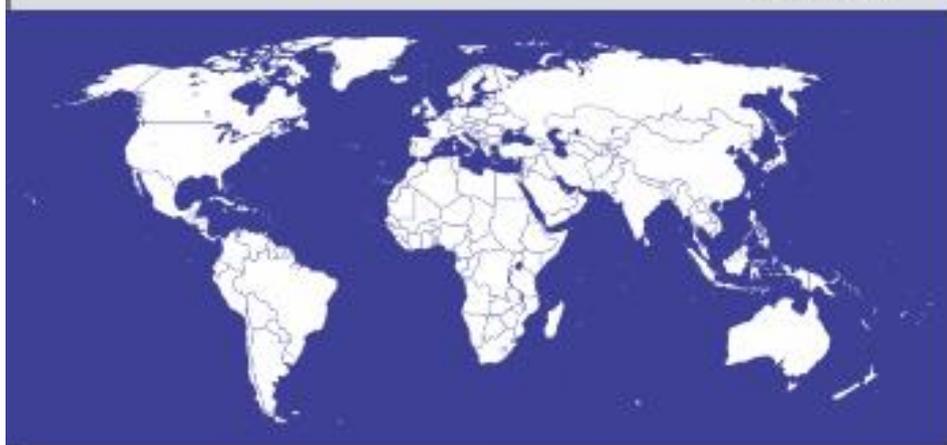


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Editor-in-Chief

Ambassador Ali Sarwar Naqvi

Editor

Iftikhar Uddin Hasan

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**Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): Security,
Moral and Humanitarian Implications**

Sajid Aziz

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Book Review
By
SAIMA AMAN SIAL

Shivshankar Menon,
Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy, (India: Penguin Random House, 2016) 243

"India will be a different power and will continue to walk its own path in the world. That is the only responsible way for us." (p.205)

Such is the confidence exuding from the narrative penned down by Shivshankar Menon in discussing some of the contemporary foreign policy "Choices" made by India, in his book, *Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy*. Intertwined with personal impressions sporadically, the book generally takes the reader through the making of these choices, the "reasons and considerations that weighed in the choices that were made in the government, on behalf of India". The instances of these choices, are chosen because the author feels that, "India's global role and posture are largely the result of these and similar choices; hence their lasting significance."

The book provides, in an easy to read manner, an insider's account of some five key contemporary foreign policy choices. This is by no means a comprehensive account of all the post-Cold War foreign policy choices of India but an examination of decisions that governed India's relationship with China, United States, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and India's nuclear posture. The narration brings forth strongly how governments operating in "uncertainty, risk and immediacy" make important choices.

Menon's account of these choices in India's foreign policy require a close read, because he writes from personal experience having being involved in making them. He served as the National Security Advisor from January 2010 to May 2014 preceded by this tenure as foreign secretary from October 2006 to August 2009. Prior to this, he not only served on the China desk in India's Foreign office but also went on to be India's envoy to Israel, Sri Lanka, Beijing and Pakistan.

The chapters discuss a range of issues from Indian foreign policy conundrums - like boundary dispute with China, dealing with Sri Lanka the "aircraft carrier parked fourteen miles off the Indian coast"; the cross-border terrorism issue under the umbrella of "protracted and intractable" conflict with Pakistan - to that of the foreign policy successes like the US-India nuclear initiative, that put India into entirely a different league among the non-NPT nuclear weapon states. The narrative of the book is exuberating this confidence of a successful Indian foreign policy lead by tactful personalities in difficult situations, opting for "boldness" in policy conception but with "tactical caution". The realist in Menon shows no qualms in admitting that "governments are usually forced to make minimax foreign policy decisions – decisions aimed at minimizing the harm to one's own interests while maximizing the gain." Although Menon doesn't indulge in counterfactuals in a given foreign policy choice he discusses, but he does rationalize the domestic, political and systemic factors that impinged upon the need for a specific decision.

