’s use of Soft Power in the Middle East, titled *“American Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in the Arab world”*.

William Rugh presents an important essay which tackles the non-military strategies used by the US in the Middle Eastern region and the degree of their influence. He relies on historical proofs and survey statistics from the Arab scene, to demonstrate these Soft Power techniques which involve the US’s cultural products (films and TV programs), the American political values, and exchange programs. Within the same scope, Gholamreza Mortazavi, Soheila Pooladi, and Hamed Mohagheghnia, in their article *“Foreign Policy, Soft Power of Iran and USA in the Middle East”*, they argue about the importance of Soft Power in the contemporary political sphere, and the purpose from using it in the region. Moreover, they define America’s resources and limitations of Soft Power in the Middle East using historical documentations of events between the two nations. Other papers by Yiğit Anıl Güzelipek' *“The Implementation of USA’s Soft Power via Hollywood: Looking Back to Cold War”* and

Ozan Örmeci's "*Hollywood: a Tool for American 'Soft Power' or a 'Global Brand'?*"

discusses America's strongest Soft Power tool used in the world and the Middle East.

This research paper examines a very important topic about the influencing and the influenced cultures of the US and the Middle East. It aims at providing a comprehensive look about the subject matter by examining the US's Soft Power tools used in the Middle East and the degree of their influence in the Arab world. Moreover, it traces the vice-versa effect of the Middle Eastern culture in the US.

Regarding the significant change of the Middle Eastern cultures, and the appearing of the Western ideologies in the region many questions arise. This work seeks to answer some of the following questions: Is there a mutual Exchange of Cultural Beliefs between the Middle East and the US? Which of these two sides seem to influence the Cultural Beliefs of the other the most? Does the United States really influence the Middle East? Is the Middle East becoming westernized? What is Soft Power? Why does America use it in the Middle East? Is Dubai westernized? Does Dubai represent the Middle East? Can the American cultural beliefs take over Dubai and the Middle East? Can a cultural influence lead to the extinction of other cultures?

The dissertation includes five chapters; the first deals with the US cultural melting pot society, and the major aspects of their cultures. The second chapter deals with the Middle Eastern Society and their Islamic culture. The third chapter tackles the diplomatic ties between the US and the Middle East, the definition of Soft Power, and the American use of cultural products as a Soft Power strategy. Chapter four goes further and discusses other Soft Power strategies used by the US, including; social media, immigration and exchange programs, the American institutions in the Middle East and the American political values. Chapter four also tackles the Middle Eastern influence on America. Chapter five takes Dubai as a case study and shows the degree of the American influence in the Middle Eastern region.

To portray the American influence on the Middle Eastern region, Dubai was taken as a case study to prove to what degree the Western cultures can affect the locals of the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) region. The case study starts with an overview about the UAE, Dubai, and the Emirati society. Then it escalates to talk about the UAE-US relations and the US's influence on the architecture, society and culture of Dubai.

This research is conducted through historical and qualitative methods aiming to analyze both the cultural effects of the Middle East and the United State on one another. This study is based on the historical approach to explore different facts and reasons behind related terms to the subject-matter like the Cultural Exchange, Influence, Soft Power, and Westernization, through a detailed investigation. The qualitative method is used to examine and explore different point of views related to the subject, collect information and data, and seek to answer the research questions.

This Cultural Exchange between the US and the Middle East, is not a new title, researchers have been writing about the developing cultural effects on both sides for decades. Therefore, this research relies on primary as long as on secondary sources to answer the questions and reach the aims of this research. Books, e-books, essays, articles, reports, and case studies are to be used in this work.

## **Chapter One**

### **The US Cultural Melting Pot**

The United States of America is known for being a multicultural country, where people from different origins came together and spread their own distinct cultural backgrounds, religions, languages, traditions and customs. This eventually led to creating the melting pot society, America represents today. More than 325 million citizens of different ethnic groups and races now live in this multicultural society; accepting, inspiring and influencing one another in order to coexist in this first world nation. This discussion covers the American society, and the diversity of its cultures, languages, religions, values, customs, food and arts.

#### **1. The US Cultural Melting Pot**

##### **1.1. An overview on the USA**

The United States of America is the third-largest country globally, preceded only by Russia first and Canada second. It is located in North America, between Canada to its north and Mexico to its south. A federal government of 50 states, 48 conterminous, and two, Alaska (located in the northwestern part of the continent), and Hawaii (located in the mid-pacific ocean). The two states share no contiguous boundaries with the country. The capital of the US is Washington DC; it was formed in 1790 (Hassler and Rollins).





**Fig.1.** The Map of the United States

**Source:** “United States.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed 08 May. 2021

According to Hassler and Rollins, the United States is considered a young country by global standards, having been in existence for less than 250 years; it only reached its present height in the mid-twentieth era. America was the first British territory to gain independence from the kingdom. During its first decades, the nation was primarily concerned with expanding its territory and developing its economy. However, the country emerged as a global power in the 20th century and became a leading force after WWII. Today, the US has the world's most significant economy, due to its highly advanced industry. America also affects the world's economy as both a source and a destination for investment and trade (“United States | History, Map, Flag, & Population”).

## 1.2. Society of the United States

Most American people are immigrants since their ancestors immigrated to the new found land centuries ago (Compass Classroom 0:12). Starting from the 18th century, people would flee Europe to America due to the wars of nationalism. Jews also fled from areas like Russia due to the persecutions. Asians, and primarily Chinese, flocked to the US in the 1850s, escaping the economic chaos in China. Not to forget Africans who came through the Euro-American slave trade, which took part between the 16th and 19th centuries. America was attracting more and more immigrants worldwide for its praised great rule of law and free market (Compass Classroom). As for 1861, the population was already 31 million people, but only 40 years later, the number more than doubled; it reached 75 million and 100 million by 1914 (“US American History”). Post-WWI and WWII have also seen a significant number of immigrants and more to follow throughout the century.

Until today, the United States continues to receive immigrants from all over the globe. Kenneth Prewitt, the US Census Bureau’s former director, declares that “We are on our way to becoming the first country in history that is made up of every part of the world.” (qtd. in Vaughan-Lee). Today, America has the most significant number of immigrants than any other country, with 47 million immigrants as of 2015; this number represents 14.4% of the US current population. According to the US Census Bureau, a new immigrant moves to the United States every 33 seconds (“American Culture: Cultural Melting Pot”).

As for its population and the different ethnic groups, the United States has the third-largest population globally, with over 325 million people of all different races and origins. About 76.3% of the population are white, i.e., people who indicate their race as “white.” These people’s origins are usually from Europe (for example, Germany), the Middle East (for example, Lebanon), or North Africa (for example, Morocco). 18.5% of Americans are Hispanic, people from Spanish-speaking origins like Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central

America, or any other Spanish culture or origin. Blacks make 13.4% of US citizens; they are people of African origins. 5.9% are Asians; they are either Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, or from any other origin from the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. 1.3% are American Indian and Alaska Native descendants of North and South America (including Central America). These people maintain a tribal connection. 0.2% are native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; these are the descendants of the original peoples of Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, or other Pacific Islands. Moreover, 2.8% are people of two or more mixed races, people whom parents, for example, are from two different races (US Census Bureau).

### **1.3. Multiculturalism in the US**

Multiculturalism refers to the co-existence of various cultures within the same society; cultures that differ entirely from one another and especially from that one of the dominant group. These cultures are usually acknowledged, and their people are met with equal rights and opportunities despite their differences. The United States is considered one of the most multicultural countries next to Canada and Australia.

#### **1.3.1. Religions**

The diversity of the American population has resulted in the creation of multiple religions in the United States. Today, there are over 310 religions and belief systems practiced in the region (“313 Religions in the United States”). Although the United States is a secular country, its constitution protects the freedom of religion. Therefore there is a religious diversity in the US; a plurality of Americans claim that faith plays a “very crucial” part in their lives (“The Structure of Religion in the US”). Several religions have arisen in the US, including those reflecting the country's ethnic immigrants' cultures and those born inside the country; these have led America to become one of the most religiously diverse nations worldwide (“The Structure of Religion in the US”).

According to Pew Research Center, the primary faith in the United States is Christianity, practiced by the great majority of people, 70.6% of Americans; about 46% are Protestant (25.4% Evangelical Protestant, 14.7% Mainline Protestant, 6.5% Historically Black Protestant), about 20.8% are Catholic, 1.6% Mormon, 0.5% Orthodox, 0.8% Jehovah's Witness believers, and 0.4% are of other minority Christian denominations. The US has statistically more Christians (and more Protestants) than every other nation globally.

Non-Christian religions are also spread in the US; Judaism is followed by 1.9% of the population. It is claimed that many individuals classify themselves as American Jews based on ethnic and social backgrounds rather than spiritual ones ("The Structure of Religion in the US"). Islam comes third with about 0.9% of the population. According to Williams, Islam first came to America through African slaves ("A Brief History of Islam in America"). About 10% of African slaves brought to the States were Muslims, according to estimates. Studies indicate that Muslims in the United States are more integrated and affluent than Muslims in European countries. Besides the monotheistic faiths, Buddhists and Hindus make up 0.7% of the population each. Other World religions make up about 0.3%. It is essential to include that a large part of America is unaffiliated; about 22.9% of the population are non-religious, 3.1% are Atheists, and 4.0% are Agnostic (Pew Research Center).

### **1.3.2. Languages**

America is one the most multilingual countries globally, thanks to the diversity of its immigrants. The US Census Bureau reported back in 2015 that there are more than 350 languages spoken in American homes. English is considered the primary language of the United States, with over 250 million native speakers; however, it is not the official language of the country. There is no official language according to the U.S. constitution. Spanish is also a sizeable spoken language in the U.S., with more than 40 million native speakers. It is one of the fastest-growing languages in the States. Chinese, including its varieties, is the

native language of over 3 million people. Tagalog and Vietnamese are spoken by more than 1.5 million each. Arabic, French, and Korean with more than 1 million speakers. Russian, Haitian, and German, with over 800,000 speakers across the states. These are only a few examples of the languages spoken in the U.S. America's multilingual map continues to grow with the coming of immigrants from all over the world. Languages continue to spread, and so do the beliefs and ideologies of these people, who are usually considered the minorities of the country.

### **1.3.3. Values**

Values are considered the core of culture. They describe what is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, proper and improper, and shape how people act. American values are many, and they define their shared culture. According to Robert Kohls and other sources American values include:

#### **a. Individualism**

According to Zhang, "Individualism is the core of American culture and the main value in America." Americans are taught since childhood to think of themselves as separate people who are in control of their own life choices and fates. They have not been taught to think of themselves as part of a connected, intertwined family, religious community, tribe, or other groups. They stress the need for independence and appreciate privacy.

#### **b. Equality**

The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal," and many Americans believe so; they think that all people should be treated equally and have equal opportunities. Kohls says that "Most Americans believe that God views all humans alike without regard to intelligence, physical condition, or economic status."(3). In America, an economic status of a person does not make them superior to others; this concept tend to be a little bit strange for foreigners visiting America for the first time, especially those of a high

economic class; some of them may get offended to how they are treated by service personnel for instance a waiter, clerk or a cab driver (Kohls 3). The majority of Americans treat all people equally from higher or lower classes.

### **c. Time**

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Time is money." Time is very precious for Americans; it is a tool that can be utilized effectively or inefficiently. According to Kohls; "Americans' language is filled with references to time, giving a clear indication of how much it is valued. Time is something to be "on", and to be "kept, filled, saved, used, spent, wasted, lost, gained, planned, given, made the most of," even "killed"(3). Americans respect people who are "well planned," and consider those who do not value time as rude. "The international visitor soon learns that it is considered very rude to be later—even by 10 minutes—for an appointment in the United States"(Kohls 3). Time is indeed very valued in the Western side of the world and especially America.

### **d. Achievement, Action, Work, and Materialism**

Americans are known for being hard-working people; they respect a person who approaches a mission with diligence and perseverance and completes it successfully ("American Values and Assumptions"). Americans are also known to be Materialistic people, Kohls says: "Americans are materialistic. This means that they value and collect more materials objects than most people would ever dream of owning."(8). For them, material possessions are regarded as rewards for sheer determination, and they are highly valued and protected, sometimes even more than interpersonal relationships (Kohls 8).

### **e. Future, Change, and Progress**

History and tradition are less important to Americans; some people would say, "History doesn't matter." They always look forward. They believe that what could happen in the future is under their control or at least will be influenced by them ("American Values and

Assumptions”). Kohls writes “Almost all energy is directed toward realizing that better future. At best, the present condition is seen as preparatory to a later and greater event, which will eventually culminate in something even more worthwhile.”(5) That is to say that Americans care for the change that might occur in the future, by working harder in the present to realize it.

#### **f. Directness and Assertiveness**

Most Americans view themselves, to be honest, transparent, and direct in their interactions with others. “They are likely to be completely honest in delivering their negative evaluations”, says Kohls (7). They believe that the only way to resolve disputes or disagreements is to have open and honest discussions among the parties concerned. Americans are known for speaking freely and frankly to others about things they dislike about them (“American Values and Assumptions”). This value differentiate Americans from other societies where saving face is a value instead.

#### **g. Informality**

Americans are known for being informal, according to Kohls; “Americans are one of the most informal and casual people in the world, even when compared to their near relative—the Western European.”(7). Formality is seen as "un-American" and a sign of arrogance and superiority among Americans. Examples of informality include wearing informal attire in public, or slouching on chairs while chatting to others. People visiting the US usually find it surprising how Americans can be informal in their speech, dress, and posture (“American Values and Assumptions”).

### **1.3.4. Style, Food and Holidays**

#### **a. Style**

In some parts of the world, people have traditional attire for specific holidays and celebrations, and in other areas, these attires are worn routinely, like in some parts of the

Middle East. Americans, though, do not have distinctive folk customs with long traditions, besides the ones inherited and worn by the Natives. American style was mainly adapted from the garments and fashions of the European colonists. However, they adopted some of the objects worn by native groups, such as clothing made from animal fur (“History of American Fashion Summary & Analysis”). Today, and despite the diversity of ethnicities in the United States, American clothing has become homogeneous; people from different ethnicities frequently trade their traditional attire for American apparel.

Blue jeans are perhaps the most symbolic piece in American apparel. They were first created by the American tailor Jacob Davis. They were first adopted by workers; cowboys, farmers, loggers, and railroad workers in the late 19th century. In the 1950s, actors Marlon Brando and James Dean turned blue jeans into a trendy garment by wearing them in their films, and soon everybody in the United States and teenagers around the world wanted them. Designers started to produce more different versions of the jeans, which began to express the American emphasis on informality and the importance of quality fines (“Dress, Ways of Life, Culture, USA”). Besides blue jeans, there are other fashion components associated with Americans; these include Flannel shirts which are long-sleeved tops usually crafted from wool and cotton. Cowboy hats, a broad-brimmed hat with a high crown, worn mainly by cowboys and ranchers along with leather boots. Moreover, sneakers, and baseball caps, tennis are also parts of their everyday style.

Although Americans do not have traditional attire, they promote new fashion ideas through their brands; Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Michael Kors, and others. Their celebrities and media also help to make the American Style trending around the globe (“American Culture: Cultural Melting Pot”).



**b. Food**

American cuisine was highly influenced by the European and Indigenous native culinary methods and food styles in its early history. However, today, nearly every region's cuisine has affected the American one, most significantly the other ethnic groups' food cultures existing in the US; African American's, Asian's, Hispanic's, Middle Eastern's, and others. Now, American cities are homes to various international restaurants, from Chinese to Mexican to Italian and more nationalities ("American Food and the Flavors of Diversity"). According to Kinney Jr., "In nearly any decent-sized city in America, it is relatively easy to find: Lebanese, African, Ethiopian, Chinese, Mexican, Greek, Indian, French, Japanese, Italian, Polish, Korean, Vietnamese, Jamaican (the list goes on) restaurants." ("Food for Thought").

The United States' cuisine is usually regarded as a fusion of different culinary elements from various melting cultures. However, according to CorD Magazine, nowadays, a variety of dishes are widely known as American, such as Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Potato chips, Macaroni and Cheese, Meatloaf, and Apple Pie. These dishes have come to symbolize something genuinely American ("American Culture: Cultural Melting Pot").

