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THE LOGIC OF THE AMERICAN HEGEMONY

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The Expansion of Democracy Leads to Escalation of Hegemonic Thinking

The development and changes of America's domestic democracy have strengthened the status of the United States as a hegemon, and have also enriched its hegemonic thoughts. Historically, democracy of the United States was mainly a democracy for white males. In the early years, white racism ran rampant among America's politicians. The prejudice against the blacks held by Thomas Jefferson, one of its Founding Fathers, has been well known to all of us. Even Abraham Lincoln, famous for his emancipation of the black slaves, said there was an enormous gap determined by innate human nature between the whites and the blacks, which might forever prevent them from living together completely equally. America's early ideology and hegemony were characterized mainly by its racism. As pointed out by the American historian Michael Hunt, "the (past) American policy-makers measured other nations and states by a system of racial ladders. They displayed a hostile attitude toward those revolutions, especially those leftist revolutions, which deviated from the American model of revolution." The racist element in American foreign policy was fully exposed in its attitude toward revolutions in Southeastern Asia, especially in China, and during the Vietnam War. In addition, America's racial prejudice at home and ruthless violation of human rights, including McCarthyism of the 1950s, have all greatly reduced the appeal of the American democracy to the outside world.

During World War II, the colored people and ethnic minorities played a monumental role in defending the United States, which led to the beginning of racism's self-destruction. During the Cold War, out of the necessity for national security and ideology, the Truman Administration repealed the system of racial segregation within the armed forces. In the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr. cited the human rights principles embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, and proved that the principle of "all men are created equal" applied equally to white people and black people. After that, the American society has witnessed changes, especially during the 1980s and 1990s when floods of new immigrants came to the United States, exerting a far-reaching impact upon American democracy's format and its political

cohesiveness. Although in reality racism is far from being completely eradicated, it has become a hideously notorious thing in American politics. Racial equality and gender equality have become the principles of “political correctness” by which the society must abide.

What is the root of the “American people”—a people that is in the thicket of globalization, a people that is receiving a great number of new immigrants, and a people that lacks a common culture, common race and common religion? What does it use to pull people together? The American historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. explains this way: the United States needs values such as democracy, freedom and human rights now more than any period in its history to keep the country together. From this perspective, the U.S. foreign policy also has to accordingly reflect these “American ideals,” because after all, diplomacy simply serves domestic politics. Thus, to display more American ideology and “pursuit of democracy” in U.S. foreign policy has meant a more robust display of American hegemony in its diplomacy.

The diversification tendency in an American democracy has clearly been revealed in the U.S. foreign policies. To certain extent, it was America’s hegemonic policy against Cuba that created the fleeing of Cuban refugees, making it possible for the Cuban-American population to dramatically increase to today’s more than 1.3 million. In the meantime, these Cuban-Americans have exerted great influence upon local politics in states such as Florida, and upon the U.S. policy toward Cuba, thus intensifying the hostility of the U.S. government toward the Cuban government under the leadership of Castro. One of the consequences of the Vietnam War was the influx of large numbers of Vietnamese into the U.S. from southern Vietnam after the unification of Vietnam. The current Vietnamese population in the United States has reached over one million. The total number of Asian Americans nowadays has reached over 12.5 million. Within the U.S. diplomatic community, military community, intelligence community, and multinationals community, the percentage of ethnic minorities and non-white people is far higher than that of their races relative to the entire nation’s population. These communities dealing with foreign nations have employed Asian Americans to work in positions that interact with Asian countries; they have employed immigrants from Latin America to enhance contacts with Latin American countries; they have employed Iranian Americans, Arab Americans to gather intelligence on the Middle East, to engage in anti-terrorism campaigns; they have also used those American soldiers stationed in South Korea who have Korean blood to interact with the Koreans, etc. Meanwhile, the U.S. government is rarely concerned that these minority Americans might be used by nations that have ethnic ties with them to do harm to the United States. This is an important advantage in psychology and methodology in the U.S. diplomacy, i.e., the U.S. is able to use talented people regardless of race and ethnicity. Representing such advantage are Henry Kissinger, who is a Jew born in Germany; Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was born in Poland; Madeleine Albright, who was born in Czechoslovakia, and is the woman who has held the highest government office; and Colin Powell, whose parents came from Jamaica, who was born in the black slum of New York City—all of whom are testament to America’s diversified diplomacy. Giving important positions to these people has not only strengthened America’s

hegemony internationally but also provided force to enhance nationalistic loyalty of the ethnic minorities at home.

