

Kathmandu School of Law Review

ISSN 2091-2110

Volume 2

Issue 1

April 2013

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BOOK REVIEW

Toward Geopolitics of Hope

Dhananjay Tripathi

Title of the Book: **Toward Geopolitics of Hope**
Authors: **William H. Thornton & Songok Han Thornton**
Publisher: **Sage Publication**
Publication: **2012**
ISBN: **9788132109440**
Total Pages : **276**
Reviewed by: **Dr. Dhananjay Tripathi¹**

A very well written book which will not distract its reader till the end. This book while opposing 'Washington Consensus' also remained critical of 'Beijing Consensus'. Although it is not termed so in the book but authors argue that it could be 'New Delhi Consensus' that will resolve problems in international relations. Authors present that the West particularly the United States of America (the USA) is a declining power and is not in position to counter the rising China. According to the authors, the USA in past acted discretely to promote its own interest, and in doing so it sacrificed ethical international values. Realist school of thought predominate the foreign policy circle of the USA and its proponents have not done much good to the world. Several unwarranted regimes were supported on the pretext of enhancing national interest. China is one such country, which was supported unconditionally by the USA initially for cold war politics, but interestingly, Beijing is the new economic powerhouse of the world. Regarded as economic giant in contemporary world, China is showing a new path of development that includes contempt for human rights, ignorance of environmental concerns and most importantly suppression of democracy. This is described as Chinese model of growth.

It is argued in the book that globalization enthusiasts created hype about number of associated advantages. End of the cold war opened a gateway for neoliberalism to spread accompanied by democracy. According to the authors, this is a neoliberal bluff and it was blatantly exposed after 9/11. After the terrorist attacks on it, the USA declared a war on terror but at the same time many authoritarian regimes were also supported. The idea of globalization as exported by west has lost its appeal and is replaced by second world globalization propagated and led by China. In the future, there is a possibility of clash with capitalism, with Chinese leading the group against the west.

The book also draws the attention of readers towards Russia, which gained power under the rule of President Putin. Kremlin and capitalism abetted rise of Putin and he also showed contempt for democracy. The authors being critical to west blame it for creating a positive image of Putin initially but later on the same person started flexing muscles. Putin behaves

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like corporate CEO rather than a politician and has all the authoritarian tendencies. 'In effect he made himself the corporate CEO-in Chief. Putinism is fascism, pure and simple, and the fact that is every bit as globalist as Yelsinism say much about the nature of today's globalization' (Thorton & Thorton, 54). The authors also target west for their meek response after Russia attacked Georgia which further encouraged Putin. Russia time and again tried to create wedge between Brussels and Washington and is also closely siding with Beijing. There are scholars in Russia who have different viewpoint about China and take it as a competitor in Central Asia, but officially, Russia under Putin is more comfortable with Beijing. The obvious reason is that both are against democracy and want to pursue the agenda of economic growth by ignoring human values.

Describing Chinese model of growth, authors bring out several empirical details to ascertain that state is in full control. Capitalist development in China is guided and organized by the state as '35 largest companies listed in the Shanghai Stock exchange, 30 are majority-owned by the state or state-controlled institutions' (Thorton & Thorton,73). Socialism in China means Communist Party of China Corporatism. The authors accuse the USA for helping Chinese to grow even when it was indulged in massacre like Tiananmen Square case. China is also responsible for mercilessly crushing the Tibetan protest before the Beijing Olympics and it was tacitly endorsed by the USA. President Bush attended the opening ceremony of Beijing Olympics and Washington maintained silence on Tibetan protest. Today China is investing in Africa and in the process is also backing many authoritarian regimes. Chinese model of globalization is based on authoritarian capitalism, which is opposed to liberal capitalism of west.

China proved that development does not mean freedom as what been suggested by Amartya Sen. The authors also argue that international capital preferred China as a new destination because they do not have to worry about the labor laws, environmental clearance and everything is given on platter to them to make profit. Capitalism which brood on the concept of maximizing profit is supporting Chinese model to extract maximum benefits. There are several prominent intellectuals who favor China for their ownself-interest but put is under the grab of realism. References are made to Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski (Thorton & Thorton, 176, 206) who buttressed US-China alliance during the cold war from the realist paradigm. This scholarly advocacy is not an exception in case of China, even scholars like David Held and Lord Meghnad Desai indulged in unethical academic practices by accepting handsome donation from Gaddafi's kin and in return justified then Libyan regime (Thorton & Thorton, 208). The politics of academia is exposed in this book and there is a hint that we should not be swayed by intellectual discourses.