Many American dishes influence the world right now, including recipes like American Pancake, Cheeseburger, Apple Pie, S'mores, Peanut butter, BBQ ribs, and other foods created first by Americans they are parts of other cultures as well ("The Influence of Popular American Food").

**c. Holidays**

Like every other country in the world, the United States has its national holidays. These holidays bring Americans together, and they form a big part of their shared culture. American people usually separate their holidays into three groups; Military Holidays like: Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, and Independence Day. Religious Holidays like: Christmas, Halloween, and Easter. Plus, "Hallmark" Holidays (commercial rather than traditional holidays) that

include events like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's day, and others. Other essential federal holidays include New Year's Day, the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thanksgiving Day. Some of these American holidays are worldwide known and even celebrated in today's world, while other non-American mainly religious events and ceremonies are taking part of the American society, including Hindu holidays (e.g., Diwali, Holi), Jewish holidays (e.g., Sukkot, Hanukkah, Purim), Islamic Holidays (e.g., Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha), and others ("Holidays in America").

### **1.3.5. Arts**

Art has always been an essential part of the cultures of the countries and the United States is a one artistic nation. That is to say, America has a variety of arts; from theatre to film to music, many artists from the melting pot emerged and came up with new styles that have influenced the American culture. Thanks to its dominant media, the rest of the world has now become familiar with the arts of the US. Today, the American art is highly followed and praised.

The United States is well recognized worldwide as a pioneer in mainstream media production, namely television and film. Based on the current U.S. Department of Commerce reports, one-third of the world's media and entertainment industry is occupied by the United States ("American Culture: Cultural Melting Pot"). Today, American Hollywood films, TV programs, and shows are displayed across the nation and worldwide, showing non-Americans how Americans live, what they eat and wear, what sports they play, and holidays they celebrate. Their Media promotes their cultures through films, and TV shows, and programs. Besides the Visual Arts, American Music is also dominant in today's world. According to Hennessy, "American music is heard everywhere. Its influence on other countries has surpassed that of all other nations." There are many genres of American music; they

range from rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel, country and western, bluegrass, rock 'n' roll, hip hop, and Pop.

The US arts culture expands beyond Film and Music. Americans are also known for having a rich theatrical tradition known as Broadway. Other cultures include Folk-art which is also a part of their arts, it includes; Quilts and other handcrafted objects ("American Culture: Cultural Melting Pot").

America is now considered the land of immigrants, although the country has its own native people, the majority of the population are non-native. Today, hundreds of millions of people, from different origins and cultural backgrounds live under the American flag and share the American nationality. Until now, the US continues to invite more immigrants into its melting pot. The diversity of Americans and their cultural backgrounds has led to the creation of the country's rich culture, which can be noticed in how many ethnic groups, religious affiliations, customs, cuisines, and traditions the country has today. The melting of these diverse cultures has also led to the assimilation of others, and created homogenous lifestyles that are followed by the majority of Americans; these include their shared values, holidays, fashion styles and food.

## **Chapter Two**

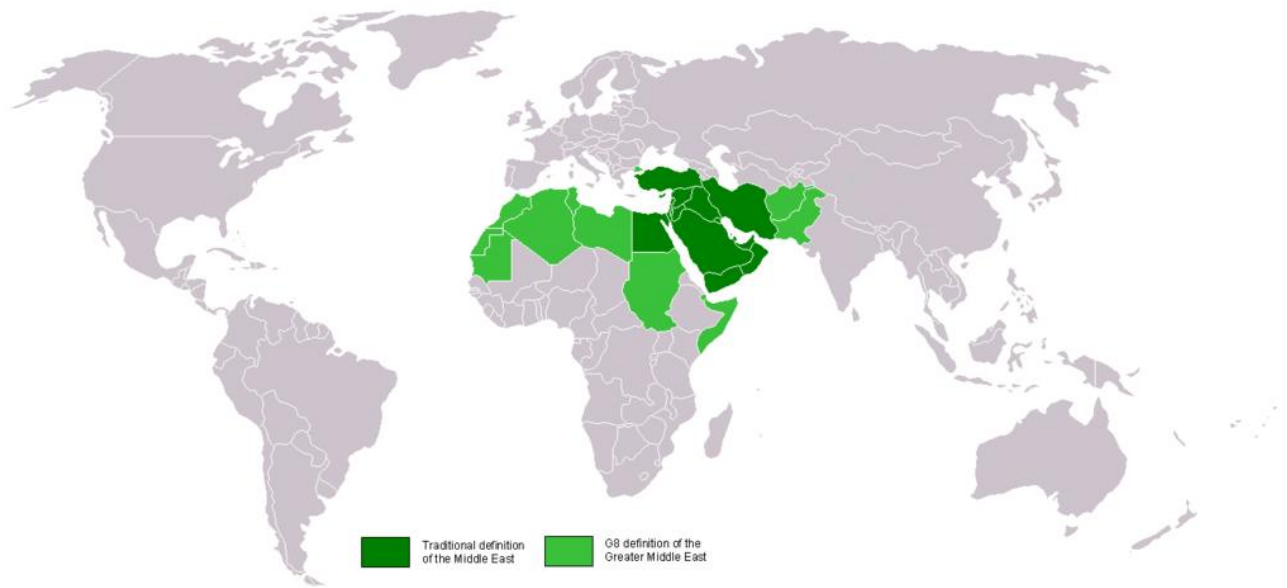
### **The Middle Eastern Society**

The Middle East is an important cultural map in this world of diverse cultures. Consisting of several nations, which differ from one map to another, this cultural area is famous for its Islamic traditions and Arabic roots. The Middle Eastern society gathers Arabs and Muslims from parts of Asia, Africa and Europe. The culture of the Middle East might appear to be a connected monoculture, however, the region has a variety of different ethnic groups, languages, religious denominations, customs and traditions.

#### **1. The Middle Eastern cultures**

##### **1.1. An overview on the Middle East**

The idea of an area known as the "Middle East" is comparatively new and turbulent construction. Since the word was first invented at the beginning of the 20th century, it has been generalized to diverse collections of countries and territories. The borders to the map of the Middle East varies from one source to another; some consider the Middle Eastern countries to be primarily a part of the Asian continent, i.e., Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. With the addition of Egypt in North Africa and Turkey (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica). Some expand the map to the North African countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and sometimes Sudan. Other maps consider other different countries like Western Sahara, Mauritania, Djibouti, Somalia, Northern Cyprus, and even Afghanistan and Pakistan mainly because they are Islamic states ("Where Is the Middle East?"). The broader map of the region is often referred to as "the Greater Middle East."



**Fig.2.** the Greater Middle East Map

**Source:** “the Greater Middle East.” Wikipedia. Accessed 09 May. 2021

As the map reveals, the Middle East is not a regional area like Africa, Asia, and Europe. Geographically it signifies a region in which Africa, Asia, and Europe interconnect. The Middle East has no natural boundaries that define its borders. The borders of the Middle East are political, and they keep changing over time. Islam is regarded as a shared bond that joins the Middle Eastern countries together (Safi 2-4).

The use of the word "Middle East" has gradually supplanted the more traditional use, which split the region into two parts, the Middle East and North Africa. "North Africa" applied to the Arab countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya; whereas "the Middle East," on the other side, referred to Egypt (which is situated in North Africa) as well as the majority of the Arab countries to the east plus Turkey, and Iran. French scholars, in general, prefer to refer to France's former North African colonies of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia by the Arabic term "Maghreb" and to Egypt and the majority of the Arab countries as the "Near East." The word 'Maghreb' comes from the Arabic designation bilad al-Maghreb, meaning "the countries of the west" or, more simply, "the land where the sun falls." Arabs historically used the word to differentiate this portion of the Arab world from the more eastern areas,

which were referred to as bilad al-Mashreq, the "countries of the east" or "the region where the sun rises" (Levinson xxxv).

### **1.1.1. Maghreb**

The Maghreb is a region in North Africa located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert. In Arabic, the Maghreb implies "the place where the sun sets," which refers to the western half of the Arab and Muslim worlds. Like those of the Middle East, the boundaries of the Maghreb vary from map to map; however, the primarily considered countries in this region are Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. The Maghreb is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups; the majority are Arabs and Berbers. The Berbers are the region's indigenous people (Levinson xxxv). The Maghreb is historically considered an essential crossroad between Africa, the Middle East, and Europe ("Japan's Foreign Policy"). Algeria is the largest country in this region.

The Middle East has often generated other geographical definitions, including Near East, Western Asia, Eastern Mediterranean, and numerous political concepts, like the Greater Middle East, the Arab world, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Muslim world. These designations all reflect various forms of conceptualizing what these territories have in common and how they contrast to other areas of the world ("Where Is the Middle East? | Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies").

The Middle East connects three distinct cultural areas: Arab, Turkish, and Iranian cultures. These three civilizations are heirs of the Great Islamic Empires. The Ottoman Empire is the most recent and longest-lasting of these, controlled over most of the Middle East and areas of Eastern Europe for nearly 500 years, until its fall at the end of World War 1. Out of its ruins came the new state of Turkey and the rest of the contemporary Arab nation-states. The Middle East is regarded as the "Cradle of Civilizations" (Levinson xxxv). Its two main rivers, the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Tigris-Euphrates in Iraq, were the locations of the world's

oldest civilizations (e.g., Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian). It is also the birthplace of the world's three main monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three separate but linked religions arose in the Middle East, and all three continue to find representation in and provide value to the lives of the region's citizens today (Levinson xxxv).

## **1.2. The Middle Eastern Society**

### **1.2.1. Population**

According to 2019 statistics, the Middle Eastern and North African population (excluding Turkey's) is expected to be about half a billion citizens or 456 million people. Egypt has the most population (over 100 million) among the other nations, followed by Iran (over 80 million) and Algeria (over 40 million). Bahrain is the least populous nation in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with fewer than two million inhabitants. (Population, Total - Middle East & North Africa | Data"). Turkey's population was projected to be more than 82 million people in 2019 ("Turkey - Place Explorer - Data Commons").

### **1.2.2. Ethnic Groups**

The Middle East is home to over half a billion people and dozens of different ethnic groups. Although it may appear to many westerners that the Middle Easterns are of one only Ethnic group, which is Arab, the borders of this region stretch from east to west, connecting a variety of different people from different ethnic backgrounds and origins. The Middle East had long been a crossroad of diverse cultures. Migrants have been drawn to the region since ancient times. Blending with the earlier inhabitants of the area, they created the peoples that make up the Middle East today ("Ethnic Groups in the Middle East"). The largest ethnic groups of the region are Arabs, Turks, and Persians. However, there are plenty of other significant groups in the area with a large number of people, some of these include; Amazigh, Assyrians, Baloch, Copts, Cypriots, Druze, Gilaks, Kurds, Lurs, Maronites, Mhallami,

Nawar, Shabaks, Tats, Tuareg, Yazidis, Zazas, and others (“Ethnic Groups in the Middle East”).

#### **a. Arabs**

Arabs are the most populous ethnic community in the Middle East and North Africa, with about 325 million citizens residing in the League of Arab States' 22 member nations, including Somalia, Djibouti, and the Comoros Islands. In addition, there are substantial Arab communities in Turkey and Iran, and a range of Saharan and Sahel states in Africa like Mali, Niger, and Chad. Historically, Arabs established many trade centers in East Africa, which led to creating Arab minorities in countries like Kenya and Tanzania, notably in Zanzibar (Shoup 16). Arabic is the oldest and most common Semitic language today. The majority of Arabs are Muslims, as Arabic is closely associated with Islam, for it is the language of the Qur'an and Islamic practice. Arabs make up about 20% of Muslims worldwide. About 20 and 30 million Christian and Jewish Arabs live in Lebanon, with Christians accounting for about 44% of the total population (Shoup 16).

#### **b. Turks**

Turks apply to the Turkic language family's various ethnic and linguistic communities, belonging to certain Eurasian ethnic groups such as Azeri, Kazakhs, Kirgiz, Tatar, Turkmen, Turkish, Uighur, and Uzbek. Although originating from Mongolia, the Turkic people today occupy many countries stretching from Eastern Europe to as far east as Siberia, with the bulk of them settling in such Western and Central Asian nations as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, a small number reside in North America and Western Europe (Shoup 300). The Turkic populations of the world total approximately 190 million. Turkey, the majority of the Turkic communities, holds a geographical role as part of Europe and part of Asia and is considered a strong force in the Middle East and the



Mediterranean area. The overwhelming majority of Turks today are Sunni Muslims, while a tiny percentage of Turks are Shi'ite (Shoup 300).

### **c. Persians**

Persians belong to the large ethnic and linguistic groups of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. Today, the expressions Iranian and Persian are interchangeably used. However, Iranians historically self-identified themselves as Iranians since Persian refers traditionally to people from the ancient district of Parsa, and its dialect Parsi, one of several Iranian languages. However, it has become the primary language in Iran today (Shoup 241). According to CIA Factbook, the main religion for Persians is Islam, and 90-95% are Shi'ite ("Iran - the World Factbook").

### **1.3. The Middle Eastern Cultures**

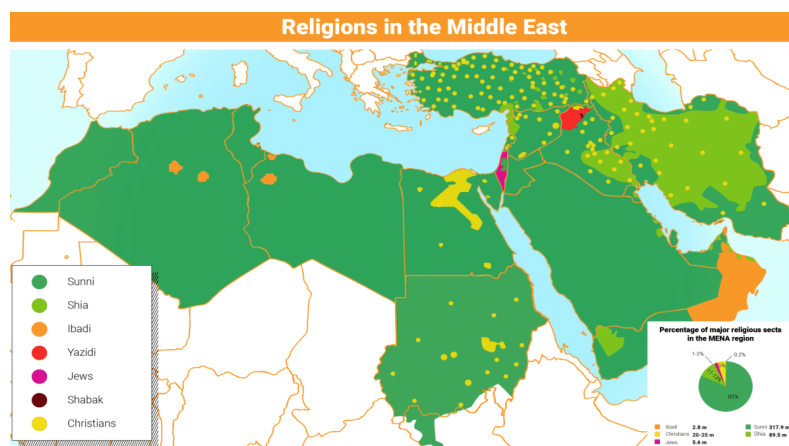
People from western origins might confuse the Middle East for a monocultural area. They, at some point, perceive the region as a vast desert with a large number of camels, where men wear turbans and long white robes, and women cover their heads with black scarves serving men who usually are husbands of four wives ("Global Connections. Stereotypes"). Other western earlier perceptions suggested things like an Arab and a Muslim are the same thing; their religion is violent, and they are extremists and still live in the medieval era, in tents. However, not all these stereotypes are accurate; many were created centuries ago by Europeans to justify wars and colonialism, for instance. These harmful stereotypes about the East are referred to as Orientalism. This latter still exists today as the media continues to throw light on the negative aspects of the Middle East, overshadowing the other reality of the region ("Global Connections. Stereotypes").

The Middle East connects three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Numerous countries with different ethnic and linguistic groups. A variety of cultural backgrounds and traditions, foods, styles of clothing, and arts. Different systems of values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Different urban and building structures, monuments, and civilizations. All variety of aspects connected and formed multiculturalism in the Middle East, a phenomenon usually referred to as the Cultural Mosaic. The main characteristic that shapes the Middle Eastern culture today is religion. Unlike many other cultures, religion is the primary source when it comes to guiding various aspects of culture in the Middle East, as it is also shared between the different territories of the region, apart from languages (“The Ethnic Mosaic”).

### 1.3.1. Religions and Holidays

The Middle East is known as the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all monotheistic faiths that arose from the same background. Since each faith used texts from earlier sects, they share several laws and values. For example, Islam and Judaism follow the same dietary laws and place a similar emphasis on faith as a basis for civil law. From Adam and Abraham through Solomon and Joseph, all three have a prophetic history. Jesus is essential in both Christianity and Islam, and Muslims still adhere to Muhammad’s (PBUH) teachings (“Global Connections”). Today Islam is the dominant religion in MENA. According to statistics from 2010, Muslims made up 92% of the Middle Eastern and North African populations. Christians constituted 4% of the population. Just 2% of the population was Jewish. 1% were unaffiliated, and 1% were Hindus (Statista Research Department).



