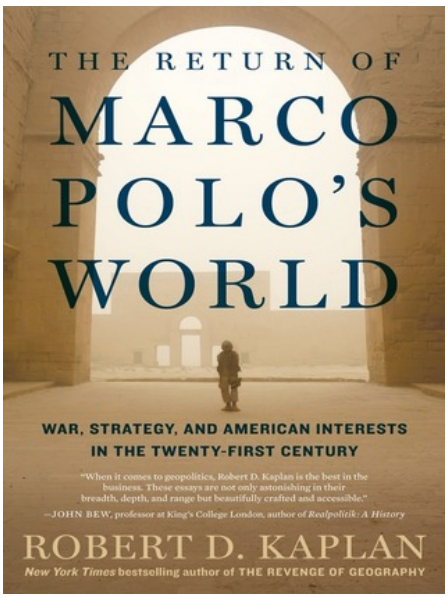

The Return of Marco Polo's World: War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-first Century

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A bracing, provocative assessment of American foreign policy over the past two decades, an era that includes 9/11, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the rise of Putin's Russia, increased Chinese aggression, and more—from the bestselling author of *The Revenge of Geography*.

Drawing on decades of firsthand experience as a foreign correspondent and military embed for *The Atlantic*, and deep reading that ranges from the lessons of Thucydides and Sun Tzu to contemporary outcomes in the Middle East, Robert D. Kaplan makes a powerful case for what timeless principles and factors should shape America's role in the world: a respect for the limits of Western-style democracy; a delineation between American interests versus American values; an awareness of the psychological toll of warfare; a projection of military power via a strong navy; and much more.

In a series of vivid and clear-eyed assessments, renowned foreign policy analyst Kaplan describes an increasingly unstable world—and how American strategy should adapt accordingly.

Advance praise for *The Return of Marco Polo's World*

"A characteristically thoughtful and provocative collection of essays from Robert D. Kaplan, born of his own Marco Polo–like wanderings and rich grasp of history. Elegant and compelling, these prescient pieces are a valuable guide to the endlessly complicated geopolitics of Eurasia, and what it all means for Americans in the decades ahead."**—Ambassador William J. Burns, president, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former deputy secretary of state**

"When it comes to geopolitics and the analysis of world affairs, Robert D. Kaplan is the best in the business. These essays are not only astonishing in their breadth, depth and range, but beautifully crafted and accessible."**—John Bew, professor at the war studies department, King's College London, author of *Realpolitik: A History* and *Castlereagh: A Life***

"Offering a refreshingly realist perspective in a turbulent time, Robert D. Kaplan's collection brilliantly illustrates the costs of war and underscores the urgent need for U.S. diplomatic deftness to preserve stability within an increasingly interconnected global order. *The Return of Marco Polo's World* is an invaluable resource for U.S. policy makers and members of the general public seeking to learn from history and a solid basis for sound American foreign policy."**—Ambassador Robert Blackwill, Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy, Council on Foreign Relations**

The Return of Marco Polo's World: War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-first Century Details

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From Reader Review The Return of Marco Polo's World: War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-first Century for online ebook

James Murphy says

As always, I learned many things from Kaplan's book--facts, frames of reference, history--while at the same time recognizing that I already share some of those perspectives. The opening piece, carrying the title of the book, describes the old Silk Road that Marco Polo traveled to China and his return via the Indian Ocean. Kaplan is an adherent of the "World-Island" school of geopolitics which thinks of Afro-Eurasia as the most important land mass on the globe and the Indian Ocean as the most important body of water. The geopolitics of the last century or so, since the idea was first advanced, has increasingly become more aligned with it so, to Kaplan, the world has returned to that of Marco Polo's experience. Eurasia is under the strong influence of the modern Silk Road, China's One Belt, One Road project linking them to all of Europe and Africa while the nations of the region are jockeying for trade and naval dominance in the Indian Ocean.

The collection of essays, which have previously appeared in periodicals, range in time from 2006 to the present. As one might expect, the more recent events in crucial areas like North Korea or naval developments in the South China Sea have greatly changed since Kaplan's conclusions made 10 years or so ago. Other essays have been in print only a year or two.

What makes Kaplan so interesting is that his work--and this book, certainly--provides many aha moments. He convincingly articulates history and our current world and how they intersect. Reading him is to learn from him. Each page offers a perception to catch your eye and your mind. He has smart things to say, for instance, about the influence of the internet on politics, how America's geography fates it to be a world leader, the burdens of imperialism, and the important blend of liberal ideals backed by conservative force. I was also fascinated by the portraits in the middle of the book of 3 statesmen and academics he admires: Kissinger, Samuel L. Huntington, and John Mearsheimer. He passes to us some of what he's learned from them.

