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Disruption and Change

The aftermath of a major disruption of a society is interesting to say the least, a move back to the fundamental elements that the society was built upon and the urge to re-discover the roots, so to speak, rings strong in these societies. In some cases these moves unite the society while others tear apart so much a society, even to the point of shifting the cultural Framework. In this short discussion, we shall take a look at 2 societies that were shaken by seismic events. The first being the British handover of the city of Hong Kong to China, which is near and dear to this writer. The second being the Holocaust, dire events that happen in WWII, that has and lasting impact till this day. Finally, we shall attempt to evaluate how detrimental change leaves a strong impact in a society, for better or for worse.

Disruption 1: Hong Kong

Ever since the British handover of Hong Kong in 1997, the city has experienced a slow drift from previous held values. The democratic values, freedom of speech and rule of law, elements that were transplanted from British ideology onto native Hong Kong soil were sadly uprooted. The dire event came in the form of the brutal crackdown of

peaceful protests in summer of 2019. The Hong Kong puppet government attempted to introduce an extradition bill that would allow the transfer of suspected convicts to be extradited to the mother country of China. Fearing the underlying Communist political agenda, the residents of Hong Kong took to the streets and expressed their concerns and demanded that the bill be withdrawn¹. The police fired tear gas into the peaceful protests in an attempt to disperse the crowds. The increased violence caused more to join the and in turn encouraged stronger measures by the governing force. If it wasn't for the COVID-19 Pandemic, the cyclical protests probably would have continued.

Not all were in support of the democratic protests. Some chose to support the policing measures, they chose to show or wear a blue ribbon to demonstrate their solidarity with the government while yellow was the color of the pro democrats. Color coded economic circles started to develop, each side was encouraged to maintain capital within their respective "color" group. With-in the pro-democratic faction, a stronger emphasis on "Local" products were prioritized, the strong preference for usage of the Traditional Chinese script and Cantonese, accompanied the desire to have distinction between China and all of this flourished.

It has since been almost 4 years since the protest, much of the fire that fueled the events were quenched by the drastically strong measures taken by the Government, but accompanying the hundreds of thousands that have migrated away from the city, is a much stronger sense of nationality, the sense of being a HongKonger even as they settle in the suburbs of London, Manchester and Bermingham .

¹ The right to protest was also one of those rights that were taken away.

Disruption 2: The Holocaust

There is no need to recount the horrific events that were bestowed upon the Jewish people during the Second World War. Some of its ripples can be felt still today amongst the Jewish community today. The Satmar Jewish Community, mainly based around Williamsburg, New York, is one that has yet to recover from post traumatic stress disorder. Motti Inbari retells the story of the founding of the community by their charismatic leader Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum(154). The Rebbe arrived in New York in 1946, just narrowly escaping the gas chambers himself, and having witnessed 450,000 of his fellow Hungarian Jewry perish(143).

Distrust in the outside world was a main artery that ran through the life of a Satmar child. As Teitelbaum rebuilt the community, this strong motif drove decisions from development of the Satmar educational system to their strong adherence to the Satmar dress code. As Inbari records, Satmar children felt like they were attacked on all sides. The Rebbe developed an education system that was independent from the US, but because of the requirement of the state, the Satmar schools taught secular subjects. The apparent preference (and trust) in their own is summarized by the Rebbe himself: Allowing the children to learn secular subjects in the Yeshivah under his close supervision was certainly a lesser evil than sending them to public schools with Gentiles for six hours a day(156). Their distinct dress code was another way to express their desire to separate. As Inbari states, the inclination of the Satmar community towards traditional European dress code “represented a countermovement emphasizing separatism and the rejection of integration”(159).

It is not uncommon to hear in the Satmar community that they have the self instilled duty to replace the 6 million lost in the Holocaust. Their deliberate separation from modern society, and extreme measures to maintain medieval European Jewish traditions, in a scene reflects how this community felt after the seismic trauma that they have experienced.

Conclusion

As we can see, the strong disruption in the cultural norm creates strong ripples that reshape the cultural frame, or at the very least tilts the cultural screens towards a fundamentalist notion. The events described above both created a stronger sense of community and a rejection of external factors. These effects are sometimes transmitted psychologically, and if not dealt with properly can reshape the entire society as it emerges from the disruption. The Hong Kong community chose to leave their homeland in search of previously held values. Even Though they reside in America, the Satmar community still believe external threats against them loom at large. Only by holding ,eversor, tightly to their cultural identities, values and traditions, can these communities survive in their ever changing worlds.

Works Cited

Inbari, Motti. *Jewish Radical Ultra-orthodoxy Confronts Modernity, Zionism and Women's Equality*. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2018.