The disproportionate increases of ethnic minorities in numbers, percentage and political clout have posed challenges to social cohesion and traditional white culture on the one hand, they have also raised the level of attention the United States pays to the outside world on the other. The new immigrants that went to the United States in the last several decades, especially those political activists, have augmented America's motivational impetus to conduct foreign expansion and "human rights intervention." Those who have decided to settle in the U.S. and those new immigrants who are political activists are usually dissents in their countries of origin, many of whom have used their persecutions in their native countries to push their "new motherland" to reach their objectives which they would have otherwise been unable to realize in their native lands, and to make every effort to stay permanently in the United States and make an impact. For various reasons, they are more enthusiastic than the native-born Americans about demanding a more robust gesture in foreign interventions. We can safely say that interference with foreign countries' internal affairs meets the "quest for democracy" voiced by these foreign-born American citizens.

In the post-Cold War world politics, ethnic and religious problems are remarkably obvious, which has considerably challenged the increasingly diversified American society. In his 1993 inaugural address, Clinton stressed that "the line between domestic and foreign matters can no longer be clearly defined." This point is particularly poignant when it comes to ethnic and religious problems. A stern warning from the 9/11 incident is that if unchecked, the world-wide ethnic and religious problems, especially the radical Islamic thoughts and forces, will have grave impact on America's domestic stability and unity. The 9/11 incident has further extended the world-wide "clash of civilizations" to the domestic arena of the United States, aggravated the contradictions between the political mainstream and various ethnicities, religions and cultural diversity, the contradictions between social control and citizens' rights, and the contradictions between an open immigration policy and anti-foreign sentiment. One of the measures to downgrade these contradictions is to strike, in the name of anti-terrorism, the international Islamic radical forces and the "evil states," in order to strengthen America's world hegemony.

This subtle relationship between anti-terrorism efforts outside the U.S. and efforts to alleviate internal contradictions at home can only be understood but never be talked about by the American ruling group. After the 9/11 incident, the leaders of the United States have repeatedly emphasized that the terrorist attacks are not related to the Middle East policies of the United States, nor are they related to the "clash of civilizations." Their interpretation for the 9/11 terrorist attacks has been that because the United States represents liberty, democracy, human rights and tolerance, it is hated by international

terrorist organizations and their sympathizers (the “evil states). The latter represents tyranny, prejudice and hatred, sneering at human dignity, liberty and life. The Americans universally accept the proposition that the attacks on September 11 2001 are attacks on America’s democratic system and democratic ideals. In the speech given on the same day the attacks took place, President Bush stated that “America is under attack, because we are the brightest lighthouse representing the liberty and opportunity in the world.” Two months after the attacks, Bush spoke on the eve of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, sending “warmest greetings” to Muslims in the United States and the world, praising the Islamic religion for its “teaching people kindness, compassion and peace,” and noted that Islam “has been one of the fastest growing religions in the United States, with a current followers of several millions.” In the same speech, Bush also praised America’s efforts in reconstructing Afghanistan through humanitarian aid. On 13 December 2001, Bush again sent holiday greetings to Muslims on the occasion of Islamic New Year. These gestures sought to demonstrate America’s “tolerance, inclusiveness” and “kindness,” and attempted to put global resentment against and opposition to American hegemony into the category of “anti-liberty, anti-democracy”, thus enhancing America’s domestic cohesiveness.

In historical perspective, we can see an immutable American tenet, i.e., the deep belief in the idea that “a nation’s greatness depends on a world made safe for freedom.” As the society changes in the United States, especially as ethnic, religious and cultural diversity and democracy expand, the social and religious foundations for America’s hegemony has gradually shifted from white racism and Protestant “Manifest Destiny” to “universal values” such as freedom, democracy and human rights. President Bush’s speech at the 2002 Independence Day ceremony states that in today’s United States, “there is no American race; there is only an American creed.” If America’s ideology based upon the core belief in liberty has provided American hegemony the spiritual foundation, democracy has provided the American hegemony institutional base, thus enabling the Americans to be united under the national flag. It is obvious that the enlargement of America’s hegemonic ambition since World War II coincides with the gradual enlargement of the American democracy and the growth of diversity in the United States. The two trends in turn complement each other. As Professor Wang Xi of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania has analyzed, under the influence of America’s political culture, “government is no longer viewed only as an imposing and oppressive power mechanism, but more often viewed as a type of ideology, a value system, a system of extraction and distribution of economic interests. When government becomes the absolute basis for public interest, to safeguard the interest of the government thus becomes the desire and obligations of the public.”