Steve Greenleaf says

Robert D. Kaplan's latest book (2018) is a collection of essays that he's written for publications such as The Atlantic, The American Interest, The National Interest, and the Washington Post. These essays provide an excellent entry into his observations and thinking if you're not already acquainted with his work, and they offer a delightful refresher if you're already acquainted with him, as I am. Kaplan describes himself (no doubt accurately) as a "foreign correspondent." But he's a foreign correspondent steeped in a profound and continuing reading of history and in particular, the history of relations between nations (which includes everything from tribes to empires to nation-states, as well as anarchical situations). This acquaintance with history allows him to achieve exquisite focus on the particulars of the here-and-now around the world (especially Asia, Africa, and Europe). This broad knowledge enables him to pull back from the tight focus to see the big picture of how the world is (and has) worked in the myriad relations between actors on the world stage, from disaffected demographic groups (young Muslim males) to nation-states and empires.

The subjects in this collection of essays are diverse. Three of them are profiles of foreign affairs thinkers

(and actors): Henry Kissinger (whom Kaplan calls "a close friend"); the late Samuel Huntington, a Harvard professor and veteran of a couple the Johnson and Carter administrations; and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, the chief proponent of "offensive realism" and a noted commentator about U.S. relations with China. Each of these three thinkers shares the designation of "realist" with Kaplan, although none of them prove to be beyond Kaplan's criticism on some points. All three subjects have been lightening-rods for harsh criticism, so Kaplan's generally sympathetic treatment of each of them provides a useful anecdote the heavy dose of invective that you can find about each of them elsewhere.

Other essays address such topics as the literature of the Vietnam War and the warrior ethos, the consequences of the fall of North Korea (written in 2006), the wounds of war, and so on. But the most interesting to me were those that examined the relations between states in Asia, developments on the Eurasian continent, and how these developments affect the U.S. As a part of this, Kaplan discusses the uses of empire and how (at least until the advent of the Trump administration), the U.S. and its support of international institutions, served as an empire to help ease relations in a world of nation-states. His discussion of the Obama administrations actions and attitudes in this regard is insightful and merits careful consideration.

With President Trump, we have in office a man of woeful ignorance about history and foreign relations. And without leadership from the top, we may not garner a clear picture of how the U.S. will conduct its grand strategy at present. But reading Kaplan, who identifies the fissures and fault lines that will shake us in the future, we know that these threats lie in wait, and we can perhaps only hope for the best.

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ragulusus29 says

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Rebecca Wilkins says

This is probably my 8th Kaplan book and I was really looking forward to something new especially in light of the changes in the US since 2016. I was disappointed to find this to be a collection of his essays that have been published elsewhere and I have already read or essays written as long ago as 2001. "Most people think that they generate their own ideas; in fact, their ideas are prepared by others who think for them." I wanted to Kaplan to think for me as he has become my geopolitical professor. I am trying to understand his "realist" thinking when I have long been a liberal idealist.

As an adolescent in the 60's I took international relations as a class my senior year of high school. I found the subject fascinating but was such a naive provincial teenager as to not know very much about the world. Then I went to college and took 2 semesters of Western Civilization. Kaplan says:
"The very obvious fact that courses in Western civilization are increasingly rare and controversial on most college campuses in the US indicates the effect of multiculturalism in a world of intensified cosmopolitan interactions. Indeed Western Civilization is not being destroyed; rather it is being diluted and dispersed." So in 1968 I was too young to understand the world and in 2018 I am too old.

I am still trying to understand liberal/conservative when even those terms are replaced by populist and

progressive. However Kaplan says: "The liberal glorifies self-expression because the liberal takes national security for granted; the military man glorifies "obedience" because he does not take that security for granted. Conservatism grows organically out of the military ethic...the conservative mind like the military one, believes that human beings learn only from human experience." Here as a liberal I want to learn from books!

