

Book Reviews

A Chronicle of Currencies

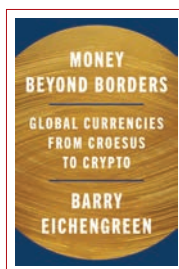
Catherine R. Schenk

THE TURMOIL IN GLOBAL TRADE sets the stage for *Money Beyond Borders*' timely reflection on the evolution of international currencies. Since 1960, the US dollar has greased the gears of global commerce and finance. Its deep and liquid markets and near universal acceptance as a means of exchange and unit of account helped launch the modern era of globalization. But many now fear that unpredictable US economic policy will so unsettle markets that the dollar will lose its grip as a common global anchor. Such predictions of the dollar's demise, however, have a long history.

In the 1960s and 1970s, inflation seemed poised to undermine its usefulness. In the mid-2000s, sustained dollar depreciation, liberalization in China, and the launch of the euro sparked speculation about potential successors to the dollar and how to manage such a transition. The global financial crisis of 2008, however, confirmed the resilience of the currency hierarchy.

Barry Eichengreen, professor of economics and political science at the University of California, Berkeley, is a leading protagonist in this debate, drawing on history to speculate about the future of the international monetary system. In his scholarly work, he argues that a multipolar currency system is feasible and sustainable and that the 1930s should be a stark warning of the perils of deglobalization.

His new book takes an even longer perspective, reaching back to the origins of Roman currency and looking ahead to the impact of the current geopolitical disruption. Accessible to a generalist audience, the book aims to elicit policy lessons from a long sweep of history. The author synthesizes a growing body of literature on classical economic history as well as the considerable research on 18th century financial history, notably that of Amsterdam. The chapters on the 20th century will be familiar to readers of Eichengreen's other research on this era, but the cycles of history are worth revisiting. US President Richard Nixon's confrontation with the chair of the Federal Reserve in the 1970s makes for particularly timely reading.



MONEY BEYOND BORDERS: Global Currencies from Croesus to Crypto

Barry Eichengreen

Princeton University Press

Princeton, NJ, 2026, 344 pp. \$29.95

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Eichengreen argues that it is the absence of an alternative currency that has sustained dollar dominance so far. But the combined effects of the US retreat from commitment to open markets, internationalization of the renminbi, the evolution of the euro, and fintech innovation may upend things. He concludes that “none of these alternatives is ready for prime time” and is pessimistic about their future prospects. But more extreme geopolitical ruction since the book was written increases the likelihood of some of these outcomes. If EU members pull together more closely, US friction with China heats up, or fintech comes up with a viable stablecoin that is not tethered only to the dollar, we may yet see a seismic shift in the trajectory of the dollar. The shock to liquidity could still provoke a version of the 1930s Great Depression, and the book concludes by repeating this warning. **F&D**

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