

Nation, Society and Global Harmony (I)

Mainstream Media and Organic Views

Dr. Wordman

The author selects this serious topic because he is concerned with the current U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. education system. 'Isolationism' had appeared numerous times in U.S. foreign policy since its founding days, but in reality, 'isolationism' had very different political meaning at different times including today. George Washington accepted temporary alliance for the U.S. advantage. Monroe's doctrine essentially helped the U.S. to be the dominating nation in American Continent while balancing European powers. The roles of the U.S. during WW I and WW II had swung from isolation to engagement hesitantly with political debate. Cold War till the collapse of the Soviet saw isolationism being touted between containment and entanglement. Now today, the word of isolationism again appeared in debate along with 'balancing power' in the U.S. foreign policy when the U.S. met difficulties in her world policing role and the rapid rise of China and Asian countries. The author feels that as an American citizen, we need to understand the concepts of nation and society in the context of humans are destined to live under global harmony instead of using of 'isolationism' as a double edged sword to deal with foreign relations.

A Nation is characterized by its size (population, small, medium to large), location or sovereignty (regions under governance or control), its government system (how the population is governed and regions are managed) and a set of symbolic icons (such as a flag and a national anthem). Hence a country can be characterized as a small, medium or large nation, a tropical island nation pertaining to an ocean (such as Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic and Antarctic) or a continental nation pertaining to a land mass (such as Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North and South America). A nation also can be characterized by its governing system which although tends to be evolved over time but it can be natural or unnatural due to evolution or revolution and caused by internal or external forces (such as by the influence of war resulting in a new governing system then evolving over time). The governing system is usually represented by a national symbol, a flag, an anthem and sometimes a mascot which can be an animal, a flower, a tree or a human designed object. This symbol may be selected or designed to connect the nation with its people and/or its society, sometimes its political philosophy (such as neutralism). Today, there are 196 nation members in the United Nations.

A society is principally characterized by a group of people living together exhibiting a set of characteristics bound by their original cultures of their original races and modified by later cultural evolution influenced and cultivated by their societal elements over time. The societal elements include individuals, different races, family units including interracial marriages and people co-mingled and living together. The society culture characterizes the society's way of life, including how do people live, what and how do they express themselves (spoken and written languages transcended or adopted over the years), how do they make their living as productive members of their society and

how do they raise their young and take care of their old. The society's culture or its way of life evolving over time can best be understood by studying its history and observing its current changes in the society in contrast with the past. There is a big difference between a long lived society sustained over a long time and short lived society interrupted over time, including recently or newly formed societies having a history ranging from less than a century, formed after WW II, to a few hundred years, produced by colonialism such the U.S. and Canada in North America, nearly all South America, Australia, Africa and some parts of Asia.

Following human history, one can see the evolution of many human societies and the fall and rise of many nations. The biggest impact or the greatest transformation of human society occurred during the era of colonialism when industrialized societies and nations in Europe developed colonialism and conquered many of other societies and countries all over the world. In turn, some transformed new societies or nations influenced or formed by colonialism began pursuing colonialism on their own, many occurred in Africa, Australia, South America and North America.

In North America, the British and a few European countries' immigrants occupied NA and eventually colonized the NA continent and established two big nations, Canada and the United States. They extinguished the American Indian society and created a new immigrant society. In South America, multiple European nations invaded SA and transformed the local societies and created many new societies dominated by Spanish and Portuguese culture, principally through their language and religious beliefs. The Continent of Australia was similarly conquered by the British, consequently created an English dominated Australia.

The colonialists' invasion of Africa disturbed the local societies and affected even other parts of the world because the racial discrimination towards black people (color of skin) created a slavery trade selling African black people as slaves all over the world. This resulted in a large black population in the U.S. The later evolution of American society did try to establish anti-discrimination laws in the U.S. Constitution to give the blacks equal civil rights but many other discrimination problems persist in American society to this day. Racial discrimination remains as a disturbing issue in the large American immigrant society.

In Asia, colonialism did not prevail as widely as in other continents simply because the Chinese society with her over four thousand years cultural history stood quite firm against the colonialism and the Western powers. The Chinese culture had strong influence in Asia, especially in the Southeast Asia. In addition, China as a big nation was bordering with Russia with a huge mass of uncultivated land (Siberia and Gobi desert) and an ocean separating an aggressive Japan from China. The extremely cold land mass discouraged Russia to try to colonize China. The ocean did deter Japan to invade China until she had imitated the Great Britain and had successfully developed a strong navy.

Although Japan, China's neighbor, successfully emulated the Western powers (particularly the Great Britain and her Royal Navy) and became a colonial power itself, she was never able to conquer China, failing more for cultural reasons. Even though China as a nation was weak militarily during late 19th century and most of the 20th century but her society was strongly glued with Chinese culture principally formed on the strong foundation of family unit and family clan with a deep belief in their family ethic value extended to their society morality. Japan with her culture largely inherited from the Chinese culture (from Tang Dynasty) was simply unable to overcome the Chinese societal force to change and rule the Chinese society.

One clear evidence is that while Japan occupied Taiwan from 1895 to 1945 for fifty years (China ceded Taiwan to Japan after losing the Sino-Japanese war), she was not able to change or demolish the Chinese society in Taiwan. Japan failed to change Taiwan's language (Chinese), family name system (Chinese) and many Chinese cultural elements rooted in strong family concept and Chinese philosophy. Thus, Japan was doomed to fail in her ambition to conquer China, regardless the atomic bomb was invented or not. The Japanese imperialist army was sunk in China like stuck in molasses. The atomic bomb added the last straw on the camel's back in hastening Japan's defeat.

