

What Does China Think? by Mark Leonard. Public Affairs/Perseus, 2008, 176 pp., \$22.95.

Since almost the beginning of recorded history, China has been one of the major contributors of ideas to the rest of the world. Written over 2,000 years ago, Sun Tzu's *Art of War* is still required reading in professional military schools. Scholars such as Mencius, Chu Hsi, and Wang Yang-Ming made China the center of intellectual thought through Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, Daoism, and Mahayana Buddhism. Even as late as the twentieth century, Maoism, as the peasant variant of Marxism and Leninism, regenerated communist thought throughout the nonindustrialized world.

The post-Maoist period, however, has not been characterized as a time of Chinese thought but of wholesale adoption of Western ideas. Specifically, Deng Xiaoping's efforts to modernize the Chinese economy along the model of American capitalism have fueled spectacular growth rates over the past few years. One assumed that the Americanization of China in the 1980s and 1990s would lead to a natural emergence of liberal democracy. Such has not been the case, however, as evidenced by Tiananmen Square. Not only has the Chinese Communist Party confounded this global notion by successfully maintaining a market economy within a political dictatorship, but Mark Leonard in *What Does China Think?* asserts that Chinese intellectuals may offer an alternate "Walled World" global development model. This Chinese model competes for world influence with both the "flat world" model described by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, in which nation-states lose control of their fates in the relentless progression of American values, and the liberal multilateralism model preferred by Europe.

Following his successful book *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century*, Leonard's latest work is a result of his tenure as visiting scholar at Beijing's Chinese Academy for Social Sciences. His previous experience was as executive director of foreign policy at the Centre for European Reform and director of the Foreign Policy Center. Though not a sinologist, his relationship with Chinese intellectuals provides an insight on the internal debate among China's most prominent scholars on the country's economic and political future.

Leonard's analysis is almost dialectical between existing and emerging thought within China. "New Right" economic liberals embrace "Pearl River Capitalism" and press their case for increased entrepreneurial freedom against the "New Left," who advocate "Yellow River Capitalism" with more state control for worker's rights and environmentalism. Similarly in world politics, "liberal internationalists" who advocate promoting Chinese interests through the existing world order compete against the nationalistic "neo-comms" who believe a more assertive foreign policy should contain American, Japanese, and, especially, Taiwanese influence. These debates occur within a system in which the Chinese Communist Party refuses to relinquish political power but recognizes that the government needs to be more responsive to its citizens in terms of corruption and abuse by government and business officials. Hence, deliberative dictatorship allows some modicum

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of democracy by permitting Chinese citizens to participate more in the process administered by the current regime. Representative democracy, they argue, will eventually occur but as a slow, methodical process. Militarily, the Chinese recognize they cannot and will not compete with the United States in terms of arms but will use all economic, political, and military weapons to keep the United States off balance through China's version of asymmetric warfare. Realizing they are quickly becoming a dominant world actor, the Chinese even strive to quantify their economic, political, and military assets in an all-inclusive package, or Comprehensive National Power, to better compete with other world powers. Emerging from this convolution of thought is a Walled World international system that allows nation-states the sovereignty to participate in controlling the economy, managing their own political systems, and shaping their foreign policies.

The Chinese system of managed state capitalism can be appealing to autocratic leaders of developing nations, especially after seeing how uncontrolled economic reforms contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Communist Chinese government not only provides a new developmental model but also offers the opportunity and means to apply that model through "soft power." Autocratic leaders such as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe or the military junta in Myanmar gladly accept economic aid, investment capital, and loans from China without the accompanying encumbrances and restrictions that often come with Western economic packages. Chinese "Special Economic Zones" outside China's borders cement the economic relationship with other countries. Consequently, China's influence has grown throughout the world.

This concise and readable introductory primer on modern Chinese intellectual thought is well supported but does not bog down the reader in detailed economic or political minutiae. Indeed, Leonard employed an unconventional system of identifying quotations only at the end of the book so as "not to overburden the reader" with notes. His experience as a commentator in several international periodicals has developed his talent for explaining complex economic and political issues in understandable prose. Leonard's writing style so engages the reader's interest that one could easily finish this book within a night. Short biographies of today's major intellectual thinkers in China also provide a handy reference source at the end of the book.

One might consider *What Does China Think?* as a wakeup call for global powers who, while recognizing China as a potential economic and military threat, may not have considered the impact its political and economic model might have on the rest of the world. The rise of China may indicate that the right to rule historically attributed to the Mandate of Heaven may have very well passed to these new Chinese leaders, with the new Middle Kingdom providing economic and military aid accompanied by an effective economic/political model for the modern tributary nations. The Western world may have to compete not only in the military and economic spheres but also in the realm of ideas. Leonard's book would be a fine start to learning about these new ideas.

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