

Monday, January 28th 2019

Dear Chris,

A bitterly cold winter wind greets me as I wait in line for a taxi to NYC, my father's favourite city. To him New York represented the USA, an awe-inspiring land of towering steel and glass, with a modern outlook and an erudite sophistication. He believed in America and in her merit-based system. And every summer he took the family to America, always starting with a week in New York and then to all corners of the country.

There was no better place for a child's imagination; there was so much of everything – food, music, films...an endless variety. But today as I drive towards Manhattan, nearly four and half decades later, the same exhausted infrastructure receives me. Tired buildings near tired bridges, where even the literacy of her citizens is suspect. It pains me to admit that the America of my father's admiration exists only in my memory.

American leadership, both political and financial, both Democrat and Republican, have, like emperors of ancient Rome, squandered my father's America. They have pillaged the system of merit and reciprocity, through self dealing, warmongering, and self promotion. These actions all mimic behaviour more typically associated with Third World dictators. And in the process of these actions, these titans of hypocrisy have converted a peerless America into just another Third World nation, where a handful rule and where money or some accident of birth converts itself into merit... and merit is to be publicly lauded.

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As I travel on to Asia, the sheer scale of modernity reignites dormant childhood memories of awe and amazement. There is newness everywhere and an underlying belief that it will get newer. Yes there is a gargantuan debt on these government's balance sheets, but at least in Asia you can see where it has been spent. The American leaders, on the other hand, have spent it on war and welfare.

It is true that an Orwellian social credit policy is in force in China, but this too is just a rip-off of the American credit score that is now combined with one's legal and health record. Social credit has existed in a segregated form in America for decades, but the new tech allows for an 'improved' Asian version; I imagine it will eventually end up in America too.

America needs to regain its 'razzle dazzle', a place to visit to see the future. America faces a choice, either upgrade and modernise or the next generation shall have to manage a shift in which the future is dictated by others – the dismal fate of all Third World citizens.

I know what my father would be doing – taking us to Asia – but in his heart he would be secretly rooting for America's rebirth. He did love NYC.

See you next week – Mustafa