Kaplan's realism "the ultimate moral ambition in foreign policy--the avoidance of war through favorable balance of power" sounds simple and yet the changes required to achieve it are dark and scary. His essay on warriors and what we ask of our civilian volunteer military is heartbreaking. The difficulty of obtaining a medal of honor is enlightening in that maybe it should be difficult and yet how many actual heroes slip through unnoticed because of those difficulties. His themes about a great navy and his insight and sympathies for the military are coming through in the essays. Articles on Kissinger, Samuel Huntington and John Mearsheimer are interesting. An article from 2006 about Korea is very pertinent albeit dated. The only thing I have been able to find about his thoughts on Trump is an article from 2016 in which he says "But Trump seems post-literate, a man who has made an end run around books directly to the digital age where nothing is vetted, context is absent and lies proliferate." He doesn't speculate rather those qualities are apropos in a world of leaders such as Kim Jon Un and Putin. Kaplan tells me what I didn't know my senior year, "International relations is as much about understanding Shakespeare--and the human passions and intrigues that Shakespeare exposes--as it is about understanding political science theories...and ultimately historians are more valuable than political scientists." I may never understand it all but Kaplan says "a frustrated warrior class, always kept in check by liberal-minded officers, is the sign of a healthy democracy."

Aman says

Being a collection of essays could obviously use more structure. However, it does say in simple and clear language things that are worth saying. To put it differently, it simplifies the world without being ahistorical of strong evidence.

Charles Gonzalez says

So if this volume is not on every legislators and Administration bookshelf then the future failures of American foreign and strategic policy will have been preordained. Kaplan hits at the heart of the American conflict - between our geographically inspired idealism and the hard won realism that was our birthright from the Founders. One reads this volume of essays and wonders at the what may have beens while appreciating the special nature of our exceptionalism. Kaplan is no straight-jacketed interventionist but rather that rarest of things - an American writer who truly understands the world and all its wonders and dangers. It’s a shame that i come so late to reading him but will catch up ASAP on his past efforts at educating his countrymen about the world we inhabit.

Patrick F says

One of the best essay collections I've read yet; especially pertaining to international relations, history, and U.S. foreign policy. This is as realist as one gets.

Murtaza says

Robert Kaplan has really fashioned himself as the American liberal establishment's own version of Marco Polo, so its fitting enough that he has now written a book titled after his progenitor. Not a travel book however, this is an uneven collection of essays of his written over the past several years and anchored by a Pentagon commissioned study on the coalescence of the Eurasian continent. I found the study to be an underwhelming reflection on things that are very obvious to any reader of the news, and the essays to be of fairly dubious value particularly given how dated some of them are. But there was one exception: a short but brilliant essay on the growing danger of utopian ideologies in modern societies.

Entitled "The Great Danger of a New Utopianism," this essay is sensitive, informed and prescient about the dangers of the spiritual vacuum that many modernized and modernizing people around the world currently inhabit. It is worth quoting at length:

What is our worst existential fear, worse than any cyber, biological, environmental, or even nuclear threat? It is the threat of a utopian ideology in the hands of a formidable power. Because utopia is, in and of itself, the perfect political and spiritual arrangement, any measures to bring it about are morally justified, including totalitarianism and mass murder. But what, on the individual level, has always been the attraction of utopian ideology, despite what it wrought in the 20thcentury? Its primary attraction lies in what it does to the soul, and understanding that makes clear just how prone our own age is to a revival of utopian totalitarianism.

Aleksander Wat, the great Polish poet and intellectual of the early and mid-20thcentury, explains that communism, and Stalinism specifically, was the "global answer to negation. . . . The entire illness stemmed from that need, that hunger for something all-embracing." The problem was "too much of everything. Too many people, too many ideas, too many books, too many systems." Who could cope?

So, Wat explained, a "simple catechism" was required, especially for the intellectuals, which explains their initial attraction to communism and, yes, to Stalinism. For, once converted, the intellectuals could then unload this all-embracing catechism on the masses, who would accept it as a replacement for the traditional and hence normal catechism of religion. Whereas traditional religions fill a void in the inner life of the individual, thereby enriching it, Stalinism turned that inner life immediately, in Wat's words, "to dust." Stalinism represented "the killing of the inner man"; it stood for the "exteriorization" of everything. That was its appeal. For without an interior life, there would be less for a person to think and worry about.....

.....Our time on earth, indeed, may be ripe for the next batch of utopian ideologies. Far more than the early 20th century even, we are bombarded by stimuli: If there were too many books and ideas, too many people and systems, back in Wat's time, they were only a fraction of what people must cope with now. The soul itself, explains the contemporary Romanian philosopher Horia-Roman Patapievici, is being hollowed out because of the substitution of the inner imagination by technology: smartphones, intelligent toys, the array of electronics at malls. Technology, as Martin Heidegger understood, is devoid of intrinsic purpose, with mental anguish and confusion merely the result of its overuse. Thus, we desperately require meaning in our lives, which conventional politics obviously cannot satisfy, even as technology and primitivism—witness the Islamic State—can flow together in new belief systems that assign themselves to traditional religions.