Nationalism and International Behavior Pattern Based on Domestic Experience

Nationalism within any country includes certain irrational elements. For example, nationalism normally implies such an idea that one’s own nation is the lovely, strong, peace-loving, generous one, and that the strengthening of one’s own nation is a bless for the entire mankind; and that certain other nations are ugly, small-minded, innately aggressive, and selfish, and that their rise is a disaster to the entire mankind. If we go

beyond such nationalism, we will see that such belief is narrowed minded and lacking in persuasiveness, without historical, anthropological and sociological bases. But if we speak from our own nation's perspective, such a belief is natural, and is rationalized by our own nation's historical and cultural narratives. America's nationalism is covered in beautiful clothes of freedom, democracy and market economy, thus disguising the irrational side to its public.

America's nationalism evolved around the formation of the Americans as a nation. Because the Americans have come from different races, cultures or religions, to develop a common political value system, that is to say an ideology, has been the main ingredient of the American nationalism. The Chinese American scholar Pei Minxing has pointed out in an article that the primary characteristic of the American nationalism is founded on its political ideals, not on its cultural or racial ideals. Pei's article also reveals other features of the American nationalism, such as that the American nationalist prides comes from America's material power, scientific achievement and its global influence; that the American patriotism is promoted by spontaneous societal forces rather than by the government; and that the American nationalism seeks triumphs, and it is forward looking, contrary to most other nations in the world that stress national tragedies, looking back into history, thus gaining little sympathy from the Americans who adore winners and victories. These are insightful conclusions.

The pride of the Americans is manifested not only in their praise and defense of their nation, but also in their criticism of it. The level of relentlessness and profundity of criticisms launched against America's historical events, racism, and other social illnesses by some Americans thinkers and scholars has even surpassed that by foreigners. Many of America's literary writings, television and film programs have portrayed Congressmen, even the president, as bad guys. But contemporary Americans almost never regard any foreign country as a good example to emulate, or even think American's ugly and evil behaviors have surpassed anybody else's ugly and evil behaviors. In other words, they have seen the evil of the United States, but they have not found any country that is better than the United States. They will not be on the side of America's enemy because they have criticized America. The renowned Leftist thinker Norman Chomsky has since 1971 strongly criticized America's own terrorist acts, but he has also pointed out in the meantime that "these people (such as Osama bin Laden) have in the past twenty years brutally hurt the poor and oppressed peoples in their countries. Terrorists never care about the people." An American scholar who paid a visit to China before the Iraq war was vehemently opposed to the war, but he also opined that once the war broke out, he would hope the U.S. could finish it off quickly, minimizing the casualty of the U.S. troops. Chalmers Johnson, who has sharply lambasted the "American imperial diplomacy," writes that during the Cold War, the Soviet Union established satellite countries in Eastern Europe while the United States also did the similar thing Asia; that now "the U.S. officials and media have always described countries such as Iraq and North Korea as 'rogue nations,' but we must ask ourselves if we ourselves have become a rogue superpower." Nevertheless, Johnson has failed to say, and he will never say, that the behaviors of the United States are worse than those of the Soviet Union, Iraq and

North Korea.

The American nationalism is indeed promoted by spontaneous societal forces rather than by the government, and there is rarely any form of official media or “government-employed literati.” The Americans are proud of this fact. If the American media want the public to doubt the accuracy of foreign (especially those deemed dictatorial nations) reports, all they have to do is to say “this is according to this nation’s official media.” This is a primary reason why the American public finds it difficult to understand or have sympathy with other countries’ nationalism and anti-Americanism. In addition, compared to people in places like Europe, the percentage of the Americans who travel abroad and live abroad is very low. Social elite in today’s United States were mostly born after the Second World War, having been basking in an environment where domestic stability and affluence are the rule (having “freedoms from fear and want”). It is said that a man with a full stomach can not understand the man with an empty one. In a similar vein, it is very difficult for the Americans to imagine, let alone accept, the thinking and life style of other nations, especially other poor nations.

