

The World Turned Upside Down: America, China, and the Struggle for Global Leadership, Clyde Prestowitz, (Yale University Press), 344.

The crux of the book can be summarized in one sentence: the US made a blunder supporting China's membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO). It was done in the hope that China will act as a responsible stakeholder in the global rule-based system. But it was not to be; according to the author, this was not in line with China's great dreams. China's dream is to make China great again and to achieve greatness, it would employ all possible means even evading or maneuvering around the WTO's policies whenever it is needed.

Prestowitz argues that historically whoever tried to conquer China, for instance Mongols and the Manchus, were absorbed by the Chinese people and culture. Even after humiliating China in the Opium Wars, Britain was not able to conquer China like it did countries in other regions. Chinese have a legacy of dominating the foreigners instead of being dominated. The author elaborates how Americans generally got overwhelmed by the Chinese culture, and intellect of its leadership with certain examples. In 1972, Henry Kissinger engaged with the Chinese leaders for the first time, with ambitious plans of convincing them to release all the Americans in the Chinese custody, make them help in persuading North Vietnam to accept a peace deal and agree to an official visit by President Nixon to the Chinese Mainland. Kissinger, overawed in the presence of Chinese leadership, ended up making concessions himself and could only convince Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong to accept an official visit by the American President.

Chinese government's actions since becoming an economic power are in line with Xi's vision of making China a Middle Kingdom

(Great Power) through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The author goes on to elaborate China's strategy for beating the US and achieving global leadership status. China in his estimation will be using economic tools to drive a wedge between the US and its allies. He gives Australia's and Singapore's example to explain how China is spreading its economic reach to influence the political culture in other countries. Chinese students and tourists contribute billions of dollars to the economy of these two countries. Besides China imports agricultural products and iron ore in huge quantities from Australia. The author observes that Singapore and Australia are culturally aligned with the US but they are economically heavily dependent on China.

Prestowitz argues that the western strategy of liberalizing China through its membership of WTO and engaging with it economically to influence its culture has not borne fruit. According to the author, China has 'won the wager' by operating in free market economy simultaneously with maintaining an ever-tighter control on the civil society and political life at home. His solution to the problem is that the US should exercise complete reciprocity in its relations with China. Whatever restrictions are placed on the US exports and people in China, US should impose similar restrictions on China.

Another major idea discussed in the book is that in post WWII period free trade policies have generally not served the US interests. The trade deficit with China grew rapidly after China's entry into the WTO. To take advantage of cheap labour and other incentives given by China, more and more private companies moved their operations to China and began exporting their produce back to the US. This added to trade deficit every year.

The author believes that the US is not fully cognizant of the threat posed by China's growing influence on the free world economy and cultural values and presents some examples to support this view. China has infiltrated political and academic centers in Australia,

Canada and the US through systematically strengthening ties with its diaspora, making massive donations, and even harassing some leading figures to promote its interests. China's dream of making China great again is revived through stoking pride in glorious periods of Chinese history.

The author further argues that Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has maintained political and ideological control through intense propaganda both at home and abroad. Furthermore the priority of CCP is to maintain its control and power – something it values above the people, nation, and the country therefore the enemy of the west, in his opinion, should not be China but the CCP.

The author observes that shifting from an agricultural to an industrial economy and following mercantilist policies had paved the way for the US to become a superpower. He explains in extensive detail, diving into the history of US trade policies, to make the case that US free trade policies after WWII have worked to its detriment. Major economies like that of Japan, South Korea, and even US itself in the past have achieved economic growth through adopting mercantilism as the center piece of their economic policy. The US should, therefore, reconsider its free market economy.

The book analyzes history in a narrative style and adds insights to the historical events. The author has an interesting style of writing and makes his point through sharing his personal interactions with important political and business world leaders throughout the book. For instance, he mentioned his discussion with the CEO of Motorola to explain that the Tiananmen Square incident did not dampen American company's decision to invest in China. He also writes about General Electric's avionics division that moved their operations to China, as an example to show how China lured foreign investment to develop indigenous capacity in a wide range of technologies.

Each chapter begins with an interesting quote, which builds the rhythm for the reader for what is about to come and also gives quotations by renowned persons in the text, which adds to the interest of the reader. At one point, he quotes Confucius to back China's hegemonic designs. The quote goes as: "Just as there are not two suns in the sky, so there cannot be two emperors on the earth."

At some point arguments do seem a bit exaggerated. For instance, the author writes: "China does not intend to find a niche for itself in the so-called liberal global order; rather it is bent on setting its own course to great power status," suggesting China intends to establish a new world order which doesn't seem realistic. However, the author has made interesting arguments and reference to some authentic sources in support of his point of view.

At some place, author does appear biased against China and exaggerates its threat to the west. He writes: "As I write this in May 2020, the media are reporting live tests of Chinese anti-ship missiles in the South China Sea. This is a clear warning to all who transit the South China Sea that they ignore China at their peril." It can be seen, the author is portraying China as a regional and global menace, mindfully ignoring similar activities by others regionally and globally.

At another point, Prestowitz writes that China is working to split the US' allies and "once the United States is completely blocked, China will be able to create a new authoritarian global system guided more by coercion than by law." These threats appear exaggerated, magnified, as well as unlikely to surface.

Students of international relations would find '*World Turned Upside Down*' of interest as it gives a fresh perspective on the subject.

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