

The future of Empire State and the United States

Mainstream and Organic Views

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New York State is called the Empire State for many reasons. New York State has other nicknames such as Excelsior State. Empire State was adopted in 19th century generally referring to its wealth and resources as a big state in the United States. Some attributed the name to the remark George Washington made while viewing the map of New York prior to the battle of New York in the independence war, "New York is the seat of an empire." The 102 story of Empire State Building in the Big Apple, New York City, built in 1931 as the world's tallest building at that time, remains as the famous icon of the City and State of New York. Nearly all tourists came to New York would visit the Empire State Building, ascending to the top to take a panoramic view of the Manhattan Island. The first King Kong movie made with the Empire State Building in 1933 had captured the hearts of many millions of movie fans not only for loving the actress Fay Wray and King Kong but also for appreciating the Empire State Building's architecture. The name Empire State is now on every license plate of vehicles registered in New York.

New York State is now the third largest state in the union. Interestingly, the Encyclopedia Britannica had kindly described New York in a paragraph which will lead to my discussion on the title subject, "Until the 1960s, New York was the country's leading state in nearly all population, cultural, and economic indexes. Its displacement by California beginning in the middle of that decade was caused by the enormous growth rate that has persisted on the West Coast rather than by a large decline in New York itself. Texas overtook New York as the second most populous state in 2000. Still, New York remains one of the most populous states in the country, and its gross economic product exceeds those of all but a handful of countries throughout the world." Unfortunately, an updated assessment of the New York State in many New Yorkers' view is that the state, especially New York City, although remains the centre of much of the country's economy and finance, as exhibited by the power of Wall Street, as well as the driver of America in art and culture, as displayed through Broadway and media and entertainment industries influencing the national political and social lives, however, the state and the city have been divided in political philosophy as liberal against conservative, down State suppressing upstate and rural population opposing city folks among its nearly 20 million people over land of 140, 000 square kilometers.

The upstate of New York has been on decline economically for decades. The manufacturing jobs have dwindled post World War II from 2.2 million to less than 300,000 in 2008. From 2010 - 2016 while manufacturing jobs grew nationally 6.5 % from a decline, New York on the contrary further lost 3% or 14,000 jobs despite of decreased taxes on manufacturing industries, the lowest level in decades. When Volkswagen invested \$1B for auto manufacturing it selected Tennessee State for lower labor cost and free of labor union. Manufacturing site selection focuses on labor cost, market access, friendly business environment; New York is just not competitive comparing to other states. Many manufacturers had been scared away after they had examined the financial state of the prospective New York municipalities. New York's financial center status is no longer a significant attraction to manufacturers. Of course, the lack of growth (turning to paper

economy) and high taxes are driving residents and retirees leaving the state and forcing the 1.2 million degree-credit students in New York's 270 colleges seeking jobs in other states.

The prognosis of the future of New York State is not great. Politically, the State is deeply divided with a frustrated Republican Party forever unable to gain control of the full government and the legislature. The Assembly is essentially controlled by the Democrats in New York City whereas the Upstate counties barely contribute to maintaining one vote margin in the Senate. The long decline of New York State manufacturing since 1945 has a close correlation with the politics in the State. One notices that out of 44 previous US Presidents, New York has more than its fair share of producing six. However, one further notices that the six from Martin Van Buren (8th), Millard Fillmore (13th), Chester A. Arthur (21st), Grover Cleveland (24th), Theodore Roosevelt (26th) to Franklin D. Roosevelt (32nd, 1933-1945) were all serving prior to WW II. This is probably not a coincidence judging the economic performance of New York post WW II.

The 2016 presidential election was an unusual one having twenty three candidates (17R and 6D), including three contenders from New York, Hillary Clinton (D), George Pataki (R) and Donald Trump (R). Pataki dropped out early leaving Clinton and Trump eventually becoming the final candidates. Donald Trump finally won the presidency after a vigorously contested primary and a bitter campaign against well funded Hillary. However, Trump could hardly claim that he was representing the State of New York. He did not serve any public office in New York other than being a real estate tycoon; he did not even get a fair support from the New York State Republican Party machinery. Thus his victory had little to do with the economic performance of New York, in other words, unlike Franklin Roosevelt who served as the Governor of New York prior to becoming the US President nor like Ronald Reagan who served as the Governor of California before becoming the US Commander-in-Chief, both won their home state support.

Now the future of the U.S. is in the hands of a New Yorker, Donald Trump. Perhaps, it is a good thing that Trump is not minted out of Albany or New York politics, since the poor score card of New York economy has to be blamed on the politicians in Albany and New York City (poverty rate 19.5% in 2016, high rent problem and sheltering homeless 60,000 per night) and their recent scandalous corruptions and long impotence in revitalizing New York. Whether or not Trump can make America strong again with his "America First" campaign pledge perhaps depends on how fast and well he can learn on the job. He has given lots of campaign promises and has taken many actions on his own initiatives. His bold tax cuts and unwavering positions on trade issues and immigration problems have all yielded early or temporary results that the frustrated Americans find refreshing; hence, the US economy shows a tick-up and the stock market gives him approval and vital support with watchful eyes.

If Trump were able to learn on the job and steer the country onto the right path smoothly into a second term by getting our trading partners to agree on a new set of trade agreements benefitting the U.S. economy, negotiating and stabilizing a number of international or global security problems (such as North Korea and Iran) and energizing our domestic programs to create jobs and improve our national infrastructure, the future of the U.S. would be bright. Then, what about 2024? Even though New York State performed poorly since 1945 and showed no sign of revitalization, the New York State is not short of ambitious politicians inspiring for the U.S. Presidency. Clinton might make a comeback and the current Governor Andrew Cuomo already

showed his interest for 2024 even 2020. Cuomo is an Albany product used to seeing (or managing) the miserable New York State economy. Cuomo issued an unwelcome welcome statement when Trump visited New York supporting mid-term election candidates. Cuomo even made the statement, "America was never so great.", a foolish statement to counter Trump's America First to make America great slogan. Sadly, despite his track record, Cuomo is expected to win his reelection. Hence, I see no good future in New York State. As for the future of the U.S., we must pray for Trump's fast learning and self-correcting skills. But with so many enemies against him and he keeps making more, the future is at best uncertain. If another authentic New Yorker politician becomes the 46th US President, I may say our future is beyond praying. What the US future would be like? Your guess is as good as mine!