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The WW II ended colonialism, many societies became independent nations. However, the procedure was neither natural nor fair. The colonial powers left their signatures more than a little in the society culture and quite a lot in the governing system in the nation or region from occupation to 'independence'. As the winning allies were divided ideologically as the 'capitalism versus communism' or 'democracy versus authoritarian one party rule' or 'the left versus right', they imposed influence on the rest of the world recovering from the severe war damage, particularly on the newly formed nations. When the globe was divided into two political hemispheres each aligned with nations and societies under the banner of 'communism' and 'anti-communism', the evolution of emerging nations or recovering countries (even the winning powers themselves) was pulled away from a natural evolving process but infused with external ideological influence and interference.

Looking back hindsight, even though the anti-communism alliance seemed to have won as evidenced by the end of Cold War in 1990, the 196 nation members in the United Nation have suffered from or deprived of a smooth natural evolution process of forming their societies or nations largely due the fact that it was an extremely challenging task to develop a nation's economy from the ashes. External aid was so critical in the early phase of economic development. Even though colonialism was nominally ended after

WW II, its influence lingered on with plenty of evidence in Africa (endless revolutions and wars), Middle East (decades of wars between societies and nations) and Asia (rivalry countries such as India and Pakistan, Japan and Korea, even unrest in a small former colony like Hong Kong).

In Asia, Japan as a loser in WW II did remarkably recover economically as a prosperous nation but its reform process was not natural but guided or aided by external control from the U.S. The U.S. occupation and aid in Japan played a key role for Japan's recovery but she left not only a signature but a big footprint in Japan. The only nation that had gone through her own transformation with pressure but no direct external control is China, although the transformation did take more than a half century. China started as a communist country, supported meagerly by the Soviet Union (in contrast to US Japan aid), but she wisely parted her way from the Soviet in the 1960's and pursued her own development path. She failed a couple of times in experimenting with communism under Mao's leadership but learned a valuable experience and gained a strong spirit to seek independence. China valued her traditional culture (after an experiment of destroying it to create a new culture) which was established over several millennium. Based on her culture, China is now evolving the nation and reforming her governing system in steps continuously. The 'one country multiple systems' governance concept proposed by China is apparently not just a convenient slogan but a profound philosophy inherited thousands of years ago. (as early as 'Chunqiu and War States' period, 771 to 403 BC) This philosophy seeks global harmony for human society while allows States to govern their people and societies in different political philosophy and systems, that is permitting different governing systems to function under one nation harmoniously.

China had never turned to be a colonial or imperialist power as evidenced by the fact that she never launched any aggressive war other than for defending her sovereignty. China valued her long history and inherited culture, her claim of sovereignty does create conflicts with some of the newly formed nations, but China has been electing to settle her disputes with neighbors through dialogue and negotiation. This process does favor the stronger nation but it is the only workable peaceful process available. One should understand the difference of a society and a nation, particularly when they are formed with a short history. In Chinese history, China was and is always a big nation, the Chinese society and its cultural influence expanded throughout her long history but not deliberately through nationalistic expansion. If one had studied the history of Indo-China, the tributary relations China had with Indo-China societies and small nations (practicing royal and citizen inter-marriages, fair trade system and generous gifts or financial aids) were the result of Chinese society culture (and its political philosophy) not a goal of nationalistic dominance.

Human societies have come a long way. The United Nations and her 196 nation members have coexisted more than a half century. In the UN assembly, one can observe the emergence of a concept of global human society, desiring to have Global Harmony. With the advancement of global transportation and communication, human societies are interacting more freely than national borders can restrict them. (Formation

of EU, ASEAN and African Alliance and free visa between nations are examples) Since the ending of colonialism, slavery, and domination of societies by religious power are disappearing. Humans would likely prefer a natural evolution of society through culture interaction rather than any means driven by nationalistic objectives. China has launched a Belt and Route Initiative (BRI) calling for global collaborative development on all aspects from agriculture, culture, trade to technology. Again, the BRI does not appear as a political slogan as opposed by a few nations but a genuine global plan to create Global Harmony by inducing global collaboration, cultural exchange and society integration. Bearing the above understanding of the meaning of society and nation, we can not help but applaud this BRI initiative as a possible sacred plan to achieve Global Harmony.

The U.S. has been the world leader since WW II. She has made very significant contribution to the world in helping many nations to recover from the war damage. However, the U.S. aid is not free from strings. As the world is progressing, it is apparent that every nation and every society desires to develop in its own way without pressure or control from external forces. Even some nations may still require financial aid but no one wants to be tied with strings, especially required to take either-or side. Therefore, it is understandable why the U.S. feels more and more uncomfortable in the U.N. as more and more members act independently and challenge the U.S. position on many issues or the U.S. preferred way of dealing with them. China, on the other hand, is getting more support in the U.N. simply because she understands the sentiments of the developing countries with her own experience. If global harmony is the real goal of human societies (and the United Nations), every global citizen, every society member and every nation citizen must understand and accept what is a society and a nation. We must understand why and how human societies desire to have global harmony and they wish to be free to grow, to expend and to influence one another. On the other hand, nations are created to protect, to confine and to restrain societies to avoid conflicts that may erupt global harmony. In a philosophical sense, nations may disappear when societies grow and merge to a single harmonious global society. That philosophy should be the foundation of the charter of the United Nations.

(Part II to be continued)