The first chapter on pacifying the border dispute with China, lucidly characterizes the evolving "international context" as a determining factor that demanded imposition of "peace along

the border while leaving to the future the more politically difficult task of settling the boundary.” The success of the settlement was that it “delinked” the boundary issue from the rest of India-China relationship. He concludes that futuristically the status-quo on the boundary settlement is the realistic way forward.

His assertion that “finding the balance between rivalry and cooperation, is among the hardest task in strategy”, holds more true for the India-Pakistan context. Here the reader is compelled to ask why the lessons learned on settling the India-China border dispute are not applicable in India-Pakistan context; where all progress on dialogue is essentially “linked” to talks on terrorism. While discussing the issue of cross-border terrorism in the context of Mumbai attacks, Menon expounds the Indian strategy to respond to such cross-border terrorism is to pursue all “legal and covert means to achieve its goals” and through “uniting the international community to force consequences on Pakistan for its behavior.” While rationalizing the choice of restraint in responding to the Mumbai attacks through force, Menon gives undue credit to India’s decision making calculus and its rationality; glossing over the danger of escalation of any use of force across border as being an important ingredient in India’s calculation of restraint. This exposes the dilemma of India’s Pakistan policy which views Pakistan through a narrow prism and has virtually reduced relations to cross border terrorism issue.

Chapter two and five are devoted to explaining the choices that transformed India’s global nuclear outlook, i.e. India-US Nuclear Initiative and the no-first use pledge respectively. The chapter on India-US initiative discusses the historical baggage of Cold

War and ensuing skepticism of reconsidering relations with US; a narrative that kept resonating in the media and public discourse throughout the course of negotiations of the deal. The author rightly cherishes the “unconditional clearance” from the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the ardent diplomacy that was able to achieve a deal with no international nonproliferation obligations. Menon does give a tribute to “US power and persuasion” in respecting “India’s red lines” of “no reference to testing, no discriminatory provisions and no periodic review of India’s behavior on the exemption.” Reading this instance, one cannot but notice the hypocrisy of the nonproliferation diplomacy propagated by the United States in trumping its nonproliferation goals to geopolitical interests. This is further compounded by the fact that India’s strategic congruence with the US in the Asia-Pacific, according to Menon, doesn’t extend to West Asia, where India is an “awkward partner” with divergent interests than those of United States.

Interestingly, the author mentions the “unspoken factor” that provided the strategic context of US-India Nuclear initiative i.e. the rise of China that impressed upon US and India the need to build “strategic congruence”. Indian diplomats seldom explain this narrative with such unambiguousness. This is not the sole instance, elsewhere while talking about India’s world-view he expounds that India has been throughout an “anti-status-quo power seeking to revise and reform the international order”, which is a clear manifestation of India’s “strategic autonomy” reflected in all major foreign policy choices that the government of India has made.

Menon’s account of Why India Pledges to “No First Use of Nuclear Weapons” (NFU), is colored by the “anxiety in India

about the wisdom of this commitment”. The chapter explains India’s rationale for NFU, which has been to deter “others from attempting nuclear coercion or blackmail against India”. The overall tone of the debate about the NFU underlines the limited utility of nuclear weapons as war-fighting weapons and questions the proponents of strategy of graduated response in India. However, Menon makes the NFU claim ambiguous by bringing in a debate about a “potential grey area” in India’s policy where India may use nuclear weapons first especially against an adversary with a first use policy, in circumstances where a potential launch on India may be imminent. This is a dangerous scenario outlined by a former National Security Advisor, and justified on grounds that the current public nuclear doctrine is silent on this scenario. Such ambiguity about a potential preemptive strike from a state with a NFU policy is not only a clear departure from the declared doctrinal stipulation but also an alarming regional development.

In the final chapter, the book leaves the reader with some policy inferences/lessons drawn from India’s foreign policy choices, which the author likes to call India’s “predilections”. These include the fundamental role of personalities, strategic boldness amalgamated with tactical caution; value of domestic political process and realism in policymaking processes. However, the policy inferences offered in the book aren’t applicable in the India-Pakistan conflict dynamics; where the personalities; strategic boldness and caution in implementation have virtually failed; making the situation reach an intractability.