**Fig.3.** Religions in the Middle East

**Source:** “Religions in the Middle East.” ©Fanack. Accessed 09 Aug. 2021

### a. The Religion of Islam

Islam is the second most followed religion globally, after Christianity, with 24.1 percent of the world's population, around 1.8 billion in 2015 (Hackett and McClendon). Although it is the dominant religion in the Middle East, Muslims of the region only make 20% of the entire worldwide Muslim population. According to Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Muslims can be Arabs, Turks, Persians, Indians, Pakistanis, Malaysians, Indonesians, Europeans, Africans, Americans, Chinese, or from other countries. Arabs make up only 12% of the world's Muslims. The most populated Muslim nations in the Middle East are Turkey and Iran (not Arab countries). The United States has the 20th highest Muslim community, with 5-6 million Muslims (28). According to Safi:

- **Islam** is an Arabic word stemming from the word peace, which also means submitting to a greater will. Islam means finding peace by appealing to the Divine Will.
- **Muslims** are people who submit truly and respectfully to God's will, believe in the Five Pillars of Islam, and obey them. They make up approximately one-fifth of the world's population, or 1.4 billion people, and are the majority in 40 countries.
- **God in Islam** is named Allah. "Say: He is God, the One ; God, the Eternal and Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." **(Qur'an 112 : 1-4)**
- "God is He, beside whom there is no other god; He knows (all things) both secret and open; He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." **(Qur'an 59:22)**
- "God is He, beside whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peace, the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme: Glory to God! (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him. He is God, the Creator, the Evolver, the Form Giver. To Him belong the Most Beautiful

Names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, does celebrate His Praises and Glory: and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (**Qur’an 59: 22-4**)

- **The prophet** of Muslims is Muhammad (PBUH), he was Born in Makah (Mecca) in 570 (CE). At the age of forty, he had his first revelation from Allah through the Archangel Gabriel. The revelations lasted for twenty-three years, and are mentioned in the Qur’an. The prophet is admired and honored by Muslims and not worshipped.
- **The Quran** is the most important source of Islamic instruction. The holly book of Islam which contain God’s words, transmitted to Muhammad (PBUH) through the Archangel Gabriel.
- **Sunnah** is another main source of Islamic guidance. Sunnah includes the Prophet Muhammad's rituals, teachings, and sayings. Gathered in hundreds of documents known as “Hadiths” (narrations).
- **Articles of Faith** in Islam include; the belief of the existence of one god (Allah), belief of existence of Angels, the belief in holly books sent to the prophets by God, the belief in messengers and prophets, belief in the Day of Judgment, and Belief in Qader (fate or destiny).
- **The Five Pillars of Islam:** Islam is based on five foundations, the first of which is a declaration of faith. The remaining four are significant practices of faith: Declaration of Faith (Shahadah), Prayer (Salah), Alms (Zakat), Fasting (Siyam), and The Pilgrimage (Hajj).
- The three holy sites for Muslims are located in two of the Middle Eastern territories, Saudi Arabia (Makah and Medina) and Palestine (Al-Aqsa Mosque). (8-17)

Islam remains a shared bond that connects the Middle Eastern countries; although there are few denominations to the religion, the majority of Muslims are Sunni with (90-95%) of

the Muslim population, however in the case of Iran and Iraq the majority are Shia followers ("Middle East Culture Facts").

### **b. Islamic Holidays**

Although each Middle Eastern country has its unique public holidays, Independence Days, and national celebrations, the region as a whole has shared Islamic holidays distributed along the Year of Hijra (the Islamic lunar calendar). Muharram (The Islamic New Year) comes first in the calendar, in the month of Muharram specifically. The event is quietly spent with prayers, Qur'an reciting, and reflecting upon the Prophet's journey ("Islamic Holidays").

Al Mawlid al-Nabawi (Prophet Muhammad's Birthday) comes on the 12th day of the month of Rabi I in the Islamic calendar. It is an important day for Muslims, marked by reminiscences of Muhammad's life and importance, prayers, and readings. Muslims also cook traditional food, sing Islamic songs, light candles, and even fireworks in some parts of the region ("Islamic Holidays").

Ramadan month is another important holiday for Muslims. According to LaBianca, "Ramadan is the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar." The Qu'ran holy book was revealed to the Prophet during this month. Muslims fast the entire month of Ramadan, but they also reflect on their lives and get closer to God. People during the holiday also enjoy spending quality time with their families and friends ("What Is Ramadan and When Does It Start?").

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, with the coming of the month of Shawwal. Eid al-Fitr means "Festival of Breaking the Fast." In this two-day celebration, People dress up in their best clothes, decorate their homes nicely, offer gifts to children, and spend time with friends and relatives. Muslims also show their generosity to the poor and donate to mosques and charities ("Islamic Holidays").

Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice); is on the 10th of Dhu'l-Hijjah month. This event glorifies the Prophet Abraham's commitment to serving Allah by sacrificing his son Ishmael. In the Quran, it is written that Allah substituted Ishmael with a sheep right when Abraham was about to sacrifice his beloved son and saved his life. Today, all Muslims worldwide, especially in the Middle East, traditionally sacrifice a sheep, sometimes a cow, or a camel. Muslims share the meat with their families and give some of it to the poor. This sacrifice represents submission to Allah, and giving some of it to others is an act of kindness and one of Islam's five pillars known as Zakat (“Islamic Holidays”).

### 1.3.2. Languages

The MENA is one of the most linguistically rich areas globally, with over 60 languages spoken in the region. Since it extends from Morocco to Iran and combines about 20 countries, various languages are spoken throughout the area. The three most frequently used languages in the Middle East are Arabic, which is the most widely spoken language in several MENA countries, Persian or Farsi, which is spoken in Iran and by large Persian speaking communities in Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates, Turkish is spoken in Turkey and Cyprus (“MENA Languages”).

- **Arabic:** According to Shoup, “Arabic is the largest and most widespread Semitic language today”(16). The Middle East is often referred to as the Arab World; although a minority of its countries do not speak the Arabic language, most do. The Arabic language is a Southern-Central Semitic language spoken in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and other Middle East areas. Arabic is the language of Qur’an, the Islamic Holy book, and it is considered the religious language of Muslims. There are two types of Arabic spoken in the MENA; Classical Arabic, which is used in Qur’an; it is the standardized version in the Arab world, and Colloquial Arabic; contains various dialects, few of which are entirely unintelligible. The main dialect categories

are those of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. Except for the dialect of Algeria, all Arabic dialects have been heavily inspired by the classical language (Britannica).

### **1.3.3. Middle Eastern Values**

#### **a. Family**

Starting with Family, Middle Easterns are known for giving considerable value to their surroundings. Family is considered the second most crucial aspect after Faith in the Arab culture. Arabs value their connections with their parents, partners, siblings, children, and elderly. They are usually aware of and respectful of their ancestors and speak proudly of their heritage. In many Arab countries, the father fulfills the patriarchal position; he supports the family financially and has the final say. Mothers, in most cases, are housewives; their prominent roles are educating and raising children. However, other women contribute to the family's financial wellbeing. Children usually follow in their parents' footsteps. Boys are taught from an early age to be "men", defend the woman in the household and carry on duties outside the home. Daughters learn to do housework. They are praised for their feminine traits. In most cases, children stay at their parents' house until they wed. It is also common for one son to remain at home to provide for his parents' needs. Elders are much respected in the Arab community. The Qur'an commands people to be kind and gentle with the elderly in Sūrat al-Isrā'. They are an important branch in the family's tree, and they are often consulted in all matters (Betts).

#### **b. Privacy**

Another cultural value for Arabs is Privacy. For instance, Muslims are very private when it comes to sharing their problems. It is discouraged in the Arab community that a person speaks dismissively about a relative or discusses personal matters with an outsider (Betts).

Arab men do not like being asked questions about their female relatives, especially their wives. Arab women demand more privacy and personal space, and usually do not like prolonged eye contact with men (Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence 9). The display of male-female intimacy in public is also considered inappropriate (Safi 41). The way Middle Eastern homes are constructed also involves privacy. There are spaces reserved for guests and sections where visitors are not permitted (Betts).

### **c. Hospitality**

Middle Easterns are known for being generous by nature. Hospitality for them is a sacred duty and a trait inherited from the earlier Bedouin traditions; nomadic passengers were welcomed and provided shelter and food in the harsh conditions of the Sahara desert (LaRock). Today the Arab generosity is noticed in their ways of welcoming strangers, whether in their homes or hotels, as they integrated these long-standing hospitality values into their offerings and facilities (Chani).

## **1.3.4. Middle Eastern Traditions: Dress, Cuisine and Arts**

### **a. Middle Eastern Dress**

Although Western clothing styles have influenced the Middle Eastern apparent, from Jeans to sneakers, business suits, and trendy dresses, many people in the region still adhere to their traditional attires or at least continue to follow an appropriate modest dress code respectful of their religion. The Middle Eastern attire is vibrant and differs from one territory to another; however, these Male and Female wardrobe elements are the most common clothing items shared between the people of the region.

#### **Male Dress**

In the East, mainly the Arabian Peninsula, men are likely to wear a national dress, consisting of Thawb; an ankle-length robe, with long sleeves, other times referred to as Khameez or Dishdashah. Bisht or Mishlah is a long cloak that men wear over the Thawb. In



addition, they wear Keffiyeh, a traditional headdress that provides them protection from the sun; a white cotton cloth usually prevalent in the Gulf states and other versions of it in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and others. Under the Keffiyeh, a skullcap is sometimes worn, known as Tagiyah. Last but not least, they tie a dense black chord around the Keffiyeh to hold it in place; it is referred to as Agal (Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 1).

### **Female Dress**

The female dress code may differ from one state to another; for instance, women from societies like Saudi Arabia are likely to adhere to traditional dress, whereas in countries like Egypt, women are less likely to do so; however, women in the Middle East usually wear appropriate and modest clothing in public. The female dress of Middle Eastern women consists of "Thawb," which is a long garment that usually covers the entire body and arms. "Salwar" pants worn under the Thawb, and "Abaya" which is a long black cloak. The headscarf or "Hijab" is an essential headdress to most Muslim women in Middle Eastern societies. "Niqab" is a veil that covers the face; some women prefer to add it as a part of their Hijab. Moreover, "Burqa" is a different Niqab style, which also covers the entire body; it is more prevalent in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan (Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 2-4).

### **b. Cuisine**

The Middle East is much known for the variety of cuisines and food cultures in the region. Many recipes originating from the Middle East are known worldwide today. Middle Eastern cuisine includes dishes from Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Maghreb, and Bedouin cuisine. Arabs consume many grains, vegetables, fruits, and dairy products, and meat is usually added to soups and rice dishes. Muslims are widely known for eating Halal food and meat; they butcher sheep, chicken, goats, cows, and even camels using the halal way. Pork is forbidden.

Some of the most common Middle Eastern dishes include; “Kabsah," a Saudi Arabian rice dish. The Syrian "Maqloouba", Palestine "Mansaf", Lebanese "Mahshi," Iraqi "Dolma", Iranian "Khoresh," Turkish "Kebab," Egyptian "Molokhiyya," Moroccan "Tajines," Algerian "Couscous," Tunisian "Brik," and many other countless dishes (Hays).

Middle Eastern cuisine is vibrant due to the complex structure of its cultural map; however, the region's cuisines have always influenced one another, which is why there are many recipes shared between the Arab countries today, only with different names and slightly different ingredients.

### **c. Arts**

The Middle Eastern cultures are very rich of all types of Arts; from the traditional Islamic genre to the recent modern themes. Art has always been an essential part of the Arabic world, as it has influenced the cultures of the nation, and the other’s cultures; Arabs helped spread it beyond the MENA region, and today the Islamic architecture, for instance, is present in many areas around the globe.

Islam largely inspire the Arts of the Middle East, and most notably the architecture. “The most visible aspect of Islamic art is its architecture, brought to its highest form in the mosque. The earliest mosques were designed in the style of the Prophet Muhammad’s home in Medina. These hypostyle mosques feature long, columned prayer halls and courtyards” (“Arab Arts & Music”). The architecture of the Middle East is very unique and follows a theme that differentiates it from other foreign buildings. Moreover, Arabs master the Arts of calligraphy; “Ceramic tiles and glass are arranged to display elaborate patterns and colors on walls, floors, ceilings, and dome roofs” (“Arab Arts & Music”). These patterns can be noticed in mosques and other Islamic architectures. Furthermore, Arabic traditional furniture is also very much inspired by the society’s religion. From: Ceramics, Glass, Metalwork, Carpets,

and other artifacts, Muslims have really created unending catalogs of Islamic objects (“Islamic Art”).

Traditional Arab music and dance are also an important part of the Middle Eastern arts. “Arabic music or Arab music is the music of the Arab World, including several genres and styles of music ranging from Arabic classical to Arabic pop music and from secular to sacred music” (“Traditional & Classical Arabic Music”). Besides the Halal devotional music (Anasheeds) Some types of secular music for Arabs include; maqam Al-iraqi, Andalusi Nubah, Muwashshah, Fijiri songs, Qasidah, Layali, Mawwal, Taqsim, Bashraf, Sama'i, Tahmilah, Dulab, Sawt, and Liwa (“Arabic Music”). Some of the best well-known Traditional dance for Arabs include; the belly dance, the Ardah, and the Dabke (“Arab Folk Dances”).

Arab’s modern Arts include; painting, photography, film, sculpture, literature, and music. These Arab artists often work on themes that are religious, politic, or themes that reflect their own nations. These contemporary arts have helped spread the Islamic culture around the world (“Arab Arts & Music”). The arts of the Middle East are a really important part their Islamic and folk cultures.

The Middle East is a rich cultural area. It is pretty much known for its Islamic history and civilization. Its vast map includes several countries, from three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. The society of the Middle East is very diverse, tens of different ethnic groups live in the MENA region; from Arabs, Turks, and Persians to other smaller important groups such as: Amazigh, Druze, Kurds, Tuareg and more. These people, who come from different parts of the Middle East, have their own distinct languages, dialects, customs, cuisines, and traditions. They together make the rich culture of the MENA region. Although the latter is diverse, the religion of Islam, connects the scattered societies of the Arab and Muslim world, with similar traditions, values and cultural beliefs.

## Chapter Three

### US-Middle East Relations: What Kind of Ties... What Degree of Influence?

The United States of America and the Middle East have had a history of diplomatic relations. The US has politically interfered in the MENA and established its military bases in some of the countries. Moreover, it helped discovering oil in the Middle East, and started economic ties with its nations. The US continues to be an ally to some of the countries, and interfere in the diplomatic affairs of others using both the Hard and Soft Powers. The US' Soft Power techniques are plenty, and some of them have been experimented in the Middle Eastern region. This discussion tackles what cultural products the US uses as Soft Power strategies.

#### 1.The Relationships between the United States and the Middle East

The United States and the Middle East have established many diplomatic relations since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although mostly political relationships, the US also established economic and cultural ties with the majority of the Middle Eastern countries.

##### 1.1. Political Relationship

The United States has long been active in the Middle East, most significantly after WWII. The two regions have had diplomatic relations for nearly a century. After America emerged as a superpower, it shifted its focus to other countries and continents; the Middle East was one of its main directions. The US had and still has many interests in the region.

Although the United States' first involvement in the Middle East was as early as its existence, in the 18th century, the most notable engagement between the two regions was at the end of the Cold War. During the latter, the US policy aimed to restrict the Soviet Union's dominance by backing anti-communist governments and defending Israel against Soviet-sponsored Arab governments. "During the Cold War, the Middle East's energy supplies and

several communist-leaning regimes rendered it part of the US-Soviet chessboard." (Byman and Moller 1).

According to David Sylvan and Stephen Majeski, between the 1960s and 1970s, the United States replaced the United Kingdom as the principal security patron of many states in the Middle East (notably Persian Gulf nations) to secure a steady supply of Gulf oil. In the 1990s, the US military presence expanded widely in the region to constrain Iraq and its leader Saddam Hussain and limit Iran's religious dictatorship, not to forget its long involvement in the Arab-Israeli political conflict.

