

'Harmony' versus 'Hegemony' for Global Leadership

Mainstream and Organic

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China had considered herself as the middle kingdom of the world, confining her world in Asia. During 15th century (1405-1477), The Yongle Emperor, Zhu Di, of China's Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) inherited a ship building enterprise initiated by previous dynasties, especially the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368, ruled by Mongolians), for maritime trade. China was then capable of building ships of 200 feet long capable of carrying 500 seamen. Yongle commissioned several voyages with large maritime fleets led by Zheng He to explore the world reaching as far as Africa and even America suggested by evidence found in America. The alleged purposes for these voyages ranging from searching for an escaped rival, a threat to the throne to exploration of the outside world, a discovery and treasure hunt and an extravagant means of showing off Ming's power. The first six voyages (1405-1422) led by Zheng He brought back lots of discoveries and heads of states or ambassadors bringing tribute to the Ming Court. The 7th voyage (1431-1433) was sent out by Yongle's successor, his grandson Xuande Emperor, but Zheng He died on the return trip (1433). The Ming Court was then facing financial problems due to Yongle's extravagant life and ambition and later caused by famines and floods. The Court politics was split over the support of oversea voyages. When another voyage was proposed in 1477, the opposing war ministry confiscated all of Zheng He's records in the archives, damning them as "deceitful exaggerations of bizarre things ... the voyages wasteful to Ming's treasury with no benefit." In today's world politics, the Ming war ministry's opposition to ship building can only mean a non-militant attitude. By 1525, the government further ordered the destruction of all ocean-faring ships, ending the prospect of maintaining a powerful Chinese Navy (once peaked at 3500 ships comparing to 300-400 US navy ships today) and any **'hegemony'** attempt if ever existed since the Great Genghis Khan, official founder of Yuan Dynasty.

Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) overthrew Ming Dynasty but her prosperity lasted less than two centuries. From early 19th century onward, China was declining due to weak emperors, corruptions and foreign invasions. In 1911, Dr. Sun Yat San led a revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and established a republic nation. This ill-fated revolution took place under the presence of eight foreign powers. The Japanese invasion of China later evolved into WW II had given China eight years of turmoil. In 1945, Japan was finally defeated but China was devastated. Under the influence of the U.S. and Russia, the post-war China was divided into the People's Republic of China (Mainland) and the Republic of China (Taiwan), both claiming sovereignty of the whole China under their constitutions. The incomplete Chinese revolution has evolved from an internal affair to a stalemate due to external influences. Post WW II, the two sides of China each has experienced a success story. The PRC has risen to be the second largest economy in the world, projecting a great nation influence, while ROC has fared very well economically with per capita income reaching \$23000. Taiwan's future hinges on the

mainland market and its fast growth and yet strangely the unification of China has become a global issue very much dependent on the global power play.

The U.S. made significant contribution in winning the WW II both in Europe and in Asia and had emerged as a capitalistic superpower in the world. Under the influence of communism, Russia led the formation of the Soviet Union ideologically opposing the western capitalism. This ideological confrontation of nearly five decades resulted in continuous political, economical and military conflicts between the West and East led by The United States with her NATO allies and Russia with her Warsaw Pact. Eventually, in 1990, the Soviet Union collapsed under the weight of a failed economy. The U.S. has become the strongest nation in the world, a true superpower, serving as a global police force managing the world order. However, the world is not in order, the Croatia crisis, the ISIS turmoil and the South China Sea conflict all point to a global disorder begging a global leadership in solving the world problems..

While the world entered into a Cold War after WW II, China was struggling with rebuilding of the nation. China lived through failed experiments of communism initially with “The Great Leap Forward”, then “The National Commune System” and eventually the disastrous results of “The cultural Revolution” as she was essentially sanctioned off from both the Western world and the Soviet Bloc. When the U.S. decided to formulate a strategy of uniting the European as well as Asian nations to economically suffocate the Soviet Union, China was let into the Western global economy. This turn of events gave China the opportunity to focus on her economical development. With the ending of Cold War, China’s development continued and accelerated eventually surpassing Japan as the no. two economy in the world. The rising of China seems to challenge the U.S. global leadership.

China has developed a rich lasting culture through at least thirteen dynasties over nearly 5000 years of history; many philosophers left wealth of knowledge especially regarding political governance and world view. ‘Wang Dao and Baa Dao’ were two political doctrines observable throughout Chinese history describing ‘Chinese world’ politics and empire formation. These two doctrines may be mapped with modern terminology as follows: Wang Dao is practiced by a great nation by using her soft power (culture, trade and diplomacy, even by offering marriage as seen in ancient Chinese history) to expand her influence on other nations and neighbors to gain global influence. Baa Dao is practiced by a nation by developing and maintaining a strong military force to impose her wills and policies onto other nations and neighbors to gain global control. These concepts may be characterized by a pictorial term, the word “Harmony” for “Wang Dao” and the word “Hegemony” for ‘Baa Dao’. Chinese politicians and historians are very well versed in the above concepts. The Chinese has learned from history that “Baa Dao” may succeed temporarily but will ultimately fail due to unsustainable financial burden; on the other hand, “Wang Dao” has a better chance to succeed for a long time provided that there is no other strong nation practicing “Baa Dao” against it. Hence, practicing “Wang Dao” cannot ignore military strength; otherwise a “Baa Dao” nation may crush a “Wang Dao” nation. These concepts are useful for analyzing our current global affairs.

The expansion of the Soviet Union after WW II is a clear example of a nation pursuing "Hegemony" or "Baa Dao". The Soviet Union rose rapidly but eventually failed because she failed a pre-requisite of "Baa Dao" doctrine - a sustained strong economy comparable to the rest of the world capable of maintaining a superior military power and offering military aid as the means of controlling other regimes. The global strategy of the United States has been pursuing a 'Quasi Baa Dao' or 'Quasi-Hegemony' - using the soft power whenever and wherever feasible to gain global influence (but military power would be used if the soft power was not effective, think Middle East). Military treaty is an essential element in 'Quasi-Hegemony' foreign policy to gain global influence as evidenced by over 100 U.S. military bases all over the world. China pursued "Wang Dao" or "Harmony" not solely because she was a weak nation; she essentially continued this doctrine even after she had risen in her economic status as evidenced by her foreign policies..

At the 70th anniversary of the victory of WW II, the global order is disappointing. Instead of fixing her fatiguing soft power and effectively managing her shrinking military budget, the U.S. is beefing up military relations with her existing allies and cultivating more new alliances. Her pivot to Asia policy and her recent postures in the East and South China Sea do suggest that she is shifting ominously her "Quasi-Hegemony" towards a "Hegemony" approach. Russia seems to have learned a lesson from her "hegemony" behavior and began to pursue a "Quasi-Hegemony" path. Her soft power is limited to her energy resources. Unfortunately, the United States, by recruiting more members instead of abolishing NATO, is leaning towards 'hegemony' which may reverse Russia back to "hegemony" as well. China understands that a pure "Harmony" approach must be backed by adequate military strength; particularly if the neighbors are practicing "Baa Dao" with military alliances. China's AIIB initiative and the 'One Belt One Route' collaborative economical development plan are clearly a policy of "Wang Dao" or "Harmony" and her strengthening of her navy and construction of her South China Sea Maritime bases are not inconsistent with a policy of 'Harmony'. On the other hand, racing arms among the U.S. allies and increasing the military presence of the U.S. and Japanese Navy in South China Sea seem to be an act of 'Hegemony' which may force China to abandon a "Harmony" policy.