

Back To The Future To Forward To The Future

Mainstream and Organic Views

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This year marks the 30th anniversary of a Hollywood Hit, Back To The Future, featured the story of Marty McFly and Doc Brown traveled at least 30 years into the future. The 30 years span was sort of revealed by the Back to the Future II filmed in 1989 four years later than the part one. The boyish faced Michael Fox and the fuzzy white-haired Christopher Lloyd, played the roles flawlessly in capturing the audience's appreciation of the change in civilization and the movie's storyline. As Fox remarked in a letter published by the White House about the research on Parkinson's disease, "Back then, if you'd have told me that I'd go from talking on a cell phone to talking cell biology, I would never have believed you." But today, Michael J. Fox Foundation is helping to spearhead research collaborations to speed a future development in which we can treat, cure, and even prevent brain diseases like Parkinson's." Indeed, as entertaining as the Back to the Future, it is more like a hindsight story not really a daring prediction about future.

There is a trilogy of Back to the Future with the original released in 1985, part II released in December, 1989 and Part III released on May 25, 1990. They were all very successful movies at least from the point of view on their financial return. The first Back to the Future produced with a budget of \$14M had grossed \$384M, highest grossing film in 1985. The part II and part III were produced with a budget of \$40M back to back and they grossed \$331M and \$245M respectively. The director of the Back to the Future trilogy, Robert Zemeckis, was always leery about setting the future day of the movie precise for worrying that film watchers would keep score on the predicted scenes. Indeed, these movies were science fictions but their plots were not about illuminating or predicting future. Personally, I would be thrilled if Hollywood could produce a movie, say, entitled, Forward to the Future, won't you be excited to watch it?

The time span the B2F trilogy covered was from 1955 to 1985 and to 2015. The world has made tremendous progress in many aspects as well as produced some serious turmoil on Earth during these six decades. Technologically, communication has made the biggest stride. In the 1950's and 60's television (TV) exploded and pushed radio to the back stage, making events like the Crowning of Queen Elizabeth II (1953) to Neil Armstrong Walking on the Moon (1969) watched by the millions all over the world. From 70's to 90's, TV became color, wide screen and high definition along with video cassette and digital recorders capturing TV programs for anytime viewing. Telephone users increased from 30 million in the 50's to 100 million in the 70's. Cellular phones came in the 90's and took off in the start of the 21st century with multi-purpose smart phones today (2015) not only serving as a wireless phone, but also as a TV and a computer, a camera, an alarm clock and a damn sophisticated personal assistant. The users of smart phones are on the order of billions not millions anymore.

In the six decades of B2F, the computer revolution has been non-stop driven by the Moore Law increasing in density of transistors in the computer processors and memory capacity, propelling computers going through several generations measured by processing speed and functions. Advances in computerization brought along progress in transportation, cars, trains, ships and planes as well as work efficiency in offices, banks and hospitals. As commented by Michael Fox, medicine research had come a long way with the knowledge on DNA and computer mapping of human DNA and genes. The breakthroughs in agriculture and manufacturing technologies essentially eliminated the concern of the world cannot produce enough foods and goods to support humans on Earth. With all these positive achievements, why isn't Hollywood producing a Forward to the Future movie, say into 2045? If scientists and engineers can keep inventing, why can't creative movie makers produce movies predicting the future?

The problem is not in the grasp of technological advances and making a prediction. The uncertainty is in the issues of human behavior. Before anyone geared up to Forward to the Future, one can simply review what have happened in the past six decades in human behavior? The most unpredictable and mostly illogical human events are wars, Arab-Israel War (1948-49..), Korean War (1950-53, 66-69), Vietnam War (1955-75), Iraq-Kurdish War (1961-70, 74-75), Soviet-Afghanistan War (1979-89), Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), US-Afghanistan War (2002-14), US,UK-Iraq War(2003-2010), ISIS (2014-...), and numerous small, civil and on-going local wars. The threat of future wars now seems to be spreading to Asia as evidenced by the dispute of the Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea and the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Apparently, the world was not prepared to predict and welcome the rise of China over the past three decades. China simply worked hard and absorbed the technological advances and applied to her nation building in infrastructure development, industrialization and manufacturing capabilities. Hollywood might not be able to predict the outcome of the emerging China, but the CIA or the World Bank certainly could have predicted the rise of China's economy? So why are there the surprises and envies towards a nation building herself up?!

Perhaps Hollywood should be encouraged to produce more Forward to the Future movies leading people to think more about the positive scenarios when humans make progress rather than leaving people to be caught in surprise developing anxiety even hostility. Witnessing and predicting positive scenarios could bring positive feelings towards cooperation and collaboration to achieve greater mutual benefits. Of course, this type of prediction does require wisdom. One example may be cited to encourage the world to think positively is the recent development of the UK-China relationship. Judging what the UK has approached the rising China issue with a firm embrace, in the instance of joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), inviting China's leader Xi Jin Ping to a State Visit and declaring a 'Golden Era' to come between China and UK with numerous joint projects initiated leading to mutual benefits. This clearly illustrates that UK, a most seasoned developed country in the world, has the wisdom to recognize China's change (and continuing change) to strike a most positive strategy to develop a solid UK-China relationship in the decades to come. Hollywood with its many creative producers perhaps should make a series of movies to illustrate what a 'Golden

Era' may mean to the world. I bet these F2F movies not only can motivate other nations to emulate their golden eras in the future, rather than cultivate negative scenarios in the future, but also can create a golden era for Hollywood in terms of big hits.