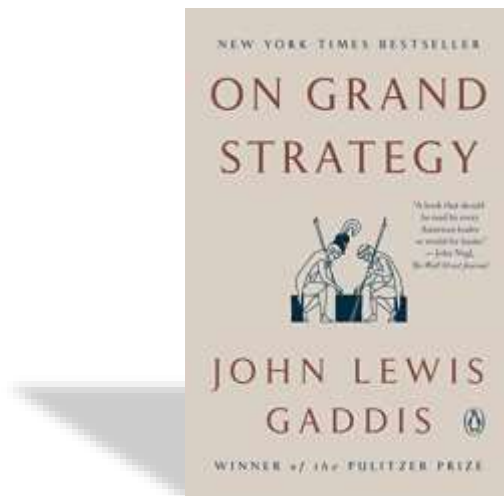


BOOK REVIEWS



John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (London: Penguin Press, 2018), 313.

Reviewed by Taimur Shamil, former Research Fellow, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Pakistan.

Gaddis is an internationally renowned historian and Robert A. Lovett Professor of History at Yale University. *On Grand Strategy* deals with different approaches that leaders, nations, writers and conquerors employ in what is the battlefield of life. It is a book that takes us through the battlefield approaches that were employed by ancient conquerors like Xerxes, Alexander, and Napoleon. We also learn what Tolstoy, Berlin, Fitzgerald and Jane Austen taught us about life.

Gaddis analyses the famous essay, ‘The Hedgehog and the Fox’ by renowned theorist of ideas and philosopher, Isaiah Berlin. Berlin critically examines Tolstoy’s view of history and categorises thinkers and writers into two categories: Hedgehogs and Foxes - ‘The fox knows many things but the Hedgehog knows one big thing.’ Gaddis delves into exploring these two approaches and sifts through the pages of history in order to educate the reader if there can be more than these two ways of ‘strategising life.’

‘Hedgehogs,’ Berlin explained, ‘relate everything to a single central vision’ through which ‘all that they say and do has significance.’ Foxes, in contrast, ‘pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory,

connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way' (p.4). Gaddis takes the case study of Xerxes of Persia and his conquest of Greece. Xerxes, according to Gaddis, is a hedgehog who focused on his ideals and ends. He was ambitious, like other conquerors, and wanted to subjugate Greece. But ambition isn't enough as one needs to understand the uncertainties that may challenge aspirations. Ends must take into account the means. In comes Artabanus, the fox, the chief official and advisor to Xerxes. He counsels Xerxes on how to address challenges in the battlefield that he is not aware of. One learns that both Xerxes and Artabanus have their limitations, and need each other to conquer Greece. Herein is the difference in approach of a hedgehog and a fox: sense of direction and sensitivity to one's surrounding.

But is it true that in the history of mankind, or as Berlin would put it, in a 'proper study of mankind,' we don't have people who combine both the sensitivity of fox and the one big idea of a hedgehog? What about the people who can hold opposing ideas together - that of a hedgehog and fox? Gaddis derives this conclusion from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Crack-up*. 'Neither Xerxes nor Artabanus, therefore, would have passed Fitzgerald's test... the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function' (p.14).

This ability to function by keeping the greater scheme of things in mind and then developing the requirements and skills to achieve a goal is what Gaddis believes, Fitzgerald teaches us. Holding two opposing ideas and ideologies might be difficult for many, but therein is the difference. The genius knows how to pull off both. 'Some people are neither foxes nor hedgehogs, some people are both' (p.15). This signifies the comprehensive approach to life instead of a specialised one. The military genius, as Gaddis quotes Clausewitz, comes not from a specialised approach rather the ability to have the larger picture in mind. Theory and practice both save the day.

Gaddis's book is a study of life, its challenges and opportunities. It directs the reader's attention to what conquerors and kings perhaps might have forgotten in their pursuit of ambition. It is a masterpiece that teaches a student of life when to stop and how to use common sense.

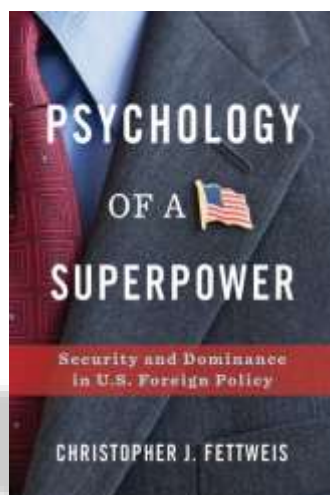
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The principle, for both Augustine and Machiavelli, reflects common sense: if you have to use force, don't destroy what you're trying to preserve (p.111).

The work environment is charged with ambition. One pursues goals and strives hard to achieve them, while thinking less about the rationale and logic of this pursuit. Here Gaddis' approach is, somewhat, stoic:

Dogs that catch cars never know what to do with them. Why, then, did Napoleon forget what most fools remember. Perhaps because common sense is indeed like oxygen: the higher you go, the thinner it gets (p.190).