The Americans are an extravert nation. They do not avoid self interest, and regard self interest and public interest as non-contradictory. The Americans seldom hide their purpose of seeking self-interest and their arrogance in diplomacy. In 1998, the then Secretary of State Albright defended the U.S. action to launch cruise missiles against Iraq by saying that “if we are forced to use arms, that’s because we are the United States. We are an indispensable nation. We stand tall, and see far out.” In a few words, Albright fully displayed an American mindset that embodies this logic: the United States is like a corporation in a free market economy, it provides the world certain public products (stability, economic growth, etc). The motive of a corporation is to seek profit for itself, but it also pays taxes, giving out products for the public, thus collaterally benefiting the society. By the same token, the motive of the United States is of course selfish, but other nations all need the United States, therefore it is providing products for the benefit of the public; the more the United States does for itself, the more it contributes to the world, thus America’s self interest is public interest as well. Regarding the relationship between corporations and society, Justin Dart, a businessman and one of President Ronald Reagan’s close friends and advisors once said that “I have never sought to build a corporation for the benefit of humanity. I feel if a corporation employs many people, has made lot of money, it is in fact beneficial to humanity. Everything we do involves greed, I don’t think there is anything wrong with it.” The words of Albright and Dart represent America’s understanding of corporate interest and national interest. They have candidly revealed their self interest without feeling any moral defect. Why is it that the Americans cannot apply their domestic mechanisms which are marked by democratic, equal and moderate characteristics to maintain their international interest, thus avoiding frequently resorting to use of power politics or even force? The answer to this question can be found in the American way of thinking and behavior patterns.

Individualism is the foundation of America’s free and democratic ideals. From childhood onward, every American is indoctrinated with individualism. They worship individual struggle to triumph among fierce and ruthless social competitions, to achieve a

sense of security and satisfy desires for accomplishments, thus becoming pioneers and leaders in their own professions. Compared with developed countries in Europe and with Japan, the American style free-wheeling economic ideal stresses individuals and corporate self-reliance, rather than dependence on government and social welfare. It emphasizes the point that individual interest is the motivating force behind social progress and economic growth; that people should let out their natural instinct to compete freely, to find the perfect balance of manpower and material power. In schools, American children are encouraged to behavior differently from the crowd, to develop leadership qualities. These social customs and way of thinking are diametrically opposite to the Chinese way of social behavior whereby reliance on family, groups and organizations is the key to solving individuals' problems, whereby all individual achievements belong to the collective whole, to the group's leaders. The Americans are proud of having developed leadership qualities, and there are competitions everywhere. Therefore, in the international arena, Americans naturally seek a "leadership position" in a "if not me, who else?" manner. The Americans will not behave like someone in a Confucian society where the rule is "the first bird that sticks its head out gets shot."

In the early history of the United States, the rule of law was not complete, frontiers were vast and wide. In such an environment, the society encouraged the role of "lone heroes" who typically embodied the spirit of defiance against the privileged and the powerful, the worship of force and masculinity, and the readiness to help others for a just cause. When this Western cowboy spirit is applied to the current international arena where lack of authority and rule of law, fierce competition and anarchy reign, we naturally have an American style bullying and greedy desire for leadership positions. An American sociologist pointed out during the Cold War, "an American spends his entire life to pursue a certain sense of security, but his firm clinging to individualism in turns makes the sense of security always steps away from him. The American nation is like an American individual, behaving self-destructively in material, social and moral aspects to acquire a certain sense of security that will never be reached, because America is not willing to get security through equality and cooperation but through achieving superiority and imposing its own will upon other regions in the world." If these words are true, then today's unilateralism in American diplomacy, and stubborn insistence on absolute military superiority are the natural manifestations in the international arena of the deep mentality that worships heroes and American style individualism.

Regarding the American tradition of achieving individual dreams through wars, another American scholar Robertson writes, "The American nation today is often regarded as an individual in capital letters. An individual's character, his virtues and ideals belong to the nation. The Americans still are talking about the stories of the American nation, still believing in the solidarity, great goals and ultimate destiny of the American nation. These stories share themes that involve large scale organized actions, often revealing nationalism and reflecting the wars for the ideal of liberty. The Americans' wars are revolutions, civil wars on the global scale. The goals of these wars are liberty, the destruction of slavery in all forms and shapes, and the independence of individuals and nations. In the mythology of America, wars reveal the ideals that as long as the nation is united, organized and willing to sacrifice all manpower and material

power to achieve desired goals, the Americans can achieve whatever they want to achieve, can build many nations or reconstruct many societies, can speed up progress, and bring freedom and democracy to the world.”

