

## *Book Reviews*

**Robert D. Kaplan, *Earning the Rockies: How Geography Shapes America's Role in the World* (New York: Random House, 2017), Price: \$27, Pages: 201.**

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*Earning the Rockies* by Robert Kaplan is a narrative and account of America and its geographical and physical aspects which make it significant in the conduction of its foreign policy and domestic affairs. The book is a result of travels undertaken by the author inside his country and observations made throughout the journey which inspire a perspective from him on what defines America and the American dream. The author has found knowledge and inspiration from certain ideals of his father- Philip Alexander Kaplan who was an ordinary citizen of America but with values that hold the country in high regard. His father was a truck driver and travelled throughout the country exploring the vast terrain and Kaplan too undertook the cross-country journey imbibing the meaning and significance of America's vast land expanse and natural resources and what that means of the people of the country.

Robert Kaplan is an American author whose work primarily focuses on theory of International Relations, travel, politics and global affairs. Several of his works have been published in journals, newspapers and publications like The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. His interest in history and world affairs was encouraged by his father from an early age, which proved advantageous. *Earning the Rockies*, too, is an idea inspired from the values his father instilled in him about the country and its history.

The author has meticulously chosen the title of the book with a deeper significant meaning behind it. He emphasises on how politically and strategically the country and the government should explore the advantage posed by the

mountain ranges, rivers, plains and the vast expanse of land that defines the country. The book is not just an account of the role that geography plays in the formulation of the foreign and domestic policy of the country, it is an insight into the author's perspective and feelings about his country and the learnings from his journey. It is also a political analysis of how America's power lies in the heart of the country and its unexplored territory. The author delves deeper into the 'frontier' attitude of America and the necessity to have such an outlook. He urges the people to explore the country and gain a new perspective on politics in the country. By using the term "Earning the Rockies", he advocates that the journey to understand every land of America cannot be done by flying from coast to coast, but to "see the mornings and evenings along the way of the ground you have covered".

The beauty of the book is the fact that the author has so passionately spoken about the country continuing to dominate the world if it realises its own inner strengths. Kaplan predicted the change in politics and power that would begin if there is a change in leadership at the top tier of the White House- what we see today as the time of Donald Trump as President Trump. He implores the people in power to take advantage of the nation's agricultural wealth, land expanse, natural resources and favourable geographical position. He has quoted and used the ideas of Bernard DeVoto, the historian, geologist John Powell and several other eminent analysts and thinkers. The book delves deeper into ideas such as conservatism, imperialism, globalisation and what that implies today.

During this rapid era of globalization, and the connectivity across the world, the fundamental question that Kaplan asks is how well do you know your own people? In every city, every street and lane, between elites and commoners, with the wholesome presence of the media, what connects the people? The most prominent theme behind the book is that you cannot gauge the significance of the Rockies by flying from the East Coast, the learning takes place in seeing the sight of the Rockies by driving across the prairies and the Great Plains, and understanding why America conquered this land to become a superpower.

Earning the Rockies is an insightful read for any and everyone who is interested in the field of International Relations, Global Affairs and Politics, particularly. It is also worth a read for anyone else who enjoys geography and travel and feels inspired. The meaning behind every place he sees and the message that Kaplan is trying to get across to the readers is quite prominent. The book is layered in its approach to analyse America's role in the world today and is philosophically very pure in its analysis of America's rise and decline as a global power. As an IR Major student, the book definitely provided me with a new

dimension of perceiving America and its policies and approaches as a global power. It gives a new perspective on the role of geography and the importance of geopolitics in the world today. The book and its meaning stay with you long after the read is over.