Then there is loneliness. Toward the end of The Origins of Totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt observes: "What

prepares men for totalitarian domination . . . is the fact that loneliness, once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become an everyday experience of the evergrowing masses of our century." Totalitarianism, she goes on, is the product of the lonely mind that deduces one thing from the other in linear fashion toward the worst possible result, and thus is a "suicidal escape from this reality." Pressing men and women so close together in howling, marching formations obliterates individuality and thus loneliness. But even with all of our electronic diversions, is loneliness any less prevalent now than it was when Arendt published her magnum opus in 1951? People are currently more isolated than ever, more prone to the symptoms of the lonely, totalitarian mind, or what psychiatrists call "racing thoughts."

People everywhere—in the West, in the Middle East, in Russia, in China—desperately need something to believe in, if only to alleviate their mental condition. They are dangerously ready for a new catechism, given the right circumstances. What passes as a new fad or cult in the West can migrate toward extremism in less stable or more chaotic societies.

The jet-age elites are of little help in translating or alleviating any of this. Cosmopolitan, increasingly denationalized, ever less bound to territory or parochial affinities, the elites revel in the overflow of information that they process through 24/7 multi-tasking. Every one of them is just so brilliant! They can analyze everything while they believe in nothing, and have increasingly less loyalty to the countries whose passports they hold. This deracination renders them wholly disconnected from the so-called unwashed masses, whose upheavals and yearnings for a new totality, a new catechism, in order to fill the emptiness and loneliness in their souls, regularly surprise and shock them.

The full essay itself is actually here (https://www.cnas.org/publications/com...) so maybe you don't even need to buy the book. I'm an avid reader of Kaplan despite frequently disagreeing with him, but I am not a fan of collections of essays.

Lianne Burwell says

The Return of Marco Polo's World was a book I felt a little conflicted by.

First off, the essays that made up the middle of the book, originally published in The Atlantic, are based around a number of subjects. There are articles about various thinkers and advisors who tried to guide US foreign policy in a very pragmatic direction. Following high morals just does not work, since what works in North America and Europe isn't necessarily going to work in other parts of the work, and trying to force Western-style democracy on the middle east or Asia is likely to cause even more chaos than is already there. The author, and the subjects of his essays, push a more pragmatic stance of looking at possible interventions and making choices based on whether it will be good for the security of the US, not whether it is the 'moral' thing to do.

The essays on the morass of the middle-east follow similar thought paths -- only step in if it will, in some way, make things better for the US.

It's a somewhat cynical, and very pragmatic, look at foreign policy, and where its focus should be. As someone who is pretty left-wing (in a country that is also very left-wing), I found myself heavily agreeing with him there. I'm left-wing at home, but feel that we should let other countries work out their problems. Provide aid where they need it, but not try to police them. Iraq under Hussein was not good, but is it really

any better now? Or further back, the US interfered in Afghanistan in the cold war days, and while they knocked the USSR out of the country, the result was the Taliban, and later Al-Qaeda.

Unfortunately, the opening and closing pieces, written (or heavily revised) for the book are less successful. The opening attempts to tie Marco Polo's era into the present, travelling along the corridor that China wants to develop with high-speed travel as a modern version of the Silk Road. To be honest, that piece dragged, and the sentence structure was so tortured that I had to keep rereading paragraphs to make sure of what he was saying. As well, he periodically threw in words that I had to look up. I consider myself well-read with a large vocabulary, but in several places I came across words that I couldn't even figure out from the context. Thankfully, my Kobo has a word lookup dictionary.

The closing piece, on China, was shorter, but again went for the overdone language. It made me wish that those two pieces had the same editor as the magazine essays.

In the end, the book's contents had little to do with the title, although the subtitle was a clear description of the contents. I just wished that it had been billed more as an essay collection than trying to force in a theme that only really showed up in the opening that was, to me, superfluous.

But looking at only the magazine essays, this is a book well worth reading.

Kevin Christiansen says

Solid collection of essays from Kaplan. A nice overview on international relations with an emphasis on realism.