These words by Robertson were written in 1986. Since then, the Americans have the Gulf War and the Iraq War, continuing to write its war mythology with the models, rationality, objectives and way of domestic mobilization exactly as described by Robertson, i.e., America’s wars are all one about “justice overcoming evil,” demanding the enemy’s unconstitutional surrender. As the American sociologist Seymour Lipset has stated, “Unlike other countries, we seldom believe we are only defending our own national interest. Because every war is a struggle between good and evil, the only acceptable outcome is the enemy’s unconditional surrender.”

Then, in the political, social and cultural tradition of America, has there been a tendency to support violence in order to sustain its hegemonic behavior? The answer to this question must be provided carefully, because every culture, every nation embodies the dual traditions of peace and violence. It is hard to say that the American nation is more of a worshipper of violence than others. But, in the past several decades, the United States has frequently waged wars overseas, while in the meantime has constantly claimed that the United States has been more peace-loving than others, which is quite ironic, no matter how you look at it. When interpreting why American diplomacy has been successful, the American scholar Walter Russell Meade analyzes America’s “warlike disposition.” He states that “people often say the American people are more religious than its allies in Western Europe. Equally true is that they are also more militaristic.” About the tradition of violence in American society, the American historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. makes an insightful point, “We always think ourselves as a moderate, tolerant and kind nation, a nation ruled by laws rather than by monarchs... But this is never the only disposition in our tradition, because we have always been a nation that worships violence. Failing to see this, we will not be able to face the reality of our nation. We must admit that we have certain destructive desires inside our body. It comes from the darkness and tension of our social systems in history. After all, we started with slaughtering the Indians and enslaving the blacks. There is no doubt that we did these things in the past by holding the Bible and prayers, but nobody can be so aware of our mission as we are. In its deepest place, in its tradition, in its social institutions, in its conditioned reflections and its soul buries a tendency for violence... We cannot escape such accusation that we are indeed a terrifying nation, because within this decade we killed three outstanding leaders that had represented American ideals to the world (author’s note: the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King). We are a terrifying nation because in the past three years we have been engaging in a war on the other side of the globe with a weak nation, a war that has no relation with our national security and interest. (author’s note: the Vietnam War) We are a terrifying nation because many in the world are questioning the inner connection between us and the conclusions drawn by America’s most honest friend and scholar Dennis Brogan (a British scholar) that “a nation that is innately blood thirsty domestically happens to be the world’s first and only nation that has ever dropped atomic weapons. Are we sure this is just a coincidence?” We are a terrifying nation because our various violent actions, domestic and abroad, have not

awakened the conscience of our politicians, or weakened our transcendental conviction about the absolute accuracy of our moral uprightness.”

Domestic Restrictions on the U.S. Hegemonic Behavior

It is hard to imagine in countries other than the United States to have somebody such as Schlesinger who is a famous scholar, with experience of being a special advisor to President Kennedy, to so severely and harshly criticize his own nation’s ugly characteristics, even calling his own nation the “most terrifying one.” Among politicians, extraordinarily outstanding is Kenney and Johnson’s Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. Facing all kinds of criticisms and ridicules, he bravely disclosed the unspeakable secrets of American policy makers during the Vietnam War, and published a memoir refuting his own earlier words and actions. Furthermore, by learning lessons from the Vietnam War, he sharply criticized America’s post-Cold War foreign and defense policies. Many American thinkers, critics mentioned in this article have written reflective works critical of the United States. Although, due to their limited experiences and political views, their criticisms are not yet good enough, it is sufficient to prove that the Americans are willing to self examining themselves and are good at it. As an elite group, these critics are very active in America’s universities and colleges, research institutes and think tanks that have influence over government policies. In addition to pursuing scholarship and social conscience, many of them have their own political ambitions and self-interest on their minds. In the game of political competition and career positioning for bureaucratic appointments, political advisors seek to keep certain distance from the current policies, become critical of the prevailing societal pathologies, carrying out criticisms that are designed to help by a little bit of constructive criticism. This practice sometimes can be good for a person’s future. No matter what motivates them, and no matter how effective they are, the intellectual elite’s criticisms and questioning of the government have served to somewhat curb America’s hegemonic thinking and actions.

