Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Basic Books, 2010, 296p.

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Though the title of the book is somewhat misleading, the book presents an astonishingly candid assessment of the coming threat to American dominance in the world. The concern laid out is not about the tactical challenges posted by China either economically or militarily; it is about the strategic shift of balance of power defined by culture primacy. Throughout his analysis, the author cannot help but often use a mirror image and typical Eurocentric arrogance to screen what are happening in China. His continued perception about China being a "rogue state" or a "sugar daddy" to "the bad and the ugly" rulers, says something about the hidden bias of his analysis. His characterization of many touching issues such as separatist insult on 2008 Summer Olympic torch relay indicates the reluctance on the part of many Western analysts to even recognize the existence of China's legitimate national interests.

Instead of dealing with the nature of the so-called "Beijing Consensus," this book is all about China challenge and how the United States and the West should deal with it. Though "Beijing Consensus" was discussed extensively, the discussion serves the purpose of redefining the much-talked about the gathering "China threat." What's new to the author's approach, according to the author's own claim, is that instead of taking a piece meal approach to the challenges raised by the rise of China, we must adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach to the task in hand. The conclusion of his analysis is that the core of the challenges presented by China is neither military or humanitarian, nor economic per se, since all of these are still manageable. "The real China challenge," the author claimed, "is political and cultural" (P. 209) and the real threat is the shrinking "soft power" of the United States (p. 33) or the cultural appeal of the "American brand" (p. 34).

After nearly several decades of debate, Stephan Halper finally gets to the bottom of debate, ie., the China problem is all about the Western dominance and survivability of the liberal world order. As the author puts it candidly, his worry is about "the U.S.-led system is losing leverage as a politicoeconomic bloc and losing appeal as politicoeconomic model" (p. 209). According to Halper, though we have yet entered into a "post-American era," but the U.S. simply cannot dominate as it used to (p. 220). After attempting to steer the developing world towards the liberal order ("American brand") for more than a half century, the author worries about an emerging illiberal order symbolized by the "China brand" and China's potential to become an inspirer for such a shift. Nevertheless, the author does not consider this shift to be a deliberated effort made by leaders in Beijing to undermine the power of the Western bloc (p. 214).

One of the major problems with the author's analysis is that he takes the concept of "Beijing Consensus" too seriously. Anyone who has observed China up close will agree that it is still too early to call China's recent experience as a model since its reform is still half way through. The political transition which has transformed a totalitarian state to an authoritarian one is yet finished. A large scale of democratic transition may have to be waited until Beijing's economic modernization

programs are realized by the middle of the 21 century. The market-oriented reform has benefited tremendously from liberal economic theory. Milton Friedman and many other liberal economic thinkers have been busy in giving lectures and advices in helping Chinese to create functional stock exchanges, establish the modern enterprise system, and formulate new monetary policies. China does not in principle opposed to the "Washington Consensus." To the contrary, its economic reforms have followed, though reluctantly and slowly, many of the similar prescriptions of neo-liberalism: liberalization, deregulation, competition, privatization, etc. However, the concern over stability has propelled the Chinese state to continue to play a much stronger role.

Another problem is the fallacy of two-valued logic. Studies of human behavior have shown that the principle of bivalence is not always valid. If the liberal order is indeed losing its hegemonic position, then a more diverse world should be cherished. There is nothing wrong to talk about reserving and projecting Americans' soft power. But it may be too naive to use it as leverage or a new "charming offense" (p. 237) to fend off Chinese influence in developing world without a fundamental change in U.S perception about that part of the world—a world that is full of dynamics and complexity in local social, economic and political conditions.

There is nothing to be sad about the end of liberal hegemony, or a warranted agony about the rise of China. Maybe the world is big enough to allow both U.S. and China to co-exist side-by-side in the 21st century as long as the US can find a way to renew and revitalize its troubled economy and tarnished image as a moral leader in the global community. Maybe there is a third or a forth way for nations to choose from. The world, after all, has enough room for ideas from both Confucius and Thomas Jefferson. The needs for "a global struggle to assert and sustain the primacy of Western values" (p. 252) is from an old school we called Western hegemony.

Despite the limits, the book remains to be an insightful and influential one to the ongoing debate about the rise of China. It is insightful because it does provide a more accurate description of the nature of the Sino-US relations. Instead of a partner, China is perceived as a strategic competitor with the cultural and moral values of the United States. It will be influential since the arguments made in the book are far-reaching and in sharp contrast with many of the leading scholars and policy makers.

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