Being critical to Washington consensus and elaborating on the wrongdoings of west the authors caution us about the endorsement of China. Interesting case study of Burma is presented to highlight the hypocrisy of west, insensitivity of Association of South East

Asian Nations (ASEAN) and imperialist design of China. In this book, Burma is termed as Tibet of South, where monks demonstrated against the military junta for democracy. These demonstrations were crushed with heavy hands but preachers of human rights remained docile in their response. 'It would be utterly hypocritical for Washington to declare war on Al-Qaeda type terrorism while ignoring the whole issue of state terrorists like Senior General Than Shwe and his genocidal comrades' (Thorton & Thorton, 122). The 'saffron rising' of monks were ignored by the world at large and even country like India did not protest strongly against the excesses of military junta. Rich in natural resources, Burma is a preferred destination of capitalists and human rights violation is not a matter of concern for those engaged in business of profits.

Drawing attention towards the Arab Spring, authors argue that America supported several authoritarian regimes in the region. Even with all his rhetoric the US President and Nobel laureate Obama did not work for promoting democracy in Middle East. It is interesting to note that American allies in the region include Saudi Arabia to Israel. Several western analysts strongly reject any possibility of democracy in Middle East because, for them, Islam does not support such a system. Even when protest started in some Arab nations against dictators backed by the US, commentators credited social network websites for creating this awakening. Prevailing socio-political conditions – poverty and repression, were not highlighted much in these analyses. Gazing at the changing situations, Americans sided with democratic movements but remained tight-lipped for other dictators of the region. This is duplicity and it is a part of the problem.

Being critical to neo-liberal capitalist agenda, authors locate India as a hope. Indian democracy is praised and appreciated. Still authors are little apprehensive due to recent happenings. Socio-political questions related to land, forest and industrialization in India are raised in this book. The Naxal uprising, protests against the state are also highlighted. Authors express their distress over the kind of economic growth followed by India where it has also started using force to quell protests. The capitalist path of development adopted by India after the end of cold war has its own drawbacks as it failed to improve the general standard of living. Referring to the writings of famous author Arundhati Roy, Thornton and Thornton justify the protest of the tribals and downtrodden. Authors are also critical of New Delhi for siding with military junta of Burma and it is argued that such positions are antithetical to India's image. Democratic India could give the world a new model provided that India starts practicing it, before preaching it to others.

The book argues for 'moral realism' adding ethical dimension to prevalent theory of realism. The case of 'moral realism' is justified by citing examples of China, Burma and Middle East where American supported authoritarian regimes on the pretext of realism. The authors reject justifying alliances with undemocratic regimes on the premises of national interest. Although, this book is interesting, the question is why the authors confined themselves to the boundaries of realism, which is not adequately described in this

book. Subscribing to realist paradigm even in the form of ‘moral realism’ does not liberate one from certain basic assumptions. Realism is a state centric theory, which assumes that there is no order in the international relations. When nation-states have to deal with anarchy, they land into a kind of prisoner’s dilemma. Realism with its assumptions motivates states to enhance national interest, and in Hobbesian sense, it rejects moral and ethics in international relations. Thus, normative considerations are detached from realism. Authors could have subscribed to liberal school of thought, which would have substantiated their positions much better. It appears that authors did not want to engage critically with the dominant theory of realism rather went for arguing from within the realist discourse adding moralism to it, which is a strange side of this book.

Lastly, one can also find some faults in this book, such as, at times, it appears to be over-sympathetic towards the Indian Maoist. While attacking the mainstream Indian political parties authors in the same length also criticizes official left. The Maoist issue is not that simple and issue of violence is very much a part of its discussion. Thornton and Thornton ignore the relevance of non-violent methods of protest in India and their achievements. There are also stories of Maoist excesses in areas of their control. Apart for Maoist issue, the suggestions for Indian establishment are praise worthy, and in this regard, this book is valuable. This book can be an interesting reading for policy makers and strategic community in India and beyond.