Mechanisms within American politics such as checks and balances, supervision by public opinion, and popular participation have also set several limitations for America’s behaviors abroad and America’s policy options. The first of these limitations is the restriction on power and authority. Although the president enjoys so-called “king’s power” in foreign relations, he is still restricted by forces from the Congress, the National Security Council, the State Department, the Defense Department, and other executive organizations when it comes to issues such as waging large scaled wars, defense budget, military strategy, and major foreign policy initiatives, thus making it impossible for him to proceed at will, to take actions entirely according to his individual desires and political interest. As a whole, America’s foreign policy serves its long-term national interest, unlike Nazi Germany under Hitler or Iraq under Saddam Hussein whose foreign policies went to the fanatic extreme, and became short-sighted and irrational.

The latter stage of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s marks the zenith in history of American foreign policy’s fanaticism, short-sightedness and irrationality. At least over

one million Vietnamese and over fifty thousand Americans died directly as a result of this war. The Americans were forced to withdraw from Vietnam in 1973, ultimately leading to a defeat that has brought tremendous shame and humiliation to the American nation. The end of the Vietnam War was primarily a consequence of international factors, but the anti-war movement in the backdrop of the civil-rights movement was also a major reason why President Johnson declined to run for re-election and why the Nixon Administration decided to withdraw the U.S. forces from Vietnam. Nixon once helplessly remarked, "The Vietnam War was not lost in the battle fields in Vietnam, but in the halls of the Congress, in the offices of major newspapers and television editors, and in the classrooms of outstanding universities and colleges." Indeed, at the time when Nixon made these remarks, he still had power to continue this war, but he had lost the political basis and moral authority for doing so.

Secondly, there are the procedural restrictions. Compared to other hegemonic powers in history, the level of transparency in America's foreign policy making is higher, so is its predictability. In September 2002, the U.S. National Security Strategy Report announced the "preemptive strike" strategy, causing strong criticisms from many countries. But if the U.S. decides to launch a preemptive strike against another country, it has to issue a public military threat to that country before the actual strike takes place, only then will the U.S. take advantage of the crisis, setting the bottom lines of concessions, creating waves of propaganda domestically and abroad, and consulting its allies. The U.S. will not launch blitzkriegs as did during the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany, Japan's attacks on Pearl Harbor, the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet this does not by any means demonstrate the "good will" of the American hegemony. Instead, it tells us that the complexity of the U.S. decision-making process provides our countries with opportunities to figure out responses to the crisis, and to find out ways to influence the U.S. decision-making process lest the situation gets totally out of control.

The third is the moral restriction. Due to the diversity in politics, culture, and religion, the U.S. government has no way of monopolizing moral resources. It cannot proclaim itself as the ultimate judge of justice. As the outcome of the Vietnam War shows, the extreme unjust action of hegemony will eventually lose more support within the United States. When America's diplomatic isolation, the persistence and cruelty of the war, the death toll, the incompetence of the U.S.-supported South Vietnamese government, and the military attacks by the brave and heroic Vietnamese people all became undeniable reality to the American public, any defense and mobilization for the war became futile. Since then, all of the U.S. military interventions overseas have been overshadowed by the Vietnam War, forcing the government to set a threshold for the duration of military operations, sustainable casualty level, adversary's civilian deaths etc.

The fourth is the restriction by information dissemination. Although the U.S. government has done its best to control news media during the post-Cold War overseas military operations, especially since the 9/11 attacks the U.S. media has become more homogenized in its editorial opinions, information will not be blocked after all in the

global information age. The global challenges before or after the Iraq war, anti-American public opinions and anti-American demonstrations have caused considerable shocks in the American media, think tanks and opinion polls. In 1970, 4.7% of the American population was foreign born. By 2000, the number reached 10.4%, i.e., 28.379 million Americans were foreign born, about half of the French population, almost close to the entire Canadian population. Therefore, although compared with other developed countries, Americans with experience of traveling abroad are not as numerous, resources for the Americans to understand foreign countries are extraordinarily rich, and the information on international affairs is also highly developed.

