

***A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order.* Haass, Richard, New York: Penguin Press: 2017, 345.**

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The current global scenario is going through a transitional period, which is rife with uncertainty, anxiety and instability. The influence of non-state actors and international and regional organisations has increased in the formation of a new international order, making them important players in the international arena. Set in this context, Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Senior Middle East Adviser to President George H W Bush, in his new book, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* takes a look at the modern world and America's foreign policy over the last century. Haass offers a strategically coherent approach of dealing with the modern day challenges to the world. After a careful analysis of four hundred years of the world history and modern world challenges, Haass concludes that the global trend is "one of declining order."

The book has been divided into three parts: the first part contemplates the history of world order from the rise of the modern state system to end of the Cold War. Moving on to the second part, Haass explains the shifts in the world order that occurred in the last quarter of the century and the new threats, the international community is facing today. The last part outlines specific steps to tackle challenges ahead along with highlighting the issues within America that need to be addressed for an effective foreign policy.

Haass looks into the shifts in the international order from the World War I to the Cold War. He, then, carefully analyses the liberal world order that emerged after the World War II and gave birth to new global and regional institutions and norms. After the end of the Cold War, Haass states that a hopeful new world order that Washington was waiting for did not emerge. Instead, a relatively stable bipolar world was replaced with a multipolar one

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where the forces of globalisation, rapidly changing technology, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, immigration, cyber security, climate change and growth of extremism and populism in Europe and Brexit have created new challenges and instability in the world. Hence, “it is painfully evident that the twenty-first century will prove extremely difficult to manage,” writes Haass.

Haass, in his book, has proposed the concept of sovereign obligation — “a definition of legitimacy that embraces not just the rights but also the obligations of sovereign states vis-à-vis other governments and countries” (p. 227) in which sometimes rivals have to be made partners in order to tackle common challenges and transnational problems. Moving away from the traditional concept of sovereignty established in the post-Westphalian era, he repeatedly insists that countries should respect each other’s borders and play their role in resolving issues that exist beyond borders. Hence, a new operating system which he calls World 2.0 would then be established.

In the last section of the book, Haass points out that the international system has gone through a structural change where power has become decentralised, more decision-makers and more independent actors are now part of this system. In this scenario, new global and regional challenges have emerged which can only be dealt through mutual cooperation. He strictly states that “the world cannot come up with a working order absent [the] United States (US)” and similarly the US alone cannot guarantee world peace. Hence, the US should lead the world and set an example by using the concept of sovereign obligation, which will then be followed by other countries.

In his book, Haass has succinctly summarised the old world order and the current challenges of the new world order. He comes up with some concrete suggestions and lays out a way forward for the US to follow in domestic as well as foreign affairs. He also details how the US should act towards Europe, the Middle East and Asia specifically China and Russia. However, the concept of sovereign obligation is not a new idea nor it is an alien concept to the American foreign policy. It describes the foreign policy of the Obama administration spanned over eight years: strategic restraint with an eye on global cooperation. Similarly, the crux of Haass’s idea of sovereign obligation can also be found in the writings of John Locke, Reinhold Neibuhr, John Mearsheimer, Henry Kissinger and Joseph Nye.

Book Review

Haass's architecture of a new world order might be vague, but his call for a more multilateral approach to handle conflicts and modern day challenges represents sensible analysis and possible solution for the difficult road ahead.