The 2000s marked the US's most significant involvement in the Mideast after the 9/11 attacks on America; the country strengthened counterterrorism cooperation with longtime allies like Egypt and Jordan and sought stronger connections with previously unfriendly governments like Yemen and Libya (Wikipedia). Just as the US withdrew its troops from Iraq in 2011, the "Arab Spring" shocked the Middle East, overthrowing longtime US allies; Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen and sparking civil conflicts in numerous countries, most remarkably Syria. Despite Obama administration's opposition to any US military engagement in the area, following the 2014 Islamic State advances in Iraq, it launched air attacks against Islamic State militants and increased its attempts to engage with regional allies and local partners to combat the group (Byman and Moller 1). According to Byman and Moller, "Today's posited US interests in the Middle East can be broken down into five areas: ensuring the free flow of oil; preventing nuclear proliferation; fighting terrorism; maintaining the security of Israel; and promoting democratization." (1)

## **1.2. Economic Relationship**

The Middle East is considered an important geopolitical and economical region. Its strategic area has played an important role in the world's economy throughout history, according to Khalidi:

Middle East contained or bordered on the land bridges, passageways, and narrows – the Sinai isthmus, the Caucuses, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Dardanelles, Bab el Mandeb, and the Strait of Hormuz – and the sheltered seas – the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf – that provided the best routes connecting the different extremities of the vast Eurasian/African continent. (*Resurrecting Empire : Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*)

Asides from its strategic area, the region is best known for occupying some of the largest oilfields in the world, and producing about 1/3 of the global oil. The United States have had economic relations with the Middle East for nearly a century; an economical tie that is mostly shaped around oil. In fact, the first time oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia, the country that produces the most oil in the Middle East in the present time, was by a US' oil company in 1938 (National Geographic). The king of Saudi Arabia at the time, Ibn Sa'ūd, gave permission to the US Company. Since then, the United States has broaden its presence in the Middle East with more American oil companies.

The Middle East continues to cooperate with the United States when it comes to oil, according to Statista, the US petroleum imports from OPEC countries reached its highest peak in 2007, with about 5980 barrels imported per day. The US's demand of Oil from the OPEC and the Persian Gulf, started to slowly decrease in the past decade, when the country started its own domestic production. However, according to Macintyre and French, “largely because of declines in domestic crude oil production and corresponding increases in crude oil imports, EIA expects the United States to return to being a net petroleum importer on an annual basis in both 2021 and 2022.”

Saudi Arabia, along with Iraq, continue to be among the top five of US crude oil exporters to the US, with 8% and 3% respectively, in 2020 (US Energy Information Administration).

### **1.3. Cultural Relationship**

The US-Middle Eastern relations are mainly Political and Economic, however, there have been attempts from both sides to establish cultural ties. Taking as an example, the American Universities in the Middle East. The US established the first American institution in the region, in Lebanon, the AUB. It was founded in 1866, by seven American missionaries, including its first president Daniel Bliss. One of the initial aims of the institution was to promote Protestantism. The University also worked on promoting the American cultures and values in through its American liberal arts curriculum (Al Jazeera). More American Universities were later established in the region to promote the American-Middle Eastern cultural ties. Besides the cultural educational institutions, the US and the Middle East develop their cultural relations through exchange and immigration programs, Art exhibitions, Sports and competitions, global events and a variety of different opportunities in which both regions cultures come across.

## **2. Manifestations of US' Soft Power/Public Diplomacy in the Middle East**

There is no doubt that the United States of America is the most powerful and influential country in the world. This 245 years old nation became a global superpower and a world dominator in every possible field; Military, Economics, Political Influence, Innovation, Technology, and Culture. America is indeed ahead of all nations, and all is due to its smart use of powers. America uses a combination of powers, a “Hard Power” and a “Soft Power”; a mixture of powers, politicians usually refer to as a “Smart Power”.

### **2.1. What is Soft Power?**

Harvard professor, Joseph Nye, first coined the term “Soft Power” in the late 1980s. In his book *“Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics”*, Nye defines and differentiates between the terms “Hard” and “Soft” powers:

Everyone is familiar with hard power. We know that military and economic might often get others to change their position. Hard power can rest on inducements ("carrots") or threats ("sticks"). But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats or payoffs. The indirect way to get what you want has sometimes been called "the second face of power." A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries- admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness-want to follow it. (5)

In another book of his; "*Bound to Lead*", he argues that the direct sources of power such as large military spending and wars are becoming less emphasized; instead technology, education, and economic growth, are becoming the essential matters for such nations as America, i.e. the sources of Power are changing from Hard to Soft. However, he considers both powers to be essential in developing a country's Smart Power. In his Journal Article, "*Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power*", Nye writes:

"Smart power" is a term I developed in 2003 to counter the misperception that soft power alone can produce effective foreign policy. Power is one's ability to affect the behavior of others to get what one wants. There are three basic ways to do this: coercion, payment, and attraction. Hard power is the use of coercion and payment. Soft power is the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction. If a state can set the agenda for others or shape their preferences, it can save a lot on carrots and sticks. But rarely can it totally replace either. Thus the need for smart strategies that combine the tools of both hard and soft power. (1)

The United States of America highly represents both sources of power, and they can be traced in its history of political, economic and cultural interferences in the World.



## 2.2. The Utilization of the American Soft Power in the Middle East

According to Rugh, “America’s use of the "soft power" of public diplomacy in the Arab world dates back only to World War II. In fact, the real impetus for it came in the late 1940s with the start of the Cold War, which helped sustain it for decades thereafter.”(25). America has sought many resources of soft power in the Middle East. Mortazavi et al. write:

There is no doubt that America’s soft power in the Middle East resources is outstanding. Victory in the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the uni-polar world has also added credibility. Long-term presence in the region is in dire need continued support Arabic countries, America, formal regional security, end the occupation of Kuwait, the fall of the Saddam occupation, signing of agreements with countries in the region, undisputed influence in international organizations, relations in political, economic, military and cultural with most countries in the region, as the country as a haven and support non-democratic authoritarian regimes ruling countries in the region more central role in the globalization process, economic aid and some grants Nye United States popular culture typical entrepreneur knows the power of a fascinating culture. (460)

Although the American Soft Power resources have had limitations in the Middle East, the past few decades, mainly because of the American foreign policy in the region; supporting Israel, the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, supporting some terrorist groups such as al-Qaida. The United States still maintains a large influence in the MENA, using a variety of Public Diplomacy techniques; from Cultural Products, Social Media, Visa Lotteries, Exchange Programs, even building Academic Institutions abroad, help shifting the Middle Easterns’ perceptions towards the US (Mortazavi et al.).

### 2.2.1. American Cultural Products

The cultural products of a nation include its cuisine, attire, arts, books, music, films, festivals, architecture, and more. They are important as they promote the local cultures of the countries. Some of the US's cultural products are promoted worldwide to reinforce the American Soft Power, these include the American food, clothing brands, TV programs and Music.

#### a. American Food and Clothing

Food is considered a vehicle for Soft Power; Joseph Nye himself included it in his first writings about the second face of power. In his article "The Soft Power of Food: A Diplomacy of Hamburgers and Sushi?" Reynolds argues that; "It is this symbolism (and values) attached to the food—more than the food itself—that enables soft food-power to be successful." (49). He gives two cases of study of how Japan and the US could sell their cultures abroad through their signature foods; Sushi and Hamburgers.

There is no doubt that this famous American sandwich, along with several other recipes (Pancakes, Chicken Nuggets, Apple Pies, Hot Dogs) and beverages (Coke-Cola, Pepsi), have affected the Arab cuisines. According to Hays, "American fast food franchises have done relatively well in the Middle East. There are McDonald's in Egypt and Bahrain and other Middle East countries. As of 1999, there were 84 Burger Kings in the Persian Gulf states." According to their official website, Burger Kings, today is available in 4 more countries next to UAE; Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco. ("BURGER KING® | Middle East") The spread of these American multinational chains of fast-food restaurants around the Middle East, and the American food they offer, shows how successfully the US's soft power is manifested in the region.

Fashion is another vehicle of Soft Power, as it showcases a nation's culture. Joseph Nye believes that it is an important element of a country's influence. In his book "*Soft Power: The*

*Means to Success in World Politics*”, Nye compares Europe to the US in terms of its influential Soft Power elements, he writes: “Currently, the closest competitor to the United States in soft power resources is Europe. European art, literature, music, design, fashion, and food have long served as global cultural magnets.” (75). The United States has indeed contributed with new clothing brands and styles over the years. From “Calvin Klein” T-Shirts to “Nike” Shoes, and “Levi's” Denim, tens of other household fashion brands are now international thanks to the US’ media and markets abroad.

The United States Blue Jeans are recognized as an American original product and a source of soft power, even Joseph Nye includes them briefly in his book *Bound to Lead* “to demonstrate their influence on the Soviet youth, and youth in general; “American popular culture embodied in products and communications has widespread appeal.... Similarly, Soviet teenagers wear blue jeans and seek American recordings...” Mlotek notes:

What I mean is that denim has soft power. "Soft power," wrote political scientist Joseph S. Nye, Jr., who developed the concept in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead*, is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies." It is not about the literal application — blue jeans, he suggests, are an inadequate and incomplete symbol—but they function as soft power if people have been convinced that they represent much more attractive qualities: freedom, work as self-fulfillment, simplicity, ease, comfort, and democracy made material. (“Dior, Chanel, Calvin Klein: How Denim Pushes America's Soft Power”)

American fashion brands are spread across the Arab world today. A variety of multinational American stores are now available in the region. According to Anderson, “US sportswear brand Nike has opened its largest store in the Middle East and North Africa at Dubai Mall.” There are tens of Nike stores across the MENA Region including; 14 others in

the UAE, 15 in KSA, Egypt, Turkey, and Lebanon, 6 in Kuwait, 2 in Morocco and Jordan, and 1 in Algeria and Bahrain, according to the official Nike website. This distribution of the American brand name Nike in the Middle East, and multiple others (Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Levi's and more), shows how America succeeded in selling its culture through its products in the Middle East.

Recent statistics made by Sabanoglu, indicate that the USA exported about 131.83 million U.S. dollars worth of fashion products to the Middle East in 2020.



**Fig.4.** US Apparel Manufacturing Products Exports to the Middle East.

Source: “Value of U.S. apparel exports to the Middle East 2005-2020.” Statista Research Department. Accessed 08 Jun. 2021

#### **b. American TV and Music**

Today, American digital products are dominant, from Movies to TV programs, to Music and even Video Games; the US is ruling the Entertainment industry. There is no doubt that America has succeeded in influencing the world with these types of products; today, almost every region in the world has seen a movie or heard a song that is American. These American cultural products highly represent its Soft Power. US public diplomacy experts send them abroad to reinforce the spread of the American culture.

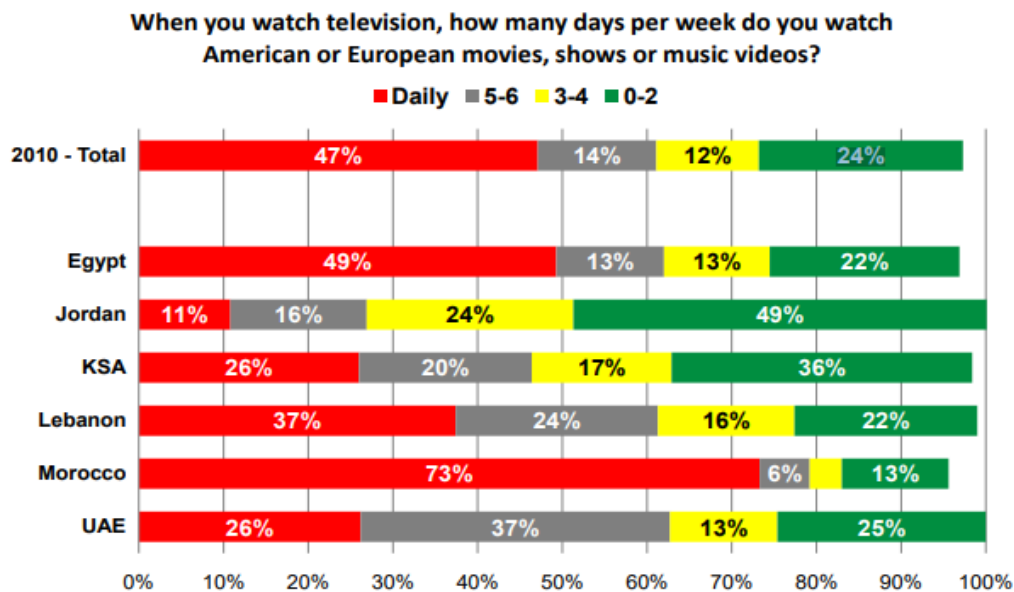
## **American Movies and TV Programs**

According to various sources, the US has the Number one film industry in the world. It is recognized as the oldest film industry; its beginnings date back to the end of the 19th century. Today, the US motion picture tops the world with the biggest, most successful, multinational film companies: Universal Pictures, Warner Bros, Columbia Pictures, and others ("Top 10 Movie Production Companies").

Hollywood, the American city located in Los Angeles, is considered the world's capital of the commercial movie industry, moreover America's essential tool for soft power. According to Joseph Nye, "much of American soft power has been produced by Hollywood, Harvard, Microsoft and Michael Jordan."(17). Güzelipek claims that; "Hollywood which is the great name of American film industry takes on a political role besides its artistic nature on certain occasions." (228). Dr. Örmeci adds, "Hollywood in fact, was operationalized during the Cold War as a part of American Foreign Policy strategy for a cultural and ideological war against Soviet Russia and Bolshevism by the American state." He continues to say, "Today also, Hollywood helps building the images of nations through the dissemination of ideas and stereotypes via popular movies watched by millions of people around the world." (1). Hollywood indeed helps to build images of nations, especially America's. Thanks to these films and TV Programs, we got to know the American culture more closely than ever. According to Rugh, "The US private sector's increased dissemination of American films and TV programs abroad gives foreigners a fuller picture of American life than before. That is soft power."(5).

Nowadays, American films and TV programs are internationally known and followed, and Arabs take part in its large audience. A survey conducted in June-July 2010 in 6 Arab countries; Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia (KSA) and UAE by the Principal Investigator, Professor Shibley Telhami, indicates that the majority (47 %) of Arabs watch

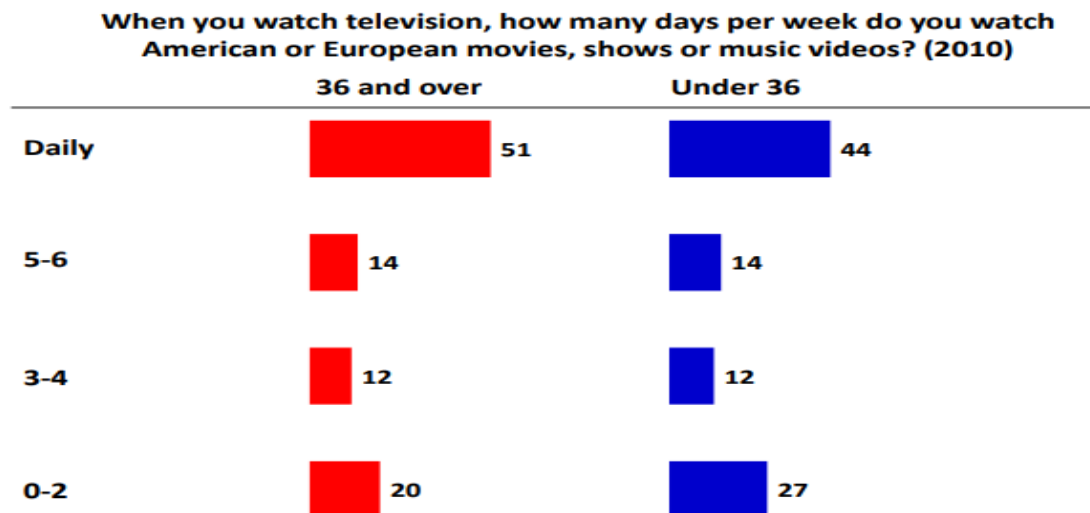
American movies, shows or music videos on a daily basis, while 14% claimed to watch them from 5-6 days in a week, 12% from 3-4 days, and 24% from 0-2.



**Fig.5.** A Survey about the American and European Media.

**Source:** “2010 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey.” Professor Shibley Telhami. Accessed 08 Jun. 2021

The same survey divided the population into two age categories, 36 and over and under 36; it shows that 51% of the first category (36 and over) watch them on a daily basis, while 44% of the second category (under 36) watch them daily. The same results are observed for both categories who watch these contents from 5-6 and 3-4 days per week; 14 and 12 respectively. 20% of the first category and 27% of the second category watch them from 0-2 days per week.



