

Book Review
By
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Richard N. Haass, Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order (New York: Basic Books 2014), 195

Richard N. Haass, the author of the book *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* is the president of Council on Foreign Relations, a position he has held for over twelve years. Council on Foreign Relations is a well-known independent think tank working in the areas of foreign policy and international relations. Dr. Haass is the author of twelve books on foreign policy and has also written a book on management. Beside his work in Council on Foreign Relations Dr. Haass has worked in various capacities for almost equal number of years in the US administration. In the Bush Administration he was Director of Policy Planning and Advisor to the Secretary of State, Collin Powell.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part of the book titled 'The Return of history,' has been written in the perspective of hope for world peace and global stability generated by the end of the Cold War. It discusses major features of international political order after the Cold War with focus on post 9/11 era. The author points out that despite assertions by some authors on the uni-polarity of the world in the absence of challenges posed to US security by the then USSR, it is not a uni-polar world. In Dr. Haass' opinion the dominant feature of the first half of 21st century will be non-polarity though the USA will retain its primacy in the world affairs. He is critical of American war on Iraq which in his opinion has weakened American position in the world. Though the author is supportive of war in Afghanistan after 9/11 terming it a war of necessity, but he is critical of the manner in which it was handled by the policy makers. The author opines that America is presently facing a number of internal problems and advises its policy makers to focus on internal issues rather than expanding its foreign policy agenda.

While discussing China the author points out that China's rise was one of the defining features of this era and its rise was inevitable. China in his opinion may not be able to sustain high growth it has been experiencing for very long, because of its dependence on imported energy. Dr. Haass thinks that China would need to co-operate with the US and other major powers to keep the Middle East stable in order to ensure uninterrupted supply of energy. Population, poverty and heavy investment in military and defense are the main factors which would burden China's economy in the coming years.

In the author's analysis a major war between big powers is not likely because major powers like China, USA, Japan, Russia and countries of Europe have become economically interdependent in the contemporary world. Cooperation rather than confrontation would, therefore, serve the interest of these powers better in the coming years he adds.

The author however cautions that the world has not yet entered into the 'Kantian period of perpetual peace,' therefore, possibility of conflict remains with the medium -size states like North Korea and Iran. North Korea is the most un-free, militarized and closed country whereas Iran is an even more dangerous and difficult state in his assessment. Both states pose nuclear threat to the world. US feels enormous threat from Iran as it poses a security challenge to the US interests in the region and also for regional neighboring countries by following a policy to shape the region in an Anti-American mode of itself. The US is therefore extending its security guarantees to the regional states to avoid further proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile advancement in the region. Though Dr. Haass has not discussed it, the USA is negotiating with Iran on the nuclear issue for the same reason. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan in the author's opinion are facing problems. He believes that Afghanistan has come a long way after 9/11 and Al-Qaida has been defeated there. Taliban continue to pose a potent threat in his views, and Afghanistan security apparatus is not yet strong enough to deal with them effectively. He expects, what American policy makers have been repeatedly saying in the past, that Pakistan take strong action against the terrorists. In his opinion the US-Pakistan relations would be defined by these actions in future. It may however be interesting to note that the US-Pakistan relations are on the mend and Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan are also improving after a new government took over in Afghanistan in 2014.

In the second part of the book titled 'Restoration Abroad.' the author has addressed key issues defining the US foreign policy doctrine. This part also contains expansive discussion on the main message of the book which is the unique and primary position of the US in the international political system. Retention of this position as highlighted by Dr. Haass could only be possible by improving US, economic infrastructure and increasing the role of American in competitive marketplace.

He further elaborates the key foreign policy objectives of the US, as spread of democracy, humanitarian efforts, counterterrorism, integration etc. In author's opinion spread of democracy remained a central objective of US foreign policy since the Cold War but it had several problems. It is difficult to spread democracy as its active promotion could get in the way of cooperation on issues like counterterrorism and conflict resolution. He quotes China and Russia as an example in this regard.

US intervention on humanitarian grounds in different countries of the world is also a part of its foreign policy but it is a far more difficult, lengthy and costly process than having military or political intervention at any level.

The author has discussed 'integration' as an objective of US foreign policy. He uses integration in the sense of broad basing of relations of the US with other states and not in the commonly understood meaning of the word. According to the author, integration should be the major objective of the US foreign policy in post-Cold War era where instead of limiting the relationship with the outer world its relations with other states should be broadened. Unlike the spread of democracy, integration is considered as a positive approach by the author in the context of foreign policy. While drawing comparison of democracy with integration the author says that promotion of democracy would need to bring about a change of the country from within, whereas integration works beyond the borders. Integration provides rationale for the US's positive relationship with China, and China's relationship with Russia at bilateral or multilateral arrangements. In its attempt to achieve integration with these countries, system of government prevalent there should not come in the way of the US. According to the author, US-China integration is essential for the future policies towards the region, in uniting both Koreas, restricting Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and preventing Pakistan from becoming a failing state.

The author defines restoration as a doctrine that would facilitate adoption of policies according to the prevailing circumstances. He views restoration, as restoring the balance between internal sources of American power to what the US aims to do in the world, and how it does it.

He advises US to shift its focus from Middle East to Asia-Pacific region. According to the author the region is “home to the world’s largest and most dynamic economies and bulk of the world’s principal powers, and where the United States has a broad range of interests and commitments.” He however does not suggest that US should abandon Middle East as it is necessary to meet its energy requirements and serves US’s other vital interests in the region. US commitment to Israel’s security also does not allow US to neglect the region.

In the final part of the book the author has identified five important domestic areas for which Restoration is required; First, reducing the federal deficit and debt through spending cuts and tax increases, especially spending on entitlements (benefits to US citizens); Second, need for comprehensive energy strategy; improving the quality of education; third, upgrading the country’s physical infrastructure; fourth, reforming immigration policy. He believes that problems in these areas are generated due to the lack of political will, and can be solved through political reforms.

This is an excellent book on the foreign policy issues of United States. The author relates internal policy issues with US foreign policy objectives and how both impact upon each other. This analytical approach and author’s long experience in foreign policy making positions coupled with his deep insight on major issues confronting the world makes the book an important source for people in policy making positions to understand how badly formulated and overarching foreign policy objectives undermine the country’s political, economic, and social agenda.

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