Overall, it is a well written, clear, and easy to read work and the five instances narrated offer some insight into India’s choices in foreign policy; choices that weren’t always satisfactory and are

not irreversible either. The book provides a well narrated account of events that transpired in the making of these choices while over projecting India's strategic boldness. The book underplays the significance of India-Pakistan relations as a priority foreign policy issue for India and takes a narrow prism to approach it.

With his vast experience and long career in the Foreign Service of India, one does feel that Menon's account is lacking a debate on the future trajectory of India's foreign relations; and a debate on how to translate India's growing power and influence into assuming greater responsibility for peace at the regional and global level.

Nonetheless, with India getting influential at the global level and assertive regionally; there is value to understanding how India's foreign policy apparatus makes its choices and hence there is value in reading Menon's account of India's contemporary foreign policy "*Choices*".

*Saima Aman Sial is a
Senior Research Officer at CISS*

**Book Review
By
SAJID AZIZ**

**Robert D. Kaplan,
*Earning the Rockies:
How Geography Shapes
America's Role in the
World* (New York:
Penguin Random
House, 2017), 201.**

There are many constituents of national power, but for Robert D. Kaplan “geography is the starting point of history and culture” and largely determines the role and influence of different states in global politics. Kaplan’s fascination with geography and geopolitics has been a constant theme and recurring motif in his works, be it in *Revenge of Geography*, *Balkan Ghost* or *Asia’s Cauldron*. Kaplan’s geopolitical insights are a result of his historical knowledge and extensive travels across the world.

Earning the Rockies: How Geography Shapes America’s Role in the World is no different except for the fact that, this time he turns inward and undertakes a journey across America. Kaplan’s meditations and reflection on geography rendered in eloquent prose and his silent observance interspersed with historical vignette make this book an engrossing read. The theme that courses throughout the book is how American geography has been pivotal in enabling it to become a global power with preponderance of influence. Inspired by his truck-driver father and childhood experiences of travel, Kaplan embarks on a road trip from east to west America. The geopolitical works of Bernard Devoto, Walter Prescott and Wallace Stegner accompany Kaplan and inform his insight about

American landscape and how it bestows United States of America the power to exert its influence in the world.

Treading the path of pioneers that undertook the arduous journey from east to west, Kaplan says that the expansion of first thirteen eastern colonies into the Great Plains or Great American Desert and Rocky Mountains (from which the title of the book derives) in the west should not be reduced to a story of gore, massacre of indigenous people and savagery, because it also entailed adapting to a harsh, semi-arid and water-scarce land, which would not only hold out further European settlements but would also, as Kaplan quotes Webb, “predetermine the defeat of confederacy”. The deficiency of water in Great Plains halted slavery, because cotton production required huge amounts of water. Thus, people inhabiting the Great Plains established an economic system that was based on “free labor, small farms and a rising industrialism”, which would prove to be a death knell for slavery prevalent in southern America, which relied on “plantation, staple crops” and most importantly “slave labor”. In addition, the conquering of arid land and dry landscape also ensured American access to Pacific Ocean, presaging a gargantuan maritime power in the making. A maritime power that came out of World War II relatively unscathed; thanks to its geographical isolation protected by Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. For Robert D. Kaplan America is a “continent endowed with forests and fertile lands, not to mention deposits of iron, coal, land, silver and gold and hydrocarbons.... the lower 48 states boast more miles of navigable inland waterways than much of the rest of the world put together”. In other words, it is a state, empire and continent wrapped in one.

Moreover, the western orientation also inculcated the element of communalism among the people, in the process intuiting the limits of geographical expansion which, Kaplan claims, should give policymakers a hint of limits of American capability to flex its military muscle every now and then.