**Fig.6.** A Survey about the American and European Media.

**Source:** “2010 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey.” Professor Shibley Telhami. Accessed 08 Jun. 2021

The results of this survey implicate the success of Hollywood in reaching the Arab audience, and taking an important part of its routine. American films, TV programs, Music Videos and even commercials, are indeed a great tool of the American soft power, as they show us a closer picture of the American culture and society. Although not always accepted by certain audiences, there is no denial that these Hollywood materials influenced the Arab societies, and youth.

### **American Music**

Just like Films and TV programs, Music is another form of Soft Power. According to Harris, "music can be a string to any country's guitar when it comes to building a global reputation and flexing a bit of soft power." Furthermore, as for American Music, its goals were beyond entertaining the world; Wynn notes; "the U.S. government has secretly used American music, from jazz to hard rock, to further its own interests overseas." American Music was indeed utilized beyond the entertainment aim, and especially during the Cold War. Clark writes, "In addition to art, literature, and film, music became a weapon in the cultural cold war, and musicians, styles, and content were carefully considered by government

officials before being selected to represent the United States as cultural ambassadors."(1). Sending American Musicians and Music abroad was a Soft Power strategy that helped to influence other nations' beliefs upon the Cold War; Clark concludes:

Leaders of both Eastern and Western nations eventually found themselves facing a force of musicians and consumers who were fed up with living under the cloud of a nuclear threat, and found their control of musical messages slipping from their grasp as fans created underground networks that eluded mainstream controls in the United States and slipped through the Iron Curtain. (1)

Many sources, including Clark's thesis, suggest that Music was among the many Soft Power strategies used during the Cold War that helped to end it. "As a contributing factor, the role of music in U.S. and Soviet efforts at exercising soft power and in cultural exchange, and its utilization by musicians and fans to connect with one another and promote peace and nuclear disarmament, cannot be underestimated." (Clark 53).

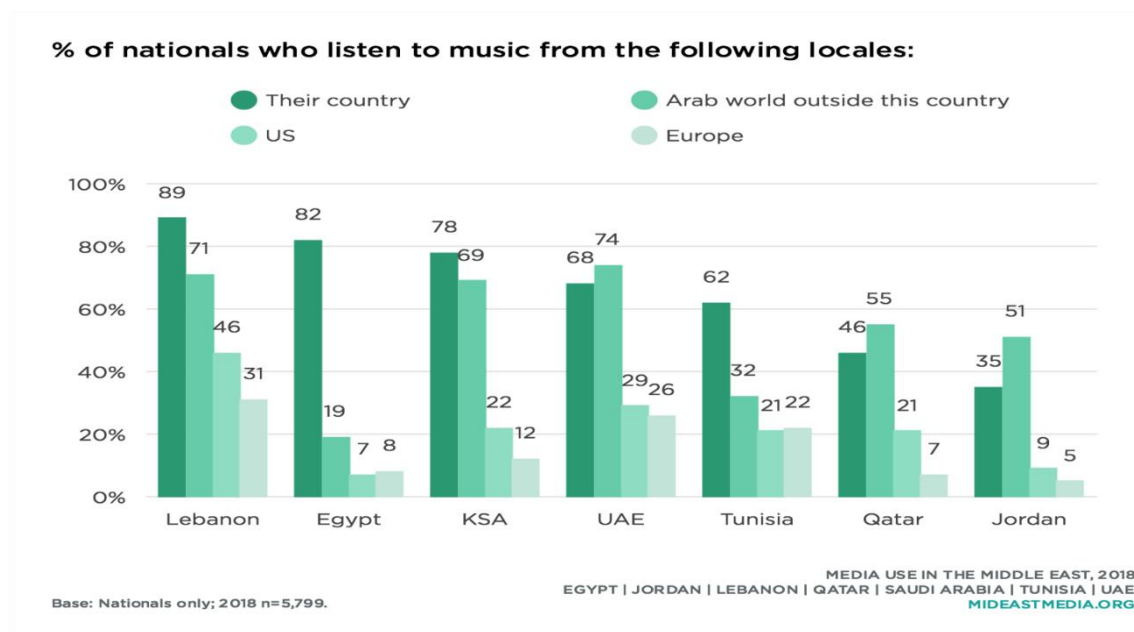
American pop culture and music has significantly affected and influenced the youths around the world; Arab youths are among them. According to Alsadoon, "In 2009, the Middle East started to get more Americanized and influenced by the most dominant culture in the world through its music, videos, movies, and TV programs. From Arab/American rap songs to Jon Stewart shows that were copied in a way to 'the Arabic version.'" Although America started broadcasting its Pop Culture years before 2009, the 2010s era marked the great influence of the latter. During the Arab Spring, youths sought to replicate American rap music in Arabic and English to speak about Dictatorship;

Arab's tend to copy the Western's dominant pop culture in art, music, and movies because it helps them to ask for democracy instead of dictatorship, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press, solve issues with poverty and



unemployment... Young people in the Middle East tend to copy the Western style in clothes, trends, music, and movies. (Alsadoon 3)

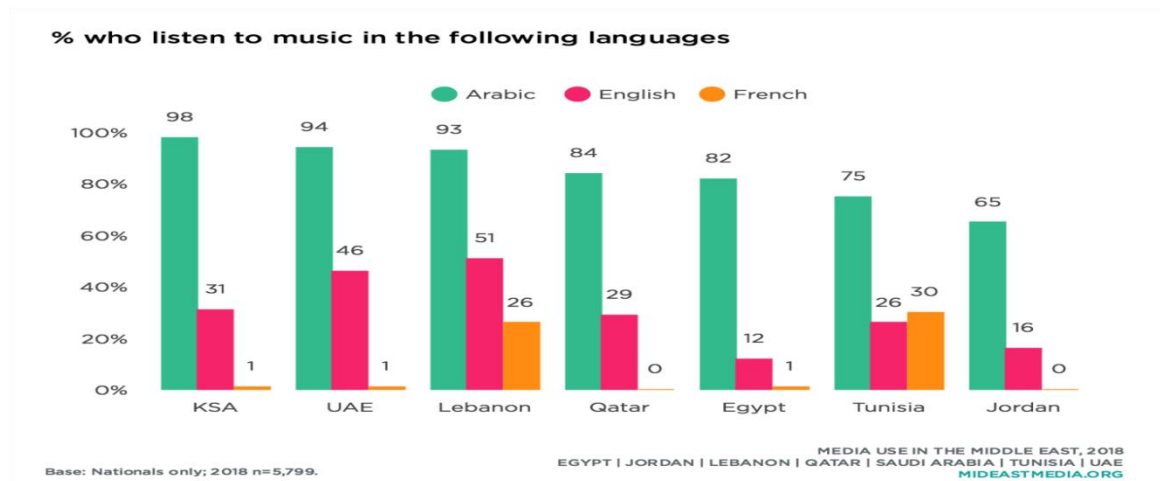
Alsadoon notes that “The Middle East did not have any rap or hip-hop songs before the 2000s,” (9). However, today and after a decade of the last events of the Arab Spring, we can sense the development of many genres of music in the region, such as; Arabic rap, pop, hip-hop and even metal. Genres that were fully replicated and influenced by the American pop culture and artists. Besides influencing Arabic music genres, America continues to broadcast its music worldwide, and Middle Easterners form a great audience of its Musicians. A 2018 survey, conducted in 7 Middle Eastern countries shows how significant is the US and European Music in the Middle East. The Survey studies the Arabs preferences when it comes to Music they like, whether their own country’s music, other Arab countries’ music, US or European music.



**Fig.7.** Media use in the Middle East.

**Source:** “Media use in the Middle East.” Mideastmedia.org. Accessed 08 Jun. 2021

Although local and other Arab countries' music is dominant in all cases, Western (US and European) music are also significant in countries like Lebanon and UAE. Another poll shows the Arab preferences when it comes to the languages of music they choose to listen to. Arabic is again dominant in all cases, however English is also high in Lebanon, UAE and KSA.



**Fig.8.** Media use in the Middle East.

**Source:** “Media use in the Middle East.” Mideastmedia.org. Accessed 08 Jun. 2021

According to the Mideastmedia.org:

Listening to music in English varies modestly by gender but more so by age and education. A few more men than women listen to music in English (30% vs. 26%, respectively). However, the youngest nationals listen to music in English at over three times the rate of the oldest nationals (43% 18-24 year-olds vs. 12% 45+ year-olds), and the most educated nationals listen in English at more than 13 times the rate of the least educated (41% university or higher vs. 3% primary or less).

Besides sending its records to the Mideast, “Exchanging Musicians” is one of America’s most influential techniques. Today, the American Musicians have another stage in the region. According to Khalife, America’s first entertainers in the region include Frank Sinatra, with his benefit concert in Egypt, 1979, and Michael Jackson’s World Tour in Tunisia, 1996. This

latter was performed in front of 60,000 Tunisian/Arab fans. Jackson said at the time, "This concert will be of special significance for me because it will be my first in Africa and the Arab World." according to PR Newswire. More American/Western singers were encouraged to perform in the MENA during the 2000s and 2010s; Ricky Martin in Lebanon (2006), Shakira in Egypt (2007), Prince in Abu Dhabi (2010), Bon Jovi in Abu Dhabi (2015), Christina Aguilera in Morocco (2016), and more (Khalife).

The United States has established many diplomatic relations with the MENA countries since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political relations since it has been militarily active in the Middle East since the second half of the last century. Economic relations as it helped the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia and established its own companies in the Persian Gulf. And cultural relations as the US initiated various cultural institutions and projects in the MENA region.

Besides its strong ties with the Middle East, in all fields, the US uses its Soft Power strategies as a way to reinforce the spread of its cultural beliefs in the region. These cultural products the US sends abroad from: food to clothing brands, to movies and music, have a real deep effect on the local culture of the Middle Eastern societies, as it influence the people to become more like westerners and adopt their lifestyles.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Influence in Beliefs vs Exchange of Ideas**

America has sought to influence the Middle Eastern cultures by enforcing its own through using a variety of Soft Power techniques. This chapter continues discussing the strategies utilized by the United States in the Middle East, from the use of Media, to the Immigration and Exchange programs, to the American institutions abroad. Furthermore, this chapter tackles, how the Middle East had a part of influencing the west as well, mainly by its immigrants in the United States.

#### **1. Other Soft Power Strategies**

##### **1.1. Social Media**

Social Media is a new source of Soft Power. According to Merriam-Webster the latter is, “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)”. Many developed countries including the United States uses Social Media as a strategy of public diplomacy in today’s world.

According to William T, “it’s important to recognize the potential that social networking sites can have on attaining soft power both now and for the future.” Only a couple decades ago communicating ideas, thoughts, beliefs and ideologies, between people from different nations was not that easy process, however, the creation of such networking websites like Facebook in 2004, and Twitter in 2006, and other sites/apps throughout the years, allowed billions of people to connect and share their distinct cultures and beliefs. These variety of websites and social networks are not only used by regular people, now politicians including presidents have their own official pages and websites. This new wave of media, helped facilitating the connection between politicians and citizens. William T. illustrates that “The 2008 general elections saw the turning point for the U.S. government as it saw the power of

social networking in candidates successfully communicating with supporters...”(30). Indeed Barack Obama winning the election in 2008 had something to do with his campaign using social media; Facebook and YouTube, to develop a connection with the voters. Aaker says:

Many factors contributed to his success, but a major one was the way Obama and his Chicago-based campaign team used social media and technology as an integral part of their campaign strategy, not only to raise money, but also more importantly, to develop a groundswell of empowered volunteers who felt that they could make a difference. (1)

Social Media not only made connections easier between politicians and their nations, but also with other nations and their people. Today, this new form of Soft Power helps facilitate the influence more than ever. The United States has made use of these new media in the Middle East in every possible case. One of the first cases media connected between the two regions, was the “Arab Spring”. During this era Arab youths found a voice in such networking sites as Facebook and Twitter; they could easily connect with one another and organize demonstrations and raise awareness among each other and other youths across the Arab world. Tunisians took an essential part in the Arab Spring; protesting adolescents took to the streets as a response to the murder of two Tunisian men; Mohamed Bouazizi and Lahseen Naji, both self-murdered themselves due to the dictatorship, misery and unemployment. Many Facebook pages were dedicated to these men, and protests were no longer the nation’s matter, as they became global news thanks to the rising Facebook and twitter posts which included images and videos from the Tunisian manifestations. Although the government responded with some policy reforms upon jobs and trade, even replacing some government officials, the Tunisians only grew louder and they led to Ben Ali’s ending. The United States, as every other nation in the world, witnessed the rise of the Arab Spring through TV and computer screens, and found a great opportunity to interfere using only

social media. According to William T., “The United States government capitalized on a prime opportunity to join the digital dialogue, speaking with the people of Tunisia, and perhaps increasing its influence with an audience that may soon be in power.”(38)

A year later the USA will try again to increase its influence among Egyptians, after they joined the Arab Spring. William T. writes: “The United States was able to increase its soft power with the Egyptian people by communicating directly with those among them on the medium they were using...” (40). Post-mortem pictures of Khaled Said, a victim of police brutality, started circulating around the media, leading thousands of people to peacefully protests against the dictatorial government. The former United States Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Philip J. Crowley posted a series of tweets supporting Egypt, in the name of America. “The government and people of #Egypt face consequential choices in the coming days. We hope they choose a path of dialogue and reform.”



**Fig.9.** Philip J. Crowley’s 1<sup>st</sup> Tweet.

**Source:** “Philip J. Crowley’s Tweets.” Twitter. Accessed 10 Jun. 2021

In another tweet he says that “As president #Obama said, ideas in #Egypt cannot be suppressed. The people want a change the government must respond to that aspiration.”



**Fig.10.** Philip J. Crowley’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Tweet.

**Source:** “Philip J. Crowley’s Tweets.” Twitter. Accessed 10 Jun. 2021

Lastly, in another sign of solidarity, Crowley tweeted Obama’s words writing, “President #Obama speaking now: there must be an orderly transition in #Egypt and it must begin now. The U.S. will be a partner.”



**Fig.11.** Philip J. Crowley’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Tweet.

**Source:** “Philip J. Crowley’s Tweets.” Twitter. Accessed 10 Jun. 2021

Despite the fact that Social Media helped letting the voices of Arab youths be heard by the entire world, it also facilitated the interferences from the US in the region’s affairs. Although mainly digitally, there is no doubt that America has not succeeded in implementing its soft power through these new forms of media in the revolting youth of the Arab world. According to William T. “the constant reaffirmation of the protestors’ actions was positive for the United States because those about to take power would know exactly where the United States

stood the entire time, and would be more likely to cooperate with the United States in the future.”(42).

Social Media has developed largely since the Arab Spring, and such websites like Facebook Twitter, and YouTube became way accessible and easier to use. Facebook alone went from 608 million users in 2010 to 3.14 billion users in 2020 according to statistics. Middle Easterners make about 187 million active users. “Facebook, the world’s largest social media network, has 187 million active monthly users in the region. Egypt was the largest market for Facebook in MENA with 38 million daily users and 40 million monthly users.”(“Social Media Use by Youth”). Multiple other Social Media apps were created and today are spread among Arab youths, apps like Instagram for instance, facilitates the cultural exchange, and help globalizing the Western cultures, especially America’s.

## **1.2. Exchange Programs**

A student exchange program is an opportunity that allows secondary school or university students to study abroad for a short period of time. These programs are usually fully or partially funded, and gives the participants the chance to study in another country, and learn about its history and culture first hand. The United States is among the most popular countries that work with such Academic programs. It first initiated the exchange programs in 1923, at the University of Delaware (Lee). Today America has the largest number of international students, 1.21 million at the end of 2017, according to CSIS Headquarters.

The US has always considered the exchange programs as an important source of Soft Power. According to CSIS Headquarters, “The US has used international educational and professional exchanges as a powerful tool of understanding and influence.” They also note: “International exchange has all sorts of incredible soft power benefits for the United States in terms of future commercial connections, international education, scientific collaboration, and greater appreciation and understanding of the United States.”



The American Government supports several programs where Arab scholars and students can experience the American culture in its country. Programs such as Fulbright has financed scholarships for Arab youth since the 1950s. Arab students of different levels, from high schools to graduate schools, can have the chance to study in the US, while also mid-career Arab professionals can use the chance to connect with their counterparts and observe how their job is performed out in the west.