John DeRosa says

Laced throughout with juicy strategic morsels

Peter Mcloughlin says

What to make of an establishment foreign policy wonk of the realist school. I am one part interested to see his view of power politics in the global arena but wince at where its applications leave collateral damage. I am interested in the abstract theory but am horrified at the applications in Vietnam, Iraq and other areas of misadventure. I can even understand how political leaders have to have a different moral calculus than the ordinary person but it is disturbing to hear defenses of Kissinger's policy in Chile, Cambodia, Vietnam. It is understandable that states commit horrible actions in there defense but how far can one bend morality in a democracy. I enjoyed to abstract systems analysis but I am disturbed by the bloodstains. A foreign policy analysts words have consequences.

George Siehl says

Robert D. Kaplan's books remain addictive. This one deserves five stars on the basis of intellectual content and quality of writing. The last star is withheld because it is lacking maps, unlike his earlier Monsoon, which featured a map for every chapter. This book consists of a declassified report he wrote for the Defense Department, along with reprinted Kaplan articles from magazines over the past two decades. Each chapter would be greatly enriched by maps of the quality of those in Monsoon. Random House has done Kaplan and the reader a disservice by not adding maps. The places he goes and writes about are not your usual overseas vacation spots, so maps are in order.

Ever the historically conscious geographer, Kaplan here continues his analysis of Eurasia featured in Monsoon and other earlier books of his. The era of Marco Polo was one of empires, and empires remain important despite the disappearance of the Western European colonial empires after WWII.
For, Kaplan writes, " keep in mind that empire remains the organizing principle of world affairs, given that the imperial experiences of Turkey, Iran, Russia, and China explain the geopolitical strategy of each country to this day. That same legacy also explains how each country could weaken or partially disintegrate." That historic perspective frames his analysis in the DOD report, reiterating that the Silk Road of Marco Polo's time was centered on trade, and that trade is still the driving force behind many policy decision of Eurasian nations today. The United States is deeply interested in that trade, as well, as it impacts American markets, imported goods, and the maintenance of secure sea lines of communication. He recommends that America first should focus on naval and air forces deployed to the area. "Boots on the ground," while important, carries the impression of "occupation" to the impacted countries. Overall, "along Marco Polo's route we always should seek to occupy the territory between neo-isolationism and imperial-style interventionism."

Kaplan identifies the Black, Baltic, South China, and East China Seas as possible areas of confrontation that could flareup and go out of control. He notes that, "The Peloponnesian War that engulfed all of Greece had its origins in relatively minor conflicts involving Corcyra and Potidaea, which helped drive tensions between Athens and Sparta to the breaking point." Starting a war carries with it the natter of ending it, as well.

The included Kaplan articles examine a range of policy issues. "The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy" addresses the pro and con of going to war in the case of national interests or for humanitarian reasons, such as the prevention of genocide. "Elegant Decline: The Navy's Rising Importance" traces the shrinking of the U. S. Navy from 6,700 vessels during WWII to under 300 today. "Rereading Vietnam" examines a number of informative books, mostly by veterans of that conflict, which had to be published privately because they were declined by major publishers at the time.

In his section "Thinkers," he reviews the writings and careers of three realist intellectuals, Henry Kissinger, Samuel Huntington, and John Mearsheimer. The profiles are based on Kaplan's review of their published work and his personal friendship and professional interactions as a journalist with each. It is a rich and rewarding exploration of ideas from the realist mindset. That mindset does not consist solely of a rush to war, but, " because, as some argue, realism in the classical sense seeks the avoidance of war through the maintenance of a balance of power, it is the most humanitarian approach possible."

The only bad thing abut a Kaplan book, apart from no maps, is a "good bad." That is, one comes away from reading it with a list of additional cited books to read. "So many books, so little time."

Highly recommended for readers who aren't put off by having to think about the subject.

David Wineberg says

For decades, Robert Kaplan has immersed himself in conflict. He is an acknowledged expert, and in The Return of Marco Polo's World, he looks both forward and backward. What he sees is more of the same, but geographically shifting to Eurasia.

The best section by far is the first, where he analyzes the state of the world and projects future conflagrations from past experience and current developments. China is his focus, with its national policy on trading along the Marco Polo Silk Road, west towards India, Africa and Europe. He explores its newfound military expansion on the oceans, something China has studiously avoided for 3000 years. But now that it has consolidated its land territories, sown instability in the smaller states on its borders, and understood the value of trade routes, the seas have taken on immense urgency.