On Grand Strategy is a *tour de force* for practitioners of foreign policy and warfare as well as for those trying to decipher the meaning of strategy in the larger context of life. ■



Christopher J. Fettweis, *Psychology of a Superpower: Security and Dominance in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2018), 280.

Reviewed by Maryam Nazir, former Assistant Research Officer, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, Pakistan.

Christopher J. Fettweis is Associate Professor of Political Science at the Tulane University in New Orleans, USA. He is the author of *Losing Hurts Twice as Bad: The Four Stages to Moving beyond Iraq* (2008); *Dangerous Times? The International Politics of Great Power Peace* (2010); and *The Pathologies of Power: Fear, Honor, Glory, and Hubris in U.S. Foreign Policy* (2013).

In his recent publication, *Psychology of a Superpower: Security and Dominance in U.S. Foreign Policy*, Fettweis examines strategic, structural and psychological aspects of unipolarity. The book inspects the impact of the ‘sudden realization that what standing alone atop the international hierarchy has done to the US or how has unipolarity affected the way US leaders conceive of their role, strategy or perception of others’ (p. 9). The book further builds the correlation of unipolarity with the world system, nuclear weapons, perception, enemy image and (grand) strategy.

Fettweis notes that during the Cold War, scholars debated the relative merits of various power configurations particularly related to bi- and multipolar systems, while ‘unipolarity’ remained profoundly unlikely. This impression changed after 1991 which then brought the focus of a corpus of

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work on a few core areas such as classification, stability and durability of unipolarity. While differentiating between world orders, the author describes unipolarity as a state:

When one member of a system towers above the rest, irrespective of how that power is used... (while synonyms can be used interchangeably such as primacy, hegemony or empire, it is opined that) unipolarity can exist without hegemony, in other words, even if the reverse is much more difficult (p. 10).

While examining the critical areas of unipolarity, Fettweis questions classification, 'Is the world uni- or multi-polar, or does it have unique characteristics that demand an entirely new intellectual construction?' (p. 11). Statistics suggest that the United States (US) dominates all its potential competitors in every traditional respect. However, an examination of all measures of power makes the unipolar nature of its systems, doubtful.

As Fettweis discusses the relation between unipolarity and armed conflicts, he extensively examines the concepts of 'Hegemonic-Stability Theory' and 'New Peace.' While reviewing the connection between the US' actions with systemic peace, a general belief exists that unipolarity has brought a steady decline in all kinds of armed conflicts (p. 23). As he dwells into the concept of 'New Peace', Fettweis briefly lists the criticism. While many consider this concept an 'illusion,' a number of scholars refer to the already existing assertion that peace is merely an absence of war. Another objection to the 'New Peace holds not that the statistics are wrong but that they are not capturing the reality of modern armed conflicts' (p. 26). Then, there is an enduring majority which simply does not believe that world is more peaceful than ever. Upon the question that how long New Peace would last, primary credit is attributed to nuclear weapons, evolving economic considerations and rise in the number of democracies around the globe.

If any state in an anarchic system should not fear for its security, surely it is the unipolar power. By any reasonable

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measure, the post-Cold War system is a safe one for the United States (p. 81).

The author further examines the political psychology of unbalanced power and its implications for perceptions in both big and small states:

Power is not a neutral attribute, for people or for states... Power is accompanied by predictable perils, all of which increase the chance of blunder as well as the stakes (p. 83).

While drawing a comparison between unipolarity, image formation and enemy image, psychologists refer that:

Power is inversely related to threat perceptions: as relative power decreases, detection of danger increases... More so, a state's perception of threat is directly related to power: as capabilities grow, so too does the enemies list (p. 98).

Fettweis believes that:

Unipolarity makes misperception of enemies simultaneously more likely and dangerous. Unnecessary conflict is quite possible if US leaders prove unable to separate pathological images from actual hostility (p. 105).

He examines the effects of the end of the Cold War on the development of strategy and writes that:

Rather than altering its outlook or level of preparation to match the evolving dangers of the world, America merely changed the direction of its strategic gaze, turning its focus inward rather than outward. The resulting unipolar conception of strategy takes no other side into account (since none exists), which has drastically and counterproductively

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altered the way the United States plans and constructs its military (p. 137).

Additionally, he also documents the strategic restraint policy that the US has adopted and how it has worked with its allies in Europe and the Far East (p. 157-159).

In this book, Christopher J. Fettweis has very cautiously touched upon the psychological aspects or the psyche which dictates the policies and grand strategies of the US as the world's sole super power. In this regard, he conducts a comparative analysis of the US' foreign policies and strategies in pre- and post-Cold War era. However, given that he analyses the policies of an established superpower whose dominance on the world stage now seems to be in flux, it would also have added value to study the policy dynamics within American power corridors as a new power raises its head on the horizon. ■