According to Rugh, “Public diplomacy officers have high appreciation for all of these programs and regard them as the best way to expose foreign audiences to many aspects of American soft power.” (5). As claimed by Fitzpatrick and Rugh, the visitors usually are suspicious at first concerning parts of the region's culture; however, when returning from these visits, they usually have a more positive impression of America as they get to live the country's culture first hand. “American diplomats know that the impact of these exchange programs is almost always to enhance the appreciation of the visitors for America's soft power.” (Rugh 6). Rugh gives the example of Anwar Sadat, the Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament, who got accepted back in the 1960s in an International Visitor program. Sadat, who was first concerned about racism in the States, was later tremendously delighted with his stay and amazed by America. Sadat eventually became the president of his country, and he altered Egypt's foreign policy to a more pro-US orientation (Rugh 6).

### **1.3. The American Immigration Programs**

The United States is a country of immigrants. Throughout centuries, people from all around the world fled to the States seeking better life opportunities, and until today, the land of the opportunity also known as the USA still welcomes large numbers of immigrants from all around the globe with various free visa programs, such as the Green Card or the DV Lottery program. According to the DV Lottery official website, the Diversity Visa Program (DV Lottery) is, “congressionally-mandated and allows up to 55,000 persons from nations

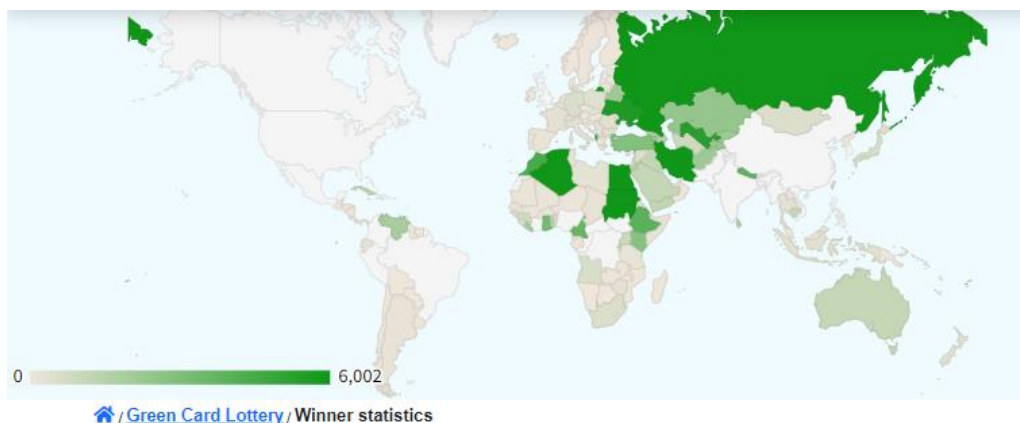
that are historically under-represented in terms of migration to the United States of America to qualify each year for immigrant visas...”. The United States randomly selects tens of thousands of immigrants yearly, and it has been doing so for nearly 3 decades (since 1994). A person who get accepted in the DV lottery gains a permanent residence in the States; for that many people around the world today apply for it, hoping they can get the chance to become American citizens, and find better life opportunities in America.

These Visa Lottery programs are amongst the US’s various sources of Soft Power. According to La Corte and Voisine: “...in its many forms, immigration has functioned as a soft power resource for the United States. For much of the 20th century, the U.S. accepted millions of refugees and immigrants escaping poverty and political turmoil, generating a reputation of openness and opportunity.” They add: “Diasporas from a wide range of countries have created communities in the U.S. that have remained in contact with home communities, facilitating cultural, political, technological, and business exchange.” Indeed, these immigrants were not the only beneficiary, but also the United States.

La Corte and Voisine write: “The connection between immigration and soft power spans many of the metrics used by the Soft Power 30 index to rank countries by their soft power resources.” They include four important metrics, the first is Educational Exchange. They agree that the latter can help foster good impressions of the host country. They say, “education, is measured in terms of the ‘ability of a country to attract international students,’ based on numerous empirical studies that show that educational exchange promotes positive images of the host country amongst exchange participants.” Engagement and Enterprise, are another two important metrics which are also connected to immigration, they connect the ability to interact with international audiences and the ability to innovate, La Corte and Voisine note that “in the U.S., immigrants have played essential roles in maintaining ties between the U.S. and their home countries and have also contributed significantly to research

and business development.” Culture is also an essential metric which relates to immigration. La Corte and Voisine illustrate with immigrant artists including singers, celebrities, artists, writers, and filmmakers, who contributed to the creation of the most impactful cultural products in the United States. Moreover, “creating content that resonates with a global audience and promotes images of tolerance and multiculturalism, which boost soft power.” Besides immigrant artists, immigrant diplomats and politicians have also come up with new perspectives to the U.S. government. La Corte and Voisine include; “Madeleine Albright, Samantha Power, Zalmay Khalilzad, and many other ambassadors, Cabinet members, and members of Congress.”

The Middle Eastern people, just like many others, apply for this International Visa Programs, and in most cases these people escape turmoil at home, mainly joblessness for most youth. They seek better life opportunities in the West. According to the-american-dream.com, thousands of Middle Eastern people were accepted in 2020. Most Significantly from; Egypt (6,002), Algeria (6,001), Iran (6,001), Morocco (4,458), Turkey (2,874), Jordan (1,587), Yemen (1,222), Iraq (1,184), and Saudi Arabia (1,126). Less Winners (i.e. Green Card winners) were from; Syria (487), UAE (281), Libya (259), Lebanon (249), Tunisia (173), Qatar (82), and Oman (32).



**Fig.12.** Green Card Lottery Winner Statistics.

**Source:** “Winner Statistics.” The American Dream Website. Accessed 11 Jun. 2021

Although it is called a random selection but a large majority was picked from Arab or other Muslim countries (Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan). The other countries in the world, besides Russia, were rarely selected. These results leads to questioning whether America really randomly pick these people, or there are cultural, political, technological, or business exchange reasons behind each pick.

#### **1.4. The American Academic Institutions Abroad**

While the United States has some of the best Universities in the world at home, namely: Stanford, Harvard, Columbia University and more: it also has tens of American Universities abroad. “American Universities Abroad (AUA) is a group of private American Universities located outside of the United States. AUA Universities are US regionally accredited, non-profit, and operate on US academic credit systems.” (“American Universities Abroad”). According to Kraska:

A lot of U.S. institutions have built American universities abroad, or are partnered with international institutions, in order to offer more to their students seeking graduate and undergraduate degrees. In fact, American colleges and universities operate about 80 branches overseas that teach in English. (“The Top 15 American Universities with International Campuses”)

Some of the best AUAs include: Abu Dhabi University, American College Dublin, the American College of Greece, the American University in Cairo, the American University in Dubai, the American University of Armenia, the American University of Beirut, the American University of Paris, the American University of Phnom Penh, the American University of Rome, and the list goes on (“Top American Universities Overseas”).

America’s Academic Institutions, whether at home or abroad, are known to be one of the greatest sources of the nation’s Soft Power. According to Wojciuk: “The American higher education system remains a source of soft power for the United States (US), which is

reflected in surveys conducted among foreign students.”(354). The AUAs are important sources for the America Soft Power. Bertelsen illustrates this with two important foreign institutions in Lebanon, one of them is the American University of Beirut:

The American University of Beirut (established 1866) and the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (1875) as private American- and French-affiliated universities in the Middle East have received much policy attention from the USA (since the 1950s) and France (from the 1880s) for Soft Power purposes. (2)

The American University of Beirut is marked as the first American Academic Institution in the Middle East. According to the official website of the University, the AUB is:

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut is a teaching-centered research university based on the American liberal arts model of higher education. AUB has over 8,000 students and 800 faculty members. The University encourages freedom of thought and expression and seeks to graduate men and women committed to creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility, and leadership. (“American University of Beirut”)

Since its founding over 150 years ago, the American University of Beirut played an essential role in the US interests in Lebanon and the Middle East. Besides its initial educational and religious purposes; promoting protestant beliefs, obliging students to learn in English, urging them to follow Darwinism, promoting western ideologies and American values, the American University also interfered in the politics of Lebanon and Syria (Al Jazeera).

The American University of Beirut had a major influence in the people of Lebanon and Syria; it helped shaping America’s good image in the minds of its students and the people of the region. One example, is the results of the survey conducted by the 2nd president of the University, Howard Bliss, the son of Daniel Bliss; one of the co-founders and the first

president of the institution. Howard participated in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and proposed to conduct a survey in the Middle East asking the people of the region what type of government they aspired, opposing to what the British and French wanted to impose.

Although The survey was latter boycotted by the two Powers, its results showed that the people of the region were rejecting the British and French mandates in the area, and suggested the US's mandate if needed. The results implicated how the US could influence the people of the region (Al Jazeera).

Moreover, some of the AUB graduates assumed high positions, and some of them became pro-American politicians. In 1958, a civil war occurred in Lebanon between supporters and opponents of Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab nationalism. The United States intervened in the region as a request from its president at the time Camille Chamoun. It was later proved that the AUB Lebanese graduate and professor, Charles Malik, who was a significant political figure at the time, was the one who advised president Chamoun to send a formal statement to the United States requesting their assistance in Lebanon. This intervention marked the US's first military presence in Lebanon, and the Middle East (Al Jazeera).

The AUB has played an important role in the US interests in the region, and could really influence generations of leaders who served back America. It is important to note that the majority of the students realized the hidden aims of the institution and protested against it back in 1970s-2000s (Al Jazeera). However, the AUB is still operating as another American Soft Power institution, with hundreds of students and future leaders graduating yearly from the University.

### **1.5. American Political Values**

The American political values also compose a significant component in the US's Soft power. According to Telhami's book *"The World through Arab Eyes: Arab Public Opinion*

*and the Reshaping of the Middle East.*", Arabs appreciate the American democracy, their rule of law, accountability of leaders, freedom of expression, and other American political values. Arabs consider the American political system a model, mostly because their countries lack such values (Rugh 5).

## **2. From the Middle East to the US, the Opposite Direction**

The United States of America, undoubtedly, has used tens of public diplomacy methods available to increase its soft power and influence in the Middle East, from sending its cultural products abroad, to manipulating the media, and permitting Arabs to enter through exchange/visa programs. Some of its techniques helped shifting roles, and gave more credits to the Arabs cultures too.

One example can be found in the American exchange programs, according to La Corte and Voisine; "The opposite works as well: Think of U.S. Peace Corps volunteers, study abroad participants, business travelers, or tourists who travel elsewhere and come back to tell the tales of the places they visited. In essence, anyone can transmit soft power upsides or downsides." Such exchange programs like U.S. Peace Corps have sent volunteers to the Middle East as well. A recent story published in the Peace Corps website, by Dominick Tanoh, describes his teaching experience in Morocco. He says; "I hope to share some pieces of my own culture with the young Moroccans I work with. I also try to take in all that I can from the local culture that surrounds me." Dylan Thompson is another volunteer, who also been to Morocco, he writes: "We blown away by how unique and special the country was compared to anywhere we had visited before. Our trip left us eager to learn more about Moroccan culture." Another volunteer, Matt Rogers, also participated in the Islamic culture of Morocco and tried fasting, he notes that "Waiting to eat until Iftar was a fantastic way to connect more deeply with my community. I spent many meals talking with several families and learning more about Moroccan culture as it relates to Islam." Many other participants

shared their appreciations on the North African and Middle Eastern cultures in the Peace Corps website. These show how such exchange programs can help send and receive soft power.

The Middle East, compared to the United States, does not have all these Soft Power techniques available, however, its presence has long been a part of the US's melting pot cultures. Immigration is the most influential part of the East in the West, and as of today there are Arabs all around the World; and where there are Arabs, there is their distinct culture and religion. According to the Arab American Institute:

Arab immigrants began coming to the U.S. in sizable numbers during the 1880's.

Today, it is estimated that nearly 3.7 million Americans trace their roots to an Arab country. Arab Americans are found in every state, but more than two thirds of them live in just ten states: California, Michigan, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Metropolitan Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York are home to one-third of the population. The majority of Arab Americans are native-born, and nearly 82% of Arabs in the U.S. are citizens. While the community traces its roots to every Arab country, the majority of Arab Americans have ancestral ties to Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iraq. ("Demographics - Arab American Institute")

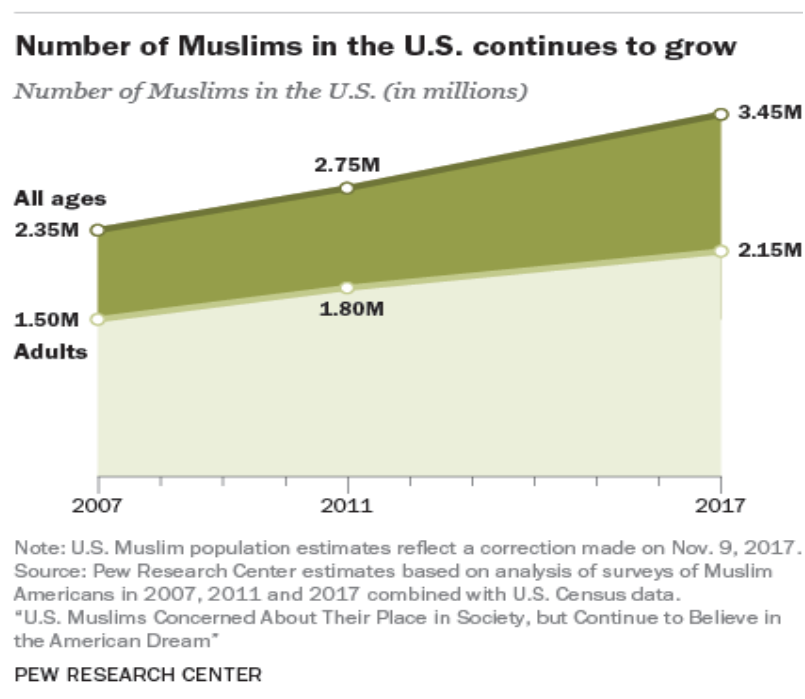
The population of Arabs in America is larger than the population of some Middle Eastern countries including; Qatar and Bahrain.

Thanks to immigration, Arabs could influence the American culture and become a part of it. Research statistics made in 2017 show that, Muslims in America have reached about 3.45 million people. According to Mohamed; "Pew Research Center estimates that there were about 3.45 million Muslims of all ages living in the U.S. in 2017, and that Muslims made up about 1.1% of the total U.S. population." He confirms that:



At the same time, our projections suggest that the U.S. Muslim population will grow much faster than the country's Jewish population. By 2040, Muslims will replace Jews as the nation's second-largest religious group after Christians. And by 2050, the U.S. Muslim population is projected to reach 8.1 million, or 2.1% of the nation's total population — nearly twice the share of today. (“New Estimates Show U.S. Muslim Population Continues to Grow”)

The Pew Research Center statistics show a continuous rise in the numbers of Muslims in the US; more than a million moved or converted to Islam between 2007 and 2017.



**Fig.13.** Number of Muslims in the US.

**Source:** “New Estimates Show U.S. Muslim Population Continues to Grow.”

Pew Research Center. Accessed 14 Jun. 2021

The increase of Muslims in the region, simultaneously, leads to the increase of places of worship, i.e. Mosques. According to Bagby:

In 2020, the US Mosque Survey counted 2,769 mosques, which is a 31% increase from the 2010 count of 2,106 mosques. Undoubtedly, the primary driving force

for the increase of mosques is the steady expansion of the population of Muslims in America due to immigration and birth rate. (“American Mosque Survey 2020 Report 1”)

Arab Muslims, and Middle Easterns in general have brought everything that has to do with the Islamic religion to the US, including the Islamic holidays; like Eid Al Adha, Eid Al Fitr and the holy month of Ramadan. “In 2015, New York City became the first large metropolis in America to recognize the two Eids as official holidays and closed its public schools in observance of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha.” (“Muslim Holidays: Fact Sheet”). More states; Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and others recognized these Islamic celebrations. This shows how significant is the Muslim culture in the US, as they are not only recognized by the States, Congress and the Presidents, but also have become a point of interest for curious non-Muslim Americans, who themselves tried to participate in these Islamic traditions. Lohr, the President of Hartford Seminary, has served Muslim students in his career as a Professor and describes his journey with the students during the month of Ramadan as a special experience. Lohr writes,

If you’ve ever been invited to a breaking of the fast meal during Ramadan, something called an Iftar, you’ll have witnessed how this special event each night brings community and family together. It is a deeply communal moment, especially when that first bite of food is taken – often a date – and water finally reaches one’s parched mouth. The connectedness of those who have waited for sunset, denying oneself for another day to draw closer to God and give to neighbor, is powerful. Joy and fellowship fill the air. It is hard to describe.

