

Empires, World War II and Multi-Nationals

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Recently, the author and a few friends were pondering about various topics including philosophy, history, economics and cultures after a hefty dinner. During the process, someone brought up the observation that if one was to **trace the world's current (largest and well-known) multi-nationals back to the 'root or host' countries**, one would end up with a list of mostly (West) European and North American economies. The exception in the list would be Japan, and to a lesser extent, (South) Korea. By coincidence or otherwise, many of such countries / economies had also at one time or another in the past 200 years been very aggressive, especially in the political and / or military sense. Some were colonizers (in Asia, Africa and so on), and a few started World Wars especially the second one. Naturally, it is NOT the intention here to review historic events and by no means are we condoning such aggression, yet there may be more to it than just pure coincidence. By and large, these countries / economies more or less shared and / or still share some of the following inclinations:

- a) **An external and focused aggressiveness:** Here 'aggressiveness' is NOT necessarily a bad word, and the phrase refers to a tendency to spread and promote one's idea / product / service / system etc to other economies and places. For instance, multi-nationals promote and sell their goods and services routinely in the world and this overall may be contributive to economic development. Naturally, it would be a bad thing if illegal actions or undue coercion are used. Typically, these multi-nationals focus on one core business be it soft drinks, computers, software, light bulbs, automobiles or electronics and as such are different from other economies which conglomerates may be involved in a wide range of businesses and industries.
- b) **A scientific / technological approach to problem solving:** Whether in areas of war, economics, business, finance, and so on, there is a relatively higher tendency to adopt a systematic scientific / technological approach to studying, researching, analyzing, solving and tackling the problems or challenges. Whether such methods always work or are sound in theory and practice is another matter, but attempts are made not just to observe things but to explain them as well. This quantitative and procedural tendency may not be inherent in other economies and cultures.
- c) **A 'management' approach to planning and achieving an objective(s):** In battles and in business challenges, the need for having a well-concerted process and coordinated team effort is paramount, otherwise precious resources would be wasted or have their effectiveness much reduced. Likewise, there is also a need for some degree of flexibility within the overall plans so that unexpected circumstances and challenges can be dealt with efficiently. In short, relatively stronger teamwork and management.

- d) **A capacity to make certain sacrifices:** In business terms, this refers to sticking to one's core business through thick and thin, the bad and good times, rather than moving from trade to trade, industry to industry depending on their cyclical prospects. This also implies attempting to be the very best in the field and are willing to go through the necessary pain and improvements. Naturally, one has to make sure the industry that one is in is not a dying one, else it may be better just to jump ship if transformation is not feasible. In short, dedication and commitment.
- e) **An emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness:** In varying degrees, most of the concerned economies demonstrate a regard for production efficiency and effectiveness and are always looking for better ways to make things with less resources. Whether such products and services can be sold for a viable price may sometimes be another matter though. In short, the products and services get better over time in general.

Some readers are likely to say that the current economies got to where they are today in part by having gained an (unfair) advantage during the colonizing and invasive eras by simply taking away resources belonging to others for almost nothing. This may be true (though perhaps what were gained have already been more than expended in the last 50 years or so) yet the question in return is why they were the first (in the last 200 years) to start such colonization and invasion. We do not have any answers and it might be a good topic for academics to pursue. We are also not saying which tendencies or cultures are better and so on. Perhaps there may be a philosophical, cultural, historical and / or human angle to it other than numbers. Perhaps such **a study may help investors spot the 'viable' economies, industries and companies to come .**

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