

Ask A Genius 56 – US, China, India, and Talent 2
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Scott: That leads to the third point, where Lee Kuan Yew had good relations with the United States and China. He had to balance between the two with a small city-state. He was the prime minister of Singapore for 30 or so years. He is the father of the current primate minister, Lee Hsien Loong, who became prime minister after one term of Goh Chok Tong (who became prime minister after Lee Kuan Yew).

He noted China was seen as, or many of the population (the leaders) saw China as, the middle path or middle road, where everything had to go through it, e.g. trade, but it can't be that anymore. It won't be that in the future because it is a multipolar world, where there will be many power countries as major poles of varying strengths. Lee Kuan Yew (and I assume Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong) knew (and know) this. Three we've been talking about will be on that list: United States, China, and India.

No country can claim absolute dominance. They are not going to own 50% of the world's wealth as the United States did after WWII. Everyone will be attenuated proportionate to everyone else. There will be the rise of some older ideological empires. Some more secular than others. Others more religious. With more technology and more science, as a rule of thumb, it will liberalize and democratize much of the world.

Rick: Forces of nationalism will be challenged by other forces. Now, historically, you have religious forces challenging national forces in places where they don't align. Some places reinforce them; some places don't. Recently, we have forces of corporatism or don't, and aligning, or not aligning, with national forces or interests. In the future, you will have nationalistic and religious forces losing power relative to corporatistic and informational forces.

Economic and informational forces in other words. We've talked about this before, where it doesn't matter if your country is number one in the world or not. I like the feeling I get from living in LA, which is one of the world's major cities and having been involved in one of the city's major industries, the entertainment industry, when the US was one of the most powerful countries. It is the place you go to have your dreams come true.

If you look at your average person in Finland, they might be healthier and happier on a day-to-day basis, but they don't have the awesomeness of living in the US. They might be a boutique country, but they don't have the awesomeness of living in the US.

Scott: What about the durability of the nation-state? Historically, it is a newer concept. Will the city-state be more viable in the future?

Rick: World-ruling countries have a run of a few centuries, historically. Rome had 5 centuries, though Rome was pretty dysfunctional because it had a model of conquest and trade. I don't know too much about them, but Rome was kind of a mess. It led to higher standards of living for millions of people, but it still brought weird ways of living as it colonized the known world.

It had its 5 centuries. Greece had its couple 3 centuries. Spain had a few centuries. The US has had, since 1776, 240 years, but America hasn't pushed to the forefront of nations until the 20th century, but you could push it back and give the United States the 19th century too – because of democracy, even though we weren't the most dominant 19th century country.

Can we expect any country to be the world's leading nation for another 2 centuries, say? I think that's unreasonable because I think the idea of leading nationhood will be beat up by the forces of technological change, where many of those forces work against nationhood and align people from all different parts of the world in entities that aren't nationally based. Cory Doctorow considers them as tribes, but they may be tribes of tens of millions of people.

One tribe might be the technologically adept. Another might be the technologically augmented. In the future, the people who have the wherewithal or the internal orientation towards economic mobility to get themselves augmented with AI that works closely with one's own brain. Those people will form a tribe of tens and then perhaps hundreds of millions of people who live life at a different speed and in a different way than people who are less able to rev themselves up with additional information processing capacity. That tribe of 100, 200, 300, half of a billion people may be something that runs the world for a while and only pays a half assed lip service to nationhood.

On the other hand, the nation that makes itself the most attractive home for this tribe of souped up people. That nation may buy itself another 50-100 years of nationhood. But eventually, nationhood will become less of a force, like sex, than it has been because there are a lot of other stuff going on in civilization than sex. It is a slow change. Right now, it is barely statistically noticeable, but people have a lot more other awesome stuff to be engaged in.

Similarly, in the future, people will be less likely to be nationalistic because there will be a lot more awesome stuff that functions apart from nations because America gives people a lot of things that are awesome, but we also get stuff that is awesome that don't come strictly from America.

The information feeds that come to us do not come solely from America. You can probably get the same quality of material fed to you from Canada, and England, and to some lesser extent in China. You need to do more dancing around stuff that might be censored in your country there. But your information feeds are not provided to you by national entities. So, national feeling, and power, will be attenuated over the next 100 years, though individual nations, as they evolve into places for certain types of people, will continue to lead in certain ways.



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