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A Critical Review of *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*

by Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris

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Under the title *War by Other Means*, Blackwill and Harris have written a major contribution to geoeconomics and statecraft. The authors work within the Council of Foreign Relations and present in their thought-provoking book recommendations for putting economic lenses on political questions to shape the US foreign policy better. The book is not only interesting in terms of recommendations, but it also serves as a textbook/catalogue of all economic tools adopted in the American foreign policy. The authors see an urgent need to apply more economic instruments in the American foreign policy because, according to them, the application of military power has not always borne very positive fruits. Additionally, they interrogate themselves as to why the largest economy of the world has not had more mature economic instruments of foreign policy, or why the foreign policy has so much neglected the instruments of geoeconomics.

Apart from those interrogations, the main objective² of the book is to establish a complete catalogue of imperial techniques. In one whole chapter (Chapter Three), today's leading geopolitical instruments are enlisted. The catalogue is almost exhaustive (addressing the issues of trade policy, investment policy, economic sanctions, cyber financial and monetary policy, and energy policy); nonetheless, these economic tools are not exhaustively described. As a matter of fact, the catalogue of the leading geoeconomic instruments illustrates some striking examples of how economic influence has been wielded to achieve political goals. The description is distinct from an exhaustive academic catalogue of how effectively these instruments were used in the past and can be used today as well as in the future. However, the reader gets at least a thorough survey of the geoeconomic tools used in the past. But in the field of monetary policy, the description leaves to be desired. Apparently, the authors are not satisfactorily familiar with the monetary policy.

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² See Page 8.

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Clearly, the ambition of both authors to dedicate such important part of their academic attention to geoeconomics cannot be explained only by academic interests. In the first chapter, they try to describe in length how geoeconomics as a discipline could mature, though the methodological differences between geoeconomics and geopolitics, between foreign policy and commercial or monetary policy have not been convincingly elaborated. The authors seem to be extremely eager to prove, on one hand, America's need to look upon foreign policy problems through economic lenses to reveal America's geopolitical potential, and then to use that potential mainly in the context of the commercial relationship America has with the People's Republic of China.

The book is, although not academic, worth reading because it helps to pave the way for geoeconomics as a maturing discipline. For the European reader it is very refreshing to take note of the unbiased, direct, affirmative approach of American academics to put themselves into the service of a policy which, quite naturally, is conceived as hegemonical - if not imperial. In particular, the German reader could learn something about the definition of "vital national interest" and "extremely important national interest". Then and only then, the German foreign policy might perhaps become *policy* in the true sense of the word - giving up wishful thinking and, in particular, abandoning the illusion that in a world of animosity and enmity, you can serve national interests without accepting opposition, combat and enmity.

It is strange that the book has not found an opportunity to deal with the extraterritorial application of American law in order to achieve political aims through geoeconomic instruments. This is surprising because of the extraterritorial application of American law that has become a feature of the American foreign policy. The US apply domestic law against foreign countries, and foreign companies, with a severity unknown in other countries. That is true for antitrust law as well as for sanctions and the fines paid by Volkswagen and French banks. These sanctions illustrate a policy which European allies have to accept reluctantly. Additionally, in the Airbus case, the power of the Committee of Foreign Investments in the US has clearly demonstrated the almightiness of the US administration and the powerlessness of the European countries concerned with these measures.