

**Rob de Wisk, "How China and Russia Reshape the World?" Amsterdam University Press, 2015. p207.**

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Rob de Wisk suggests that the outcomes of the September 11 attacks have contributed to the acceleration of geo political changes and even to the creation of new local crises. He argues about the faltering West's power, politics and position and a US foreign policy to counter rise of China.

Wisk writes that the discussion about multi polarity and the question of which powers would become dominant had already begun at the beginning of the 1990's. He has used different theoretical schools of thought to explain geopolitical development and power politics to make in-depth analysis and comparative conclusions. He, for example has pinpointed the use of the revisionist theory by Putin in his annexation of Crimea in the world of 21<sup>st</sup> century and the painful incidents unfolded in Ukraine. In the backdrop of weakening Western influence, the new world order is shaping up which is equally hegemonic in character.

In March 1992, after the end of the Cold War, a new era had begun with the US as the only super power. This offered unprecedented opportunities to figure the world in accordance with American ideas. The account suggests that the US wanted a plan of selective participation in the rest of the world where American interests were being undermined. It believed that, if power gets eroded, other countries will also gain influence over the rules of the game, and the old centre of power will start to compete with emerging powers in the world views and norms.

It has been clear for years that the world is changing and new powers are rising. In 2001, the American investment bank Goldman Sachs adopted the term BRICK, coined by Economist Jim O'Neil to refer to Brazil, Russia, India and China. From 2010 South Africa was also included in this group and the BRICK countries became BRICKS. In 2003, the bank predicted that Brazil, Russia, India and China would be

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among the world top five global economies in 2050. Due to their huge economic weight and their different political systems these countries could change international relations fundamentally and present a great challenge to the Western world. For example, after the financial crisis of 2008 developing countries were not hit hard.

Wisk's analysis is in contradiction with Halfard Mackinder (British geographer) who had laid emphasis on the power of economics. He believed that whoever would dominate Eurasian heartland would have access to rich supplies of raw materials in Siberia and Central Asia as a pre-condition for economic growth and thereby, for military might. The very presence of raw materials can be a cause of conflict. Two staff members of the World Bank Collier and Hoeffler have also argued that countries that depend mainly on the income of raw materials run a high risk of domestic conflict. Historically, in 30 percent of all civil wars the income from oil and gas has been a catalyst for political violence.

China is an emerging economic power which is largely dependent upon the Middle Eastern countries for its raw material. This brings China in direct confrontation with the US interests/influence in the Middle East. However, the sustenance of China's manufacturing potential requires a consistent politico-economic hegemony. Chinese leadership therefore, has to achieve a balance between internal stability and external confrontation. Frictions have developed between China and the countries bordering the East and South China Seas where raw materials are located. This explains why China suspects American activities in this region. The US has strengthened its maritime activities in Guam, South Korea and Japan and is reinforcing its military ties with numerous countries in the region.

The most important dispute of course is over access to the Strait of Hormuz which is crucial for the world's oil exports. Oman, US, Iran and UAE are the key players here. The US has been trying for decades to decrease its dependency on energy imports. During the oil crisis of 1973, President Nixon called for self sufficiency in energy by 1980.

Russia cut off gas supplies to Ukraine in 2009 during a dispute on payment. This left a part of the EU without gas. Since then, some

countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Ukraine, Poland and Romania have looked for alternatives, such as shale gas.

The major difference between small and great power politics is lack of opportunities to change things to their advantage. Smaller countries have two options in the geo-political game: to take sides or remain neutral.

In the end, Wisk has given two reasons for the fall of great powers (a) historically; all great powers have fallen because of its overstretched military expansions and conflicts, which become overburden for her economy. (b) America has militarily outstretched itself massively which has now become a cause of its decline.

Wisk argued that military might and economic development go hand in hand. Large scale military deployment and neglect of the economy in times of war can cause decline. The Bush administration maintained its strategy entirely in line with defence planning to establish American hegemonic power. He wanted that the US rules of the international game should remain unchallenged by any other country and applied his vision to the region of the Middle East and the Gulf states. However, an American intervention in Iraq gave an impetus to Jihad, as number of terrorists attacks increased after the first Gulf War increased the number of terrorist attacks since 1991.

The author believes that the most important school of thought in international relations is determined by economic power and power politics. Lack of supranational authority above states creates a situation in which might is right. States have a tendency to advance its own interests and focus on their own survival and in this game super powers and great powers make the rules. Ideally, countries should solve their own problems.

With the new rail and naval links of China with Europe, both economic and political influence of China under President Xi 's leadership would increase. An economically prosperous but politically divided Europe would certainly benefit China, as it has also become an active investor Europe. During the first half of 2012 alone, investments rose by 63 percent. In 2007 the Chinese bought Schwerin Parchin air

port in Germany and became one of the largest investor in the port of Rotterdam.

Written with dexterity, the book gives profound classification of the history of power politics based on geo-politics and its conversion into politico-economics in the world of today while maintaining the ethos of the erstwhile politics. The rise of China as a main contributor to the global market is detrimental trend. Similarly, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa are also on the rise to shape the political theatre. Democracy as a meaningful political system is also in question since the financial disputes have emerged with far more gravity. These tributaries of the tussle between the major powers are keeping the world as volatile as the small or developing countries remain in their struggle for survival. For them any change in the defined international order is more an adjustment with the major powers rather than an upward swing. Wisk's criticism on China-Russian axis and Russia's role in Ukraine in terms of normative principles of the Liberal School is rather biased. Similarly, author has significantly ignored the role of human resource and its management in the rise of the nations and in becoming a competing power. Both China and India set a relevant precedence for the argument. The book however, is a valuable contribution to the understanding of the changing values of international relations presently based on Western values.