

**Haass, Richard N.** *The Reluctant Sheriff: The United States After the Cold War*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997.

The effort to identify and explain international relations following the demise of the Soviet Union produced a cottage industry for scholars and policy makers alike. In a silky-smooth synthesis of this foreign policy debate, Richard Haass joins his fellow artisans by offering some middle-of-the-road suggestions for US policy at the dawn of the twenty-first century. His analysis is accessible and worthwhile, which is no small accomplishment in a book that strives to appeal to a broad audience. It also is noteworthy because it reflects the objectives and limitations of the "establishment view" of US foreign policy.

Haass suggests that the United States should pursue a foreign policy based on the idea of regulation. Whenever possible, US foreign policy should encourage developments and bolster trends that favor US interests, especially the proliferation of formal and informal institutions that supply international management. American leaders, in Haass's view, could then conduct an international symphony where various instruments - alliances, international organizations, international regimes, business and economic interests, military force, ad hoc military coalitions - are orchestrated to achieve US objectives. If the proper institutional trends can be maintained, the costs of US leadership could be minimized, especially as American predominance fades in the decades ahead. Instead of intervening everywhere there is trouble, Haass suggests that the United States can do more by making sure emerging global institutions and trends favor American interest in democracy, free enterprise and individual liberty.

Haass's prescriptions for American leaders are extraordinarily inclusive. They call for American leadership in world affairs, but at a minimum cost. They call for American activism, while cautioning that the United States simply does not have the resources to solve the world's problems. They call for American leadership in world affairs, but suggest multilateralism and international institutions are key to American effectiveness. They suggest that the judicious use of force can arrest negative trends, but that the consistent commitment of American diplomacy to the cause of truth and justice is ultimately a more powerful tool in international relations. In effect, Haass has managed to combine the entire foreign policy debate into a single strategy that all but the most extreme isolationists or activists could support as a compromise position.

While not exactly an intellectual tour de force, *The Reluctant Sheriff* is an extraordinary accomplishment because it manages to adopt virtually every pet project while avoiding nearly every favorite pitfall that preoccupies students of US foreign policy. In so doing, it also betrays some of the biases of those who aspire to practice foreign policy. Haass might be optimistic about the ability of American leaders to conduct highly nuanced policies that synchronize many initiatives to achieve key goals, but Americans do not have much of a reputation when it comes to realpolitik or subtle diplomatic maneuvering. Haass also is correct in noting that a stitch in time saves nine also applies to foreign policy. Diplomatic history often is a story about how small problems lead to disaster. The trick is to persuade the American public to turn away from the ongoing "trial of the

century" to focus on a future that seems too distant, or, too foreign, to be of much interest.

In the final analysis, Haass has written a testament to our times. It reflects the "lull" in international relations that occurred after the Cold War, a moment when scholars and policy makers could contemplate a minimalist approach to foreign affairs that would prolong America's global predominance. But current trends rarely continue unabated, the law of diminishing returns suggests that more, not less, US management will be needed to keep developments headed in the right direction. Already the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, ongoing instability in Central Europe, and the militarized containment of Iraq capture headlines, albeit without capturing anyone's attention. Ironically, Haass has offered a workable foreign policy for the lull in global politics just as new trends inimical to US interests are appearing on the strategic horizon.

James J. Wirtz  
US Naval Postgraduate School