The rest of the book is reprints of articles he has written for the likes of National Interest and Atlantic. He examines the warrior class and the mentality of soldiers and how they are an almost entirely different subspecies. And that we need to recognize that. He also profiles some right wing celebrities like Henry Kissinger, who he absolutely idolizes, whether he admits it or not. Three hagiographies reprinted here are the least credible or insightful. Kaplan is much better at strategy. He lives in a tense, violent, military-centric world. His observations are tightly focused - depressingly so - but when he lets his ultra-conservatism surface, he weakens.

In May 2016, six months before the presidential election, Kaplan wrote (in National Interest) "The twenty-first century will be defined by vulgar populist anarchy that elites at places like Aspen and Davos will have less and less influence upon, and will less and less be able to comprehend. Imperialism, then, will be viewed as much with nostalgia as with disdain." He does not and has never appreciated Donald Trump's grasp of world affairs, saying he is no realist. For Kaplan, realism is the gloomy opposite of idealism, the unachievable. He quotes Jean Lartiguy in this paradox: "How do you explain that to save liberty, liberty must first be suppressed?"

There's a lot to disagree with, something Kaplan acknowledges up front. He says Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army "are, in fact, redemptive millennial movements that are a response to the twin threats of modernism and globalization." No they aren't. They're conscripted criminal gangs whose only concerns are power and wealth over everyone else. Intellectualizing them is absurd.

The other main fault is Kaplan's total failure to account for climate change. While the military are busy making climate conferences profitable all over the world by showing up in unprecedented numbers, land shrinkage, water shortages and climate refugees do not figure in his calculations at all. Still, he is perceptive to a terrific degree, even to acknowledging that Shakespeare had more to tell us about dictators and rises and falls, than all the expensive analysis piling up in think tanks and bookstores. So it's a worthy adventure with a qualified guide.

David Wineberg

Joseph says

The Return of Marco Polo's World: War, Strategy, and American Interests in the Twenty-First Century by Robert D Kaplan is a collection of articles on foreign policy. Kaplan is an American author. His books are on politics, primarily foreign affairs, and travel. His work over three decades has appeared in The Atlantic, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The New Republic, The National Interest, Foreign Affairs and The Wall Street Journal, among other newspapers and publications. His more controversial essays are about the nature of US power and have spurred debate and criticism in academia, the media, and the highest levels of government.

In the world of foreign policy, there are two camps. The realists are based on nations acting in their own interests and closely associated with Kissinger in Us policy. The liberal camp believes in collective actions and policies based on generally held beliefs like human rights. In American thinking, it is closely tied to Woodrow Wilson and international cooperation. Without the slightest bit of doubt, Kaplan is a realist. A rational thinking realist, but still a realist. He makes a point of describing the biggest flaw in the liberal theory when points are made on moral or ethical grounds there can be no opposition or variance -- if you do not act to stop genocide, then you support genocide. There is no in-between position. It is a difficult position to hold and defend in a world where everything is not black and white.

Kaplan pictures Europe fracturing and unruliness moving in. In France, there is a rise of the National Front. In Germany, there are more incidents of right-wing extremism. These are popular movements by those fearing immigration, job loss, and identity. Eurasia, meanwhile, begins to strengthen using technology, globalization, and geopolitics. Globalization leads to the weakening of culture and religion. This affects different countries differently. In the Middle East, it has met with violence and radicalism. Other areas are taking advantage. Given to the title of this book, China is trying to build a new silk road: Harbors and high-speed rail in Pakistan and railroads and highways in Africa. Trade and trade advantage has become the goal of China. Iran is also in a position to become a regional power, but declines to do so because of the religious leadership sees integration into the capitalist systems as a treat to Islamic ideology. China traditionally deals with all regimes, good or evil. It takes a true Machiavellian stance in its foreign relations. China changes as the situation changes.

The rest of the book is a collection of previously published articles covering issues from Trump to the growing limitations of the US military. Kaplan explains drone attacks are not a sign of American strength, but a sign of its limitations. The US uses drones to knock out targets without engaging military forces against the threat. It hopes to end problems by picking off parts of the problem. The US does remain the undisputed maritime power in the world. Able to sit safely off coasts and strike inland with missiles and aircraft. American maritime power also tasks itself in ensuring sea lanes are open and the supply of petrochemical are available to allies. Something China enjoys without cost.

Kaplan uses current and past foreign and domestic issues to build upon his thesis. Of course, one can argue against any of his positions as well as for them. This is something I recall having to do repeatedly in graduate school -- defending and rejecting the same piece of policy. Kaplan defends his position well and although holes can be found in his thinking, they are very small holes in the big picture. Kaplan presents a thoroughly researched and thought out position on foreign policy.