

***War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*, Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).**

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*War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft* is an assessment of geo-economics directly aimed at the policy makers and academia. The primary focus of the book is China's use of geo-economics as a tool of statecraft, and how this tool has been neglected by the US to achieve its foreign policy and national security objectives.

The opening of the book is an investigation to find a precise definition of the term 'geo-economics,' a term extensively used in the US foreign policy circles. However, the authors do offer a definition on page 20. A part of the chapter one is dedicated to how the debate over geo-economics have been neglected by the scholarly circles over the years. As recognised by Susan Strange, political issue received more focus as compared to economics in international relations till 1970.

The authors argue that the economic dimensions of the grand strategy have been abandoned altogether by the US. The US has been constrained by a self-constructed maxim of neo-liberalism. Consequently, the very diversified and substantial resources of the US have remained underutilised as grand strategy tools. However, its competitors such as China and Russia are effective practitioners of economic statecraft. In the upcoming future, the US needs to learn how to balance and use its economic resources to achieve its geopolitical goals, otherwise, its competitor states' actions and policies might undermine American security and prosperity continually.

The book is constructed around three central themes. In the first three chapters, economic statecraft is generally examined and how it can be used as an effective instrument to obtain geopolitical objectives. The authors explain how emerging powers now utilise economic statecraft to

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boost their geopolitical objectives, while minimising the risk of an armed conflict.

Global markets have expanded and transformed their structure over time. The economic factors now have an immense influence and impact over states' geopolitical decisions. The prevailing international system inhabits new challenges and economic opportunities, and offers many significant geo-economic assets to deploy against rivals.

One of the most sagacious sections of the book is the detailed and intensive investigation of the geo-economic tools available to the states such as trade policy, economic sanctions and foreign aid etc. The authors give a valuable analysis of the symbiotic and antagonistic relationships that might lie in these policy tools. Authors' argument concerned with the effectiveness of the sources of geo-economics is commendable. They advocate that four geo-economic endowments ensure that effectiveness: control over outbound investments; unique features of domestic markets; influence over commodity and energy flows and centrality of state in the global financial system.

The authors have adopted China's geo-economic approach to statecraft as the second main theme. China have employed implicit and explicit policies of economic coercion remarkably to align foreign policies of weaker states in sync with its own, to fence against local competitors and to challenge the American hegemony in global economy. Blackwill and Harris maintain their point by stating that China's current economic strategy is a benign strategy that sees economic domination as its end. This strategy not only presents a direct threat to the US, but indirect challenges to its economy and security in general. The authors argue that China has also helped strengthen states, mostly dictatorial, against the US and have also managed to boost its own military build-up in the wake of increased risk of resource-based conflict. All this have been achieved without getting involved in wars of other states.

The book's third theme highlights problems being faced by the US in geo-economics as the result of its self-imposed constraints. However, the authors do admit that all is not lost. They acknowledge that the US is one of the largest economies in the world with abundant resources and a

central position in world politics. They believe that US has had a rich history in conducting successful geo-economics. Marshall Plan is used as an example of a triumph of the US geo-economics, and they stress on the point that US policy makers should not forget the country's successful geo-economics past and should become an avid practitioner once again.

Blackwill and Harris attribute two factors for the above mentioned 'strategic amnesia' of the US policy makers. One, the 'over' importance attached to military security over economic security and second, the presumption that markets are apolitical. The authors argue that both these arguments did not stand true for most of the US history. The authors also gave valuable suggestions to address the topic of formulating a new grand strategy such as reducing the reflexive overuse of economic sanctions, decrease the role of the US State Department in geo-economic policy-making, and also employ strategists that have the intellectual capacity to incorporate economics more into the US grand strategy.

*War by Other Means* is a well-reasoned, important and well-researched book that was needed in contemporary times to provide alternatives for the American statecraft. The book offers a strong analysis, but it fails to address the very literature it challenges in its text. The authors content that the economic dimension of statecraft has been largely buried by an overriding focus on military security in the 1960s. This view is not globally accepted. According to experts like Christopher Layne and Andrew Bacevich, American foreign policy has long sought to keep 'economic open doors' ajar. Bottom line is that economic tools have been seen as pivotal to American line of reasoning working in harmony with the military power of the state.

The authors grieve over the removal of geo-economics from the toolbox of American grand strategy, but it would also not be wrong for them to admit that liberal trade and financial policies benefitted the American economy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, in an absolute as well as relative manner. Such economic liberalism not only invigorated firm alliances, but also enhanced the efficiency of supply chains, greater access to capital, distributed risk and helped innovation to be fostered. This helped the US to force Kremlin into retrenchment and strategic reorientation towards the West, particularly the US.

In the book, the authors urge the US policy makers to quit their rule-based mechanism, as the current system is putting constraints on the US progress and strategic interests, but it is serving the geo-economic and political interests of the rising China.

The authors should have taken into consideration the fact that all is not lost in the old 'rule-based' system. They ignored the fact that China grew within the boundaries of this very system. It can neither abandon the system without dire consequences, nor can it force others to join a China-centric system.

Moreover, if the existing liberal order prevails, it is in the benefit of the US as it will further add to the dilemmas of the Chinese grand strategy. According to Edward Luttwak, China's pursuit of economic growth, military build-up and international political influence, will ultimately generate a forceful geo-economic reaction by the rest of the world. The US should uphold the prevailing order, but should make it more attractive for others. In short, the authors' argument would have been further strengthened if a thorough analysis of the prevailing order would have been carried out, containing the strengths and weaknesses of the prevailing order.

*War by Other Means* is an important contribution to the literature on the grand strategy and economic statecraft. The authors extend a remarkable service by calling readers to analyse America's past, present and future through the perspective of geo-economics. The book is useful read for the student of International Relations and International Political Economy.