The two-thirds of this book covers his journey from vertical landscape to horizontal landscape. The author calls the eastern landscape vertical because it is, in essence, “built upward with tall trees and thus enclosed, claustrophobic in many places, lacking far-off vistas”. Unlike eastern landscape, west America is relatively flat-land that offers views of vistas and horizons. The last part discusses the geopolitics of contemporary world and where and how does America fit into this. Among the geostrategic issues that find space in this book are Chinese ambitions to expand and dominate South and East China Seas, which “will unlock both the larger Pacific and the Indian Ocean to its ever-expanding navy”. But China is also beset with serious internal problems, which if left unresolved, could possibly lead it to adopt an aggressive posture towards foreign and defense policy issues to rouse jingoism and quash internal dissent.

Kaplan also dilates on the potential tussle between Russia and Europe over the *intermarium*- a term used by Josef Pilsudski for states between Baltic and Black seas. Besides the threat of Russian aggression, Europe faces other serious issues: greater number of migration from war-torn areas of Middle East and North Africa, unravelling of European Union and a weak defense. For the author, America will be playing the role of a counter-balancer to neutralize greater Chinese influence through a network of alliances with South-east Asian and South Asian states. Moreover, awesome American military might and

as its leadership of NATO will ultimately prove to be a bulwark against Russian designs in Eastern Europe. Though Kaplan is averse to repeating the American military adventurism to “solve world’s problems”, United States of America cannot just afford to isolate itself from these issues. Does an alternative course of action exist for America? There does exist an alternative way, Kaplan claims. Taking a leaf from the American history, Kaplan asserts, western expansion of American colonies was made possible because Indian tribes cooperated with the colonizers, and American role should be to make alliances and commit minimum of forces in the form of Special Forces(SF) to achieve military objectives and making the allies share greater burden.

Despite the useful geopolitical insights, emanating from his extensive travels and knowledge of history, *Earning the Rockies* at times seems an apology to the shenanigans of the “continental empire”. For Kaplan, American warships are not just war fighting machines, but “guardians of freedom”. Drawing a parallel to ancient Greek history, he quotes archaeologist John R. Hale, who considers Athenian navy as “emblem of liberty and democracy” and explains “it is not an exaggeration to say that the US Navy has served a similar function”. So, for the author dispersal of American military bases is for altruistic motives, not for maintaining its hegemony in the world. American history of supporting brutal dictators from Pinochet to Suharto, and Zia to Mubarak, defies Kaplan’s claims of it being an emblem of liberty and freedom aka ancient Greek.

The author claims, “we struggle diplomatically and through our military deployments to prevent the kind of domination of the Eastern Hemisphere by a rival power that we ourselves enjoy in the Western Hemisphere”. Rather than seeing a glaring

contradiction in this assertion redolent of imperial designs, Kaplan explains it away with embedded American universal values and says “continued humanitarianism requires the continued amoral acquisition and maintenance of American power”.

While discussing the contemporary geopolitics, the author makes interesting contrasts between American desire to “export human right” and how “imperialism and missionary impulse which go hand in hand” and Russian aggression and Chinese domination of South and South East China. So, American policies are grounded in humanistic values to do good to the world, whereas all else is power politics and aggression. But what else could one expect from an author who whole-heartedly supported Iraqi invasion. He is reminded by the war memorials to Korea and Vietnam in Muskingum banks of “America’s conception of a new purpose” - may be, blundering efforts to bomb people into democracy and liberty.

*Sajid Aziz is a
Research Assistant at CISS*

Book Review
By
HUMA REHMAN

Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 352

A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order is written by Richard Haass. He has been the long serving president of the Council on Foreign Relations. Earlier he was the senior Middle East adviser to President George H. W. Bush and served in the US National Security Council.

A world in Disarray is a timely contribution to literature on challenges faced by the world political order. *The book* is divided into three parts; the first part traces the history of the world order from the rise of the modern state system to the end of the Cold War, the second part gives an account of the momentous shifts and changes in the world order in the last quarter of the pervious century, and the third part suggests specific steps that could tackle many forthcoming challenges to the world peace and order.