Conclusions

In sum, the American ideology based upon the individual right to freedom constitutes the conceptual foundation for the American hegemonism. Domestic democracy constitutes the institutional foundation for this simplistic value system, while expansion of democracy as a result of the development of social diversity makes this value system more adaptable to a wider area, thus forming a “tyranny of the majority” in concept. This value system has gradually gone beyond white racism and the Protestant “manifest destiny,” manifesting itself in foreign affairs as a special form of American nationalism, causing the ballooning of hegemonic thinking. Experience in domestic social development has made the Americans rarely mindful of morality while pursuing their national self interest, and made them full of self-righteous desire for world leadership positions. In the meantime, there are still some restrictions to American hegemonism, preventing it from going to fanaticism and short-sightedness, as demonstrated in the self-restraining and self-examining factors embedded in America’s checks and balances system, decision making procedures, social structure and cultural traditions.

To study the ideological foundation of America’s hegemonism does not contradict with digging into American hegemonism’s economic motivation, strategic interest incentives and domestic political rationalities. In fact, they complement each other. What needs to be stressed is that the simple logic that “economics is the foundation of politics, and politics is the focal expression of economics” cannot provide complete interpretation for America’s international actions. The important feature of the American hegemonism is the American nation’s irrational impulse, the intensity of which is almost religious. The strength of America’s material power and the progress in sciences and technologies has partially come from this impulse. This irrational impulse has also caused America’s global expansionism, and subsequently the outside world’s resistance, repulsion and confusion. We can partially interpret America’s 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War from the perspective of economic factors such as oil. But such interpretation is anemic when it comes to the Kosovo War. The war in Afghanistan, the Vietnam War, the Korea War, etc, are all inseparable with certain geopolitical considerations, but are all unconnected with economic motivations. But all the wars mentioned above are related to America’s value system, without any exception.

Lastly, let us go back to the beginning when we discuss the differences among hegemonic status, hegemonic thinking, and hegemonic behavior. Since the Cold War

gradually came to a close, people have been expecting the decline of the American hegemonism and the arrival of the age of multipolarity. Yet the reality is that the American hegemony all over the world has become gradually transparent, while our own expression for multipolarity has evolved from “accelerated development” [of multipolarity] to “development [of multipolarity] through detours.” The course of history has proven that specific forms of international patterns can only be met but not be acquired. The rapid disintegration and disappearance of the Soviet Union has been quite unexpected, and the rise of America’s hegemonic status has also been against people’s wishes. America’s hegemony will never be an eternal situation, but we have to wait to see when history will show us the rapid decline of the United States.

It is unrealistic for now to drag the U.S. from the position of hegemony and to promote other power centers to a higher level, because it is beyond the ability of any nation or group of nations at the current stage. But the outside world can exert influence upon America’s hegemonic policies and actions, analyze and criticize America’s hegemonic thinking. The 9/11 attacks have been strong shocks to the American hegemony, yet these shocks have not further divided the American society (the organizer of the attacks were not necessarily pre-disposed to have this goal in mind). On the contrary, the attacks have strengthened America’s domestic cohesiveness, further stimulated America’s conservatism, nationalism and xenophobia, thus in reality leading to the formation of a U.S.-led international anti-terror front, and further consolidated America’s hegemonic status. It is thus clear now that to use terrorist acts to struggle against America’s hegemony can only reach the opposite goal. Meanwhile, it is not cost-effective and worthwhile to get into an arms race and military confrontation with the United States. To effectively impede America’s hegemonic behaviors, in addition to diplomatic dealings in the international arena, we must more deeply understand the politics, economics, society and culture of the United States, so that we can fully take advantage of those factors within the American society that serve to restrain America’s state hegemonic behaviors.

In this analysis, we can see that the domestic roots of America’s hegemonism are deep and solid. Before the U.S. falls from its hegemonic height, in order to shake its hegemonic thinking, we must eradicate America’s unitary ideology of freedom, change America’s nationalism and conceptual framework, make them believe that there are social systems and life styles in the world that are more admirable than America’s. When hearing foreigners’ criticism of America’s intervention everywhere, Americans often smugly quip, “of course, people all over the world are shouting ‘Yankees, Go home!’ but they always add, ‘bring me with you.’ This is the logic of the American hegemony! We can therefore conclude that only when there are no more boisterous assemblies of immigration and visa applicants in front of various American embassies overseas, and only when an outgoing emigration occurs in the United States, will the American hegemonic mentality be extinguished, will the age of multipolarity arrive.

<http://www.usa-mil.com/news/2003-12-10/2003j12u10m15b28o25t.asp>