(“Opinion: Finding Blessing in Ramadan as a non-Muslim”)

He even encourages non-Muslim students, and people in general to take a part of the Muslim holiday alongside Muslims. “I encourage you, whatever your faith tradition, or even

if you have none, to see this as an opportunity. If you have a Muslim neighbor or colleague, find a way to express interest, build a friendship, and experience life through their eyes.”

(Lohr)

Hallal food is also related to Islam, and is now a part of the American food markets. Arab Muslims in the US made sure to express the limits of their faith, and continue adhering to the Islamic rules even at a country, where pork and alcohol are available at almost every grocery store and supermarket. “In 2016, more than 7500 places sold halal food the US as compared to nearly 200 places in 1998” (“Halal Food Market in the US”). Muslims building their own Hallal shops and restaurants show how influential is their Islamic identity in the West. Moreover, Middle Eastern food and recipes are now spread all over the the US as well. Eadeh says that: “Aside from what’s said about Arab Americans in the news by demagogic politicians, Arab Americans are probably most known for their restaurants and cuisines found across the country.” The Arab Cuisine is indeed very influential, and such foods as Hummus, Shawarma, Tabbouli, Falafel, and falafel, are now a part of the American restaurant’s menus (Eadeh). The Middle Eastern cuisines, just like the American’s has really influenced the West and the rest of the world.

In addition to the religion and the traditions of Arabs, the language, is another very important feature Middle Easterns brought to the US. Today, Arabic is not only spoken by the Arab-Americans generations, but also is taught in the American institutions as a foreign language. Reinl writes: “While fewer Americans speak Arabic than English, Spanish, Chinese or even Tagalog, it is perhaps the nation’s fastest-growing language and is increasingly being studied in kindergartens and colleges from the boondocks to big cities.” More Americans are showing interest in learning the Arabic language, and mostly for cultural interests, al-Batal assume: “Some people study Arabic for professional reasons or to get a government job, but most are the true Americans who are open to other cultures,” (Al

Jazeera). Recent statistics show a large increase in the enrolment of American students in Arabic language courses, with 126.5% from 2002 to 2006, and 46.3% from 2006 to 2009 (Modern Language Association). “That makes Arabic the fastest-growing area of foreign language study in the US, by far, and, as of the 2009 survey, the eighth most-studied language in America. Also as of 2009, 35,083 college and university students in the US were enrolled in Arabic courses” (“Arabic language studies booming in the US”). These results show significant is the Arabic language in the West, and implicate how influencing is the Arab culture and language.

	2002	2006	% Change, 2002–06	2009	% Change, 2006–09
Spanish	746,267	822,985	10.3	864,986	5.1
French	201,979	206,426	2.2	216,419	4.8
German	91,100	94,264	3.5	96,349	2.2
ASL	60,781	78,829	29.7	91,763	16.4
Italian	63,899	78,368	22.6	80,752	3.0
Japanese	52,238	66,605	27.5	73,434	10.3
Chinese	34,153	51,582	51.0	60,976	18.2
Arabic	10,584	23,974	126.5	35,083	46.3
Latin	29,841	32,191	7.9	32,606	1.3
Russian	23,921	24,845	3.9	26,883	8.2

**Table.1.** Arabic language studies booming in the US.

**Source:** “Enrolment in Foreign Language Studies in US Colleges and Universities.” Modern Language Association. Accessed 15 Jun. 2021

The United States and the Middle East are two major influential cultural environments. Although different in cultural beliefs, they do influence one another in a variety of ways. As for the US, its culture became worldwide dominant thanks to the continuous use of its Soft and Hard Powers. Both were used in the Middle East. The most important Soft Power tools the US used in the region are: the Cultural Products, Social Media, the Exchange and Immigration programs, and the Academic Institutions abroad. These were proved to have a significant effect on Middle Eastern culture. The latter, however, has also influenced that

culture of America. As Middle Easterns have long established their own cultural group and became an essential part of the American melting pot. Middle Easterns continue to immigrate to the United States, and with that, the MENA continues to influence the US cultural melting pot.

## Chapter Five

### Dubai: a Multicultural City or a Western Village on an Arab Soil

Started from a small fishing village on the coast of the Persian Gulf, the city of Dubai became known as the fastest growing city in the world. The modern metropolis theme of the city, from the highest skyscrapers, to the fanciest hotels and buildings, to the biggest future projects, makes the city of Dubai seem unreal in comparison to its short history. This megalopolis have succeeded in becoming one of the world's most popular touristic destination, moreover, a major trade hub and re-export capital. Although, turned into a successful city, Dubai is often criticized for the absence of its cultural roots, as the city's architecture, lifestyle and society are tremendously affected by the modern Western world.

#### 1. The United Arab Emirates and the City of Dubai

##### 1.1. The United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is a Middle Eastern country situated in Western Asia, in the Easternmost of the Arabian Peninsula, wedged between Oman and Saudi Arabia. A constitutional federation of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi (Abū Ḥabī) ; the capital of the nation, and the center of the UAE's oil industry, it occupies three-fourths of the land area and borders Saudi Arabia. Dubai (Dubayy) the UAE's most important business and financial hub, hosting hundreds of international companies, and is one of the world's most popular tourist destination today. The federations of Sharjah (Al-Shāriqah), 'Ajman ('Ajmān), Umm al-Quwain (Umm al-Qaywayn), Ras al-Khaimah (Ra's al-Khaymah), and Fujairah (Al-Fujayrah), are considered smaller Emirates, and have less populations compared to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, however they also contribute significantly to the oil industry and economy of the UAE.



**Fig.14.** The Map of the United Arab Emirates

**Source:** “United Arab Emirates.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed 08 May. 2021

Having been founded only 50 years ago (December 2, 1971), the UAE is one of the most developed countries in the Middle East and the world today. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15; the United Arab Emirates was the leading economy in the Middle East, and ranked the 12th in the world. Its competitive economy only came to rise after the discovery of oil in the mid-twentieth century. Prior to that era, the UAE’s economy was mainly dependent on fishing and pearl trade. After the oil exports started in the 1960s, the country's economy rapidly changed. Today, the UAE's per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is compared with that of major Western European countries, according to the CIA’s World Factbook, as it has grown significantly since the 1970s, from Dh6.5 billion in 1971 to Dh1.54 trillion in the present year (2014) (“UAE Ranks among Most Developed Countries”). The increasing GDP of the UAE (\$67,700.00) ranks it third among the richest countries in the Middle East, preceded by Qatar first (\$129,700.00) and Kuwait second (\$71,300.00) (Chepkemoi).

The United Arab Emirates has expanded its economy and financial resources further than oil and natural gas’ money, with creating new destinations for tourism and international trade

in the Middle East; Dubai and Abu Dhabi today host millions of tourists and business men from all over the world, building the most extravagant and luxurious hotels, shopping malls and companies, and inviting millions of immigrants to become a part of their flourishing country. Today, the UAE has reached global standards in terms of economy, trade, tourism, innovation and human development, which makes it one of the most developed countries in the world.

## 1.2. Dubai

Dubai (Dubayy) is a Middle Eastern city located in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula on the coast of the Persian Gulf. It is the capital of Dubai; one of the seven Emirates of the United Arab Emirates. Dubai is the most populous federation in the UAE and the second richest Emirate. Unlike Abu Dhabi and the other five Emirates, Dubai does not depend on oil revenues; it is mainly dependent on tourism and international trade. The city receives millions of overseas visitors every year (16.73 million in 2019) and ranks amongst the top most visited cities worldwide. The city of Dubai is today compared to such cities as Singapore and Hong Kong and it is frequently referred to as the Middle East's premier port.



**Fig.15.** The location of the Dubai in the world map

**Source:** “Location Map of Dubai, UAE.” Whereig.com. Accessed 05 August. 2021



Dubai is a skyscraper-studded metropolis that is known for the highest building in the world, “Burj Khalifa”; this tower’s height goes over 828 meters and 160 stories, it has become the tallest structure and building in the world since its completion in 2009. It is today one of the top landmarks in Dubai, the UAE and the Middle East as whole. Another milestone for the city, is the Dubai Mall; it holds the title for the world's largest destination for shopping, entertainment and leisure.



**Fig.16.** Burj Khalifa

Source: “Burj Khalifa.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Accessed 05 August. 2021

This city of skyscrapers, ports, and beaches, is a place where extravagant tourism and big business take place. Besides the tourists and important business men Dubai hosts, the city is a home to millions of immigrants from all over the world. These large numbers of expatriates make Dubai feel like a Middle Eastern melting pot, where people from different cultural backgrounds coexist with the locals’ culture.

### **1.2.1. Brief History**

Dubai started from a small fishing village in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The small town of few hundreds citizens, flourished quickly as it became a key center of pearl-diving industry. The city developed further in the early twentieth century as its business-savvy ruling family reduced taxes and welcomed international merchants, and it quickly became a re-exporting center for Persia and India. Dubai's focus remained on commerce and investment, channeling oil surpluses into major infrastructure projects including an international airport, dry docks, and a trade center. The city began to diversify in the 1990s, focusing on tourism, real estate, and business. With expats from all over the Arab world, as well as Asia, Europe, and North America, the city had a cosmopolitan feel and was regarded as having one of the region's most liberal communities (Davidson).

### **1.2.2. Population**

Over the decades, Dubai's population has significantly increased, from a few thousand locals to well over three million (3.331 million in 2019). The majority of the early increasing population were merchants from neighboring nations relocating to Dubai because of its business-friendly climate. The city's construction boom in the late twentieth century resulted in a large influx of South Asian laborers, as well as skilled expats from all over the world, who play an essential part in Dubai's multi-sector economy. Expatriates greatly outnumbered Emiratis in the city. Expatriates of various countries are spread around Dubai, with the exception of laborers, who are accommodated in work camps outside the city boundaries. Despite the fact that Arabic is the official language, English is the lingua franca. The native population is predominantly Muslim, as is the majority of the expatriate community, however there are considerable Christian, Hindu, and Sikh populations (Davidson). Dubai's population continue to increase significantly due to the immigration programs and work opportunities, making the city feels like a melting pot of different races and ethnic groups.

### **1.2.3. Customs and Culture**

The UAE's culture mainly revolve around the Islamic and Arabic customs and traditions. However, in the last few decades other foreign cultures came to exist in the country. The Emirate of Dubai has quickly turned into a melting pot of diverse cultures, from the locals' own, to others from the MENA region, south Asia (specifically; India and Pakistan), Europe, America and more.

Dubai's local culture, through all the diversity, still maintains some of the Islamic customs including the five prayers of the day, the holy month of Ramadan, and the Islamic feasts. Although the laws of the city restrict foreigners from disrespecting the Muslim lifestyle and culture, they also allow freedom of belief and worship for the other cultural groups and tourists. Besides the religion, the local's mother tongue is Arabic, however English is highly used as a lingua franca. Dubaians traditional attire is modest for both genders. Male dress consist of Kandura, Gutra (Headdress), Agal, and Bisht (cloak), while female dress consist of Abaya, Jalabiyya, Hijab, Shyla, Gishwah (face-cover), and Burqa ("Complete Guide to Traditional Dress of UAE"). Besides the unique attire, Dubai's food stands out among the other traditional cuisines brought by expats. Some of the traditional Emirati dishes include; Khuzi, Al Harees, Al Machboos and Fattoush (Samtani).

The Emiratis' culture is very rich and unique, however, it is becoming less significant in their own nation. With the emergence of other world cultures and traditions, the locals are somehow becoming a minority in such cities as Dubai, and so are their cultures and traditions.

## **2. The New Society of Dubai and the Change in the Local's Culture and Values**

The local culture of the UAE, just like its Middle Eastern neighbors, originally revolved around the religion of Islam and the Arabic values. However, since Dubai's oil boom, everything from the city, the people, and the domestic culture had changed. Today, the local

people of Dubai make less than 5% of the city's population, while immigrants make the majority with 95% (Urban Stories). This phenomena created a new environment where people from outside the UAE brought their cultures and values, and added them to the country's own. Not to forget those millions of tourists, of all different backgrounds, visiting the city yearly and sharing a part of their cultures. Now walking the streets of Dubai feels like walking in a Western melting pot city like New York or London, people of all diversities exist in there. The large numbers of immigrants in Dubai has for sure effected the local's culture to a point where it became a threat to the Emirati's identity; according to Al-Qassimi,

Concerns over Emirati identity have grown in the past few years as the influence of other cultures and languages has increased alongside the growth of the expatriate population. Officials and social experts alike have identified cultural and economic globalization as a major threat to Emirati identity. (“Arabish: The Cultural Transformation of the UAE”)

As for today, these expatriates can openly practice their distinct beliefs, sell their country's food, attire, art, celebrate their heritage, and simply live Western in this Middle Eastern city.

### **3. The UAE's Relationship with the USA**

According to the website of the UAE Embassy in Washington DC; “The United Arab Emirates and the United States are close friends and strong allies. With shared interests and common values, the UAE and the USA work together to promote regional security, create economic prosperity and address pressing global challenges.” The UAE has a very close relationship with the USA. The two countries have enjoyed friendly diplomatic and economic relations since 1974, and cooperated in various situations, including the US's campaign that ended the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. America protects the UAE and maintains three military bases in the country. According to Wikipedia; “the UAE ports host more US Navy ships than any other port outside of the US.” Americans also make one of the largest expat communities

in the region, with around 40,000 people, living and working there. American businesses and big companies are also scattered across around the region. The Consulate General of the UAE in New York website states that “More than 1,500 US firms have a presence in the UAE, from Bechtel and ExxonMobil to Starbucks and Cold Stone Creamery” (“UAE-US Economic Relationship”).

#### **4. The USA’s influence on the UAE from the perspective of Dubai**

##### **4.1. The American/European Influence on the Architecture of Dubai**

The port city that grew from the desert is often criticized for looking more Western than Arab. The Washington Post newspaper once criticized Dubai for sacrificing all its Arabic features in able to become a successful known Arabic city, stating: “the Dubai model, as its advocates call it, the region's most ambitious experiment in bringing success to an Arab city by shearing away the qualities that have long defined it as Arab.” Indeed, the interface of this newly constructed metropolis has nearly no Arabic feel to it, as its architecture does not necessarily symbolize the history of the region and its people.

Dubai is indeed inspired by the European and the American architecture. According to Brook, Sheikh Rashid ibn Saeed Al Maktoum, the second prime minister and co-founder of Dubai, played a large part in creating the modern Emirate of Dubai. The late Sheikh was influenced by the Architecture of Europe, and especially Britain during his visits to the west. “When he returned to Dubai Sheikh Rashid was determined to bring the city into the modern world.” And “Sheikh Rashid’s development lodestar was London. As such he hired a slew of British experts to build a city who, in turn scoured the globe for fresh talents” (Brook 217-218). Sheikh Rashid’s did not only focus on London as an inspiration, he even sent architects all over the world to get inspired and bring new ideas to Dubai. Jun Palafox, a Pilipino architect, who worked and met the Sheikh recalls Rashid’s orders:

Bring Dubai from the third world—or fourth world—into the first world in fifteen years. Number two: Dubai was only 200,000 in population, design it for one million. Number three: design Dubai as if there's no oil. Number four: make it the center of the Middle East. Number five: go around the world and copy.

(qtd. in Brook 218)

Upon his arrival back to his country, Sheikh Rashid, started numerous projects in Dubai, including artificially deepening the creek of Dubai to allow bigger ships to sail in, and rebuilding the city with stone and cement instead of traditional materials like coral, mud brick, wood and thatch (Urban Stories). Moreover, the biggest projects Sheikh Rashid instructed were Dubai's first international airport (1960) and the city's first skyscraper; the Dubai World Trade Centre (1979) which is regarded as the first high-rise of the city (Urban Stories). Both inspired by the European-American Airports and Skyscrapers.