The fundamental elements of the world order, established after WWII, worked well till it ran its course with the disintegration of Soviet Union. Besides his own analysis, the author has drawn from prominent scholars works, who have analyzed international political transitions. He refers to Hedley Bull's perspective on international system and society and his emphases on citizens, freedom of action within the state's borders, and in the larger international society. He also

discusses disagreements and friction in state to state relations in some detail. Haass analyses the issue of “legitimacy”, as defined by Kissinger to mean international agreement on the nature of workable arrangements in the foreign policy of states. He is of the view that, in the real world of power politics, legitimacy alone does not guarantee security against military aggression. Haass also refers to historian Peter Wilson the author of “*Thirty Years War.*” who explored the world trends of the 17th century in which he surmised that secular sovereign states had become pre-eminent and empires founded on religious identity would cease to be common in international system. This approach to order may seem narrow but it brought about an enormous change in Europe’s political and economic history.

The author considers that all wars have three phases. Each one of them has an impact on the international trends. The first phase comprise forces whose interplay led to the war in the first place. The second, of war itself that takes place on the battlefields, and the third the debate about the lessons of the war and the wisdom of the aftermath. He agrees with the political scientists who are of the view that after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War in 1989, a stable new world order did not emerge. Relative stability of a bipolar world in which the heavily nuclear-armed United States and the Soviet Union had maintained restraint was disturbed and the new order was not founded on stable foundation. The new international order became further complicated in a multi-polar world, with the elements of globalization, nuclear proliferation and rapid advancement in technology. This part also explains the historical developments that have made the world, both,

more interconnected and vulnerable to the forces of disintegration.

The second part of the book describes the order taking shape in the post Cold War era. The author categorizes the efforts being made by world powers to set rules that would regulate international trade, and finance. He discusses the role of the relations among the major powers i.e US, China, Russia, Japan, Europe and India in defining international political and strategic discourse. In Haass's opinion no direct military conflicts are likely to happen in near future but the configuration of forces may lead to economic and strategic crossroads. The US-China economic power struggle may become the major event in the 21st century and Russia's role in Ukraine crisis is prominent in the post Cold War world order scenario. Haass, however, perceptively sees the gap emerging in post Cold War world order. He has listed three criteria which according to him, would be central to the stability of order. One is the extent to which the rules and principles by which the world is to operate are supported by the wider international community, second implementation of rules on all states, and finally the balance of power among major and regional states.

While portraying the current grim picture of world affairs, Haass started with the Middle East by asserting that its chaos is likely to continue. Asia is grappling with the problem of China's rise and unpredictability of North Korea. Stable region of Europe has come under the burden of prolonged low economic growth, and immigration challenges. Rooting of populism and nationalism in political discourse by world leader has contributed to further instability. Haass seems to be inclined to side with Thucydides approach to world political system that

major powers rivalry, and competition shape the international system.

The book is a useful contribution to the history of international relations. The language of the book is simple, and aids in understanding the important trends in the contemporary international system. Readers may not agree with some of author's assessments but the book provides a quick review of current state of world affairs in contemporary perspective with a short and compelling history of international/foreign relations started from the Peace of Westphalia through the end of the Cold War.

*Huma Rehman is a
Program Coordinator &
Research Officer at CISS*

CISS Insight Guideline for Contributors

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Address

Editor CISS Insight

Center for International Strategic Studies

Suite No 506, 5TH Floor Evacuee Trust Complex (ETC)

Sir Agha Khan Road F-5/1, Islamabad

Contact: 051-2722343-051-8315410-423

Email: ciss.org1@gmail.com

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Center for International Strategic Studies

Suite No. 506, 5th Floor, Evacuee Trust complex

Sir Agha Khan Road, Sector F-5/1

Islamabad. Ph: +92-51-83145410-423

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