What was started by Sheikh Rashid was later continued by his son Mohammed Al Maktoum, the third and present Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. Just like his father, Mohammed was also inspired by the Western architects, particularly the American architect Daniel Burnham. According to Brook; "As the locomotive built Daniel Burnham's Chicago, the jetliner built Sheikh Mohammed's Dubai" (285). Mohammed followed Burnham in his saying; "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will themselves not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will not die." Mohammed adapted this approach and started going bigger on projects, starting with the Emirates Towers in 2000, a building that, at the time, was higher than any building in Europe. The latter was followed by what became the highest skyscraper in the world, Burj Khalifa in 2010 (Urban Stories).

The city only grew bigger and more projects took place ever since, however all of these new constructions only got Dubai farther from its Arabic origin. Not only the city is now

shaped like a Western city, but even its local people now make up a minority in comparison to the immigrants Dubai allowed entrance to make it a land of investments and diversity. Today the Emiratis of Dubai make 3-5% of the city's population, while immigrants make up 95%, most of them are South Asians. (59.4% includes Indian 38.2%, Bangladeshi 9.5%, Pakistani 9.4%, and other 2.3% (WorldAtlas). This huge number of immigrants from all different ethnic groups and backgrounds had a large impact on the local culture, and as of today the Islamic city is more open to other religious affiliations, building churches, Buddhist temples, synagogues, and others ("Religion in Dubai"). In fact the freedom of religion in the UAE was only established about two decades ago. A policy that yet again helped dividing Dubai from its origins as an Islamic country, and contrasted it and the UAE from any other Arabic countries, but helped it become more like the United States and Britain.

Besides building a city that celebrates all religions, Dubai's sacrificed some of its Islamic laws to fit into the list of the most touristic cities in the world. Now nightclubs and bars are built all around the city (It is mentioned that Dubai has the highest bar in the world; Atmosphere, Burj Khalifa, Dubai) (Baker). Alcohol which is forbidden in the Islamic religion was initially legal for the tourists only indoors use, however the UAE has recently announced a "relaxation of Islamic laws". According to Pandey:

No more penalties for alcohol consumption, sales and possession. Those 21 and over will be permitted to indulge in these items. No more requirement of a liquor license to purchase, transport or have alcohol at home. Islamic laws disallow alcohol-consumption but the new laws flex the same for Muslims in UAE. They were denied licences earlier, but now they too can drink alcoholic beverages freely. ("UAE Announces Relaxing of Islamic Laws")

It is safe to say that Dubai had indeed gave up some of its Arabic Islamic laws to become like New York or London, a successful touristic city.

## **4.2. America's Influence on the Culture of the Local People of Dubai and the UAE**

America has always sought to use its soft power in the Middle East, and it succeeded to a certain point in transferring its culture to the region, using a variety of tools to increase its cultural dominance in the Arabic world. The UAE is one of the countries that are “Americanized” the most in comparison to its Middle Eastern neighbors, as it has developed an American-Western architecture and adapted a really similar lifestyle to that of Americans, which is totally obvious.

### **4.2.1. America's Media in transferring the American lifestyle to Dubai**

America is known for dominating the global media, and using it as a strong soft power technique to influence the world. It has been proved that the latter is a strong reason the populations of the Middle East have recently showed Western behaviors and attitudes, and took the first world country, that is America, as a model.

Hills and Atkins write; “One possible reason for these changes is the pervasive influence of Western media in all its forms throughout the region” (203). The UAE and Dubai, are influenced by the Western Media, according to the Center for Decision Making and Support of Dubai Police, American Western media is a threat that effects the Emirati's identity; “The study ... showed that the widely popular satellite TV channels and the Internet are the worst culprits in the new phenomenon, which is beginning to increase the concern of many parents and senior officials” (the Centre for Decision Making and Support of Dubai Police). This 2004 report sheds the light on the negative transformation of the Emirati youth, referred to as “Copycats” i.e. adolescents, in the age groups ranging from 7 to 17 and 18 to 30, became followers of Western lifestyle (particularly the American celebrities' lifestyles). “The respondents said that the most widely spread Western culture, includes Western haircuts, dresses, way of speaking and eating, copying of Western artists and stars, tattoos and inter-gender mix up.” This phenomena of copying the west in such aspects as dress, manners, and



behaviors has widely spread among the Arab youths, and it can be witnessed in the Dubaian society today.

**a- Influence on Dress:**

The UAE is known for their traditional Abaya, for both men and women, however the influence seem to have re-touched their original garment, according to Al-Qassimi;

Emirati fashion is evolving even faster than language. It is a hybrid of Western and traditional Emirati. Women wear Western clothes along with a black abaya – a black cloak worn over every day clothes to conceal the definition of a woman’s body and to preserve her modesty – and men wear the kandora (also called a dishdasha or a thawb) with Western accessoires, such as caps and fancy sandals. Emiratis have found ways to stylize their traditional costume while keeping up with international trends. (“Arabish: the Cultural Transformation of the UAE”)

Emirati youth nowadays, just like youths all around the Middle East, prefer to wear Western rather than traditional. According to the website Quora, under the question “How often do Emiratis wear Western clothes?” some Emiratis and expatriates answered that; “Young, male, Emiratis tend to wear Western dress more often, especially when going out to the mall in the evening or week-end. Teenagers do it more than any other age category.” (Bardot) and “those that have been exposed to Western culture (children who go to American, British or any other European schools) tend to wear the traditional clothes less.” (Omar). Indeed, the American trending style has recently become a part of the Dubaian/Emirati culture.

**b- Influence on Behaviors and Values**

Besides the fashion trends, Western media helped promoting some Western behaviors and values that affected the Arab youths. The millennial generation is known for their willingness to follow anything they've seen on the internet. Millennials in the UAE are no exception.

Materialism is one of the characteristics this generation seem to take from the Western society's behavior, especially the one portrayed by the American celebrities. Dubaian youth are found to replicate such behaviors in their lifestyle. They believe that "goods and money is the central path to happiness and social progress"(Kamal et al. 29). It is one of the outcomes of the spread of Western culture. One of the repercussions of the rise of materialism is a desire to buy high-end fashion items (Kamal et al. 31).

Inter-gender mix up is another Western behavior that is now converted into the Middle Eastern society and youth. In such countries as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, boys and girls usually study in different schools based on gender, and the law prohibits any intimate mixing between genders in public, especially unmarried couples. The new generation of the UAE, however, seem to be rather more open minded and daring, all thanks to the Western influence and Media. Moreover, recent laws made by the country now allow unmarried couples to live together ("UAE Allows Unmarried Couples to Stay Together"), as well as allowing all the schools in the UAE to teach boys and girls side by side starting from 2018 (Khaleej Times). Other transformations regarding the inter-gender mix up include mixed marriages, and allowing females to work in such work areas as the Air Forces.

### **c- Influence on Language:**

Arabic, which is the national language of the city and the mother tongue of locals seem to be vastly neglected by the Arabs of Dubai. English, however, which is considered a lingua franca, that expats use to communicate, is becoming the main language of the place.

According to a recent report, English is the most spoken language in Dubai by the expats and the locals. Dubaian youth seem to use it more than their mother tongue. Nazzal states; "The phenomenon is particularly prevalent in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) where 56 per cent of its youth say they use English more than Arabic, versus 24 per cent in non-GCC countries." When asked for the reason English became the dominant language, some of the

young people in Dubai responded it was Globalization. “I think globalisation also has a role [to play] in this,” (Nazzal). According to another article,

Young Arabs feel speaking English lends them an air of sophistication, and this in turn means they are neglecting their mother tongue. They feel English will consolidate their global identity and make them more amenable to consuming Western culture, which beams into the living-rooms on a daily basis by the influx of television, social media, the Internet and other means of disseminating information. (“The Displacing of Arabic”)

Arabic is a main component of the Emirati’s identity, however, it is slowly being displaced by the American English.

#### **d- Influence on Traditions**

Although Dubai is a Muslim city, in a Muslim country, the nature of its expat population makes it feel like a Multicultural society of different religions and religious celebrations. The Arab Muslim Locals, however, seem to be more interested in those cultures promoted by the US and the West, even the religious parts of them. Christmas, which is a Christian holiday celebrated in America and Europe, is now being replicated by the Emiratis themselves.

Mejren writes:

DUBAI: As the UAE gets ready for Christmas, it’s not just the Christian expats who are counting down to the celebrations. Many Emiratis will also be ringing in the festivities. Their homes have been adorned with lights and the Christmas trees are up, with piles of presents, wrapped in red and green, underneath them, waiting to be opened. (“How Emiratis Celebrate Christmas”)

When Emiratis were asked about the Christmas holiday, many expressed that they are Muslims, who take the cultural occasion as a chance for them to get together with their families and loved ones. Ahmed Emad, says, “We are a completely Muslim family, and the

people we invite are also all Muslims. To us, it's just about sharing and participating in everyone's happiness." (Mejren) Maitha Al Jenaïdi, another interviewee, says; "Many non-Muslims celebrate Eid and they participate in Ramadan. We can get involved in Christmas too because we don't view it as a religious festival, but a beautiful festivity that has a great cultural holiday spirit." (Mejren). Although, some of the interviewees tried to make their version of Christmas seem as Muslim as possible, the effect of this American-Western culture is clear in their answers, for instance, Ahmed Emad says:

My family and friends meet a few weeks before Christmas to decorate the tree.

On December 25, we have a gathering at our house where my mother cooks a big feast for everyone; last year, she made seafood. Then we have a 'Home Alone' marathon and play board games. We also always do secret Santa (where people exchange Christmas presents anonymously). I got my aunt's name and bought her a small gift to keep under the tree. ("How Emiratis Celebrate Christmas")

From Emad's answers about his experience with Christmas, the effect of the Western culture is clear. As Americans introduced their Christmas holiday routines, through films and TV programs, the same is being replicated by the interviewee's family and friends, from the big feast on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, to watching movies about Christmas (Home Alone) to opening Christmas presents.

It is safe to say the Emiratis are really influenced by American lifestyle; whether the one promoted on their Media, or by the American expats in the city. Emiratis, and Arabs in general, are influenced at many levels, but most importantly at the level of dress, behaviors traditions, and language.

#### **4.2.2. Bringing Hollywood to Dubai**

The United States is known for sending its Artists abroad to share the country's art and culture, and Dubai has recently become another destination where the American pop stars and

Artists are sent to perform and largely influence the Arabic country's youth. Between the 2000s and 2020s, dozens of popular American Musicians have performed in Dubai. Stars from the Beatles' member Paul McCartney to Justin Bieber, have made appearances in Dubai's stadiums. Even the most controversial figures like Madonna and Lady Gaga have been invited to perform for their Emirati super fans (Kellaghan). Music shows tend to be highly demanded by the Emirati fans, especially when it comes to these American pop icons. According to Gulf news: "In 2013, Justin Bieber performed in Dubai for his Believe Tour on May 4 and 5. The second show was added later, due to an overwhelming demand and rapid sell-out." It appears that the American popular culture has indeed a large influence on the Arab youth.

Besides these American concerts hosted by Dubai, some of the famous Hollywood movies are now being shot in the city. These include; Furious 7, Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol and Mission Impossible: Fallout, Star Trek: Beyond, and Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens (Time Out Editors). These, also have a certain influence on the locals especially the youth that love to follow Hollywood movies.

#### **4.2.3. Developing a Pro American Generation**

The American universities outside of the states are proved to be a significant Soft Power technique the US uses all around the world to gain more American pros and spread the American culture and values. The American University of Beirut and the American University of Cairo are proved to be the US's greatest Soft Power projects in the Middle East as they have raised generations of American pros in the Arab world. According to G. Bertelsen; "The American University of Beirut (AUB) (established 1866) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) (1919) as private American-affiliated universities in the Middle East have received much policy attention from the USA (since the 1950s) for soft power purposes." This soft power technique, which is proved to be successful in the region, has

been adopted and spread all over the Middle East since the 1950s. Today, there are dozens of American Universities in the Middle East and the UAE.

The first American university in the UAE, the American University of Sharjah (1997), was founded by Sheikh Sultan, who is in fact a graduate of the American University of Beirut. The AUB is famous for graduating known political leaders who were pro Americans, and in the case of the AUS (American University of Sharjah), the influence is obvious, as Sheikh Sultan who was impressed by such an institution, took the project to his own country. Today, the American Universities are spread all over the country, with the majority of them being located in the city of Dubai. According to Worldlistmania, there are 10 American Universities in Dubai alone, these are: American University Dubai, American InterContinental University Dubai, Duke University Dubai, Fuqua School of Business Dubai, Griggs University Dubai, Harvard Medical School Dubai, Hult International Business School Dubai, Michigan State University Dubai, RIT – Rochester Institute of Technology – Dubai Campus, University Of Phoenix Dubai.

There is no doubt that Dubai is different than any other city in the MENA region, as it escapes the Middle Eastern theme and rather follow the Western architecture and lifestyle. Dubai has grown to become the city of skyscrapers, fancy beaches and hotels, modern malls and museums. Moreover it went from a mono cultural small village to the cultural melting pot it represents today. Dubai now barely shows Arabness, as its roots got buried behind the modernized surface it created to impress a world that once thought of the Middle East as a big desert with camels and tent villages. Although Dubai was once a small fishing village on a desert, its fast evolution barely shows any originality, as Emiratis now live in penthouses and drive Cadillacs, wear and eat Western and even emerge in Western practices. This reality of Western influence is really present in Dubai, whether in the architecture, the society, or the local culture, the city is hardly portrayed as Arab.

## Conclusion

After examining the most important aspects of the American Soft Power in the Middle East, and shedding the light on the growing Middle Eastern culture in the US, it is clear, to a certain point, that there is an indirect exchange of cultures between the two regions. The Middle East, has indeed effected and is affected by the United States' cultural beliefs. As some Middle Easterns took their cultures abroad and promoted their roots in the West, some of them also became followers of the Western lifestyles at home. It is safe to say the Middle Eastern culture is becoming a hybrid; mixed with other American-Western cultural beliefs and values. However, even though there seem to be a certain degree of cultural exchange, the US appear to be the dominating side when it comes to the influence of cultures.

The American Soft Power is real, and it is as strong as its Hard Power. The US uses this form of cultural influence to enforce its own ideologies over the cultures of others. The Middle Eastern societies are no exception, and the US has used every Soft Power technique available in the region, from its Cultural Products, the use of Media, the Immigration and Exchange Programs, to the Academic Institutions Abroad. All, helped promote the culture of the US in its best image. Now everything about the American-Western lifestyle is trendy and fashionable. Many people, and especially youth, of the Middle East feel the need to stay up to date with the latest American fashion trends, promoted in the American media, whether Films, TV programs and Music Videos, or by the American celebrities (who are known to be very influential in today's world) via their social platforms: Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Moreover, the American media, helped promote some cultural values and behaviors of the West in the Middle East, some of these include: open-mindedness, materialism, intersex relations, feminism, and others. In addition, The American exchange programs or the Academic institutions abroad have had a major impact on the Middle Eastern scholars as well. These academic opportunities are known for their great impact on the

students' mentality. In many cases, these institutions, whether abroad or at home, have shown positive effects on the mindsets of their scholars. Many of whom became pro-American degree holders, graduates and future leaders (Pro-Americans tend to express their support for the United States, its culture, its people, its government...). The American Soft Power techniques are many, and their effects are powerful, the US uses them smartly to impose its cultural beliefs on the Middle Eastern region, and the rest of the world.

Dubai is a Middle Eastern city that can portray a strong example of the American influence. It is safe to say the city of the highest skyscraper in the world, is built upon the Western mold; the architecture of the metropolis is highly influenced by those building designs of American and European cities. Moreover, the American cultural influence in Dubai goes beyond its replicated and imitated architecture; the society of the Emirate really follows the Western lifestyle in many aspects, such as language, dress, values, behaviors, and even traditions at times. Although it is not necessarily a negative influence, the impact of the Western cultures is definitely a strong one in Dubai's case; strong enough to overshadow its cultural roots. It is important to note that the UAE, is tremendously influenced, even more than any of its neighbor Middle Eastern countries, and those across the MENA region. However, the Arab world in general does not seem to object the co-existing of Western cultures in the region, and the Soft Power strategies of the US, instead, it seems to follow Dubai's path and accept anything that comes from the West.



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