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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND  
POLITICAL ECONOMY

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**NEW  
PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
ORDER**

No Longer Alone  
in This World

**Bertrand Badie**



The Sciences Po Series in International Relations  
and Political Economy

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Bertrand Badie

# New Perspectives on the International Order

No Longer Alone in This World

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## PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

The political science of international relations grew for the most part out of the euphoria following the victory over Nazism and its horrors in 1945. Its body of writing therefore developed around an apology of power and the quiet conviction that hegemony could be full of virtues. The dialogue that was established between realists and liberals was on its way to making history. The former deserved credit for grasping a world in which one had to be strong and cunning in order to survive. To the latter fell the role of recalling the importance of values that gave power a purpose. They were thus perfectly equipped with all the necessary concepts for entering the maze of budding bipolarity and the ensuing cold war.

Yet there was a double danger there. First, without the slightest criticism, these concepts had assumed enduring virtues that gradually made them unresponsive to history, without being aware of their Westphalian origins. It was as if they were endowed with a presumed immortality and an insensitivity to the changing context. Furthermore, they were imbued with a strange exhilarating property, forever reassuring those who had sufficient resources of power. The instruments' effective capacity mattered little, as long as they were acquired in large numbers. The statistical illusion acted like a methodological drug. GNP was quantified, missiles were counted, questions were raised about divisions, military spending was measured ... and the resulting ranking was held to be as obvious as it was intangible, a kind of Bible of new science. The quantitativists had triumphed!

Consequently, few in the field of science or of action saw the change that was coming. No one had foreseen the fall of the Berlin Wall, at least not in the way it happened. But, even more, no one had thought that more change was in the offing, a more substantial, more decisive, more remarkable change because, this time, it was having an affect beyond the world's configuration to its very dimensions, scope and identity. The Westphalian concept of the international—which had thus far reigned supreme—was a Western invention, the famous order that in fact was only comprised of a homogeneous group of states linked by the unity of time, the proximity of cultures, the similarity of economies, and the affiliation of social structures. Globalization—which still has not been defined with any precision—abruptly turned everything upside down, challenging everything, endorsing new actors, new cultures, new issues, new conflicts and, in so doing, made many of our categories outdated.

I am therefore suggesting that our old political science cannot survive without adapting to this conceptual tsunami. Whereas political actors would often rather not see a change whose implications could be too costly, it is crucial for political science to grasp that *we are no longer alone in the world* and to build the new alterity that is affecting our perception of the international, the nature of our difficulties and the actors involved, and perhaps also our reading of history. Wars can no longer be won in a new Battle of the Marne, conflicts are no longer settled through deliberation by the European Concert, and choices are no longer made only on the basis of Western visions. For that reason, the French edition of this book is entitled *Nous ne sommes plus seuls au monde* (*We are no longer alone in the world*). The realization verges on the nightmarish for many analysts and for those in power, but these considerations are full of common sense and are aimed at re-examining our old political science. It is my great pleasure to present this rather atypical book to English-speaking readers. The task is so complex that it could clearly not be accomplished without thinking outside the box.

Paris, France  
December 2017

Bertrand Badie

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## INTRODUCTION

The “international order?” The expression is used every day in circles of power and in the media; but at the same time, the wars, violence of all kinds, alliances made and unmade, and zigzagging foreign policies seem a far cry from even the beginning of an international order. Conflicts in Syria, Mali or Yemen that look nothing like what we remember from past wars, a return to the Cold War which, from Kosovo to Kiev, is happening outside any bipolar framework, deadly attacks reaching deep within our societies, intertwined with a bloody Middle-Eastern political game that we have trouble understanding. Never has the old expression “international anarchy”<sup>1</sup> seemed as appealing as today. Never has the notion of an “international community” been so flouted.

And what can even be said about an international system that we appear unable to characterize other than in referring to the preceding one, which ended in 1989. It would seem that we are the timid actors of a “post-bipolar system.” It is an astonishing example of intellectual laziness. A quarter of a century has elapsed since the fall of the Wall and we are still identifying ourselves with an outdated order! The laziness is all the more appalling in that we are affected more than ever by the international agenda, its torments and uncertainties. There are no longer any barriers between the inner life of a nation and that of the international system. We are all affected and all victims of failed policies, the kind of serial failures disguised as fake victories, outdated formulas from another age, more or less conscious ignorance of the new parameters on the international stage. And yet, we are living in a context that can be

described and analyzed, provided that we rid ourselves of some old concepts. We have induced and been subjected to rifts that can still be characterized; we are acting in a world where we know the actors, or at least we can strive to find out who they are. From the Sahel to Mesopotamia, new kinds of conflicts are developing, American hegemony is wavering, the Russian bear is back on its feet, the emerging countries are rocking the boat, the destitute are legion and the planet is suffocating from our not paying attention to humanity's shared resources. Nevertheless, the patterns and policies have remained the same. And couldn't that lack of even trying for lucidity be the beginning of a solution to our enigma? There are times of great upheaval when it seems preferable to ignore transformations, to do things as we always have, to act as if nothing had changed. We treat the new ills as if they were the same as our illnesses of the past. We've deluded ourselves into thinking that we are still back in the Belle Époque. We use categories from the past to prolong the days of privilege and ease a bit longer. We act as if we were still alone in the world.

In a world that thinks in the short term, choosing intellectual laziness is not necessarily absurd. The cost of adapting is always high in the near future, and the payout for showing courage comes through only when one is no longer of this world, or no longer wielding power at any rate. Only statesmen consent to looking far ahead and going along with it. Politicians prefer to win the next election by playing on their image as precarious warriors. Pyrrhus still has a very bright future! In reality, the triumph of this anamnesis has created a formidable vicious circle: the more we see the present through the lens of the past, the less we understand what we are living and the more we take perilous refuge in a finite world. It is high time that we broke with the "geopolitical obsession" that has taken over the media and chancelleries. This old-fashioned and almost obsolete vision persists in taking a nostalgic view of the world and its conflicts as prisoners of territorial, political and strategic perspectives, when in fact the world has become mobile and transnational, structured and refashioned by unprecedented social behavior, mainly around socio-economic considerations.

Naturally, a few paltry new ideas have emerged at times to give the world a new name, alas more as a passing fad than through scientific rigor. There were the days of "multipolarity" evoked by the mid-sized powers to reassure themselves and assert their role as the noble ones in a more balanced world. There were the "superpower" days when the

United States was set above all others, but that had to be quickly shelved when the American colossus kept losing wars. Then there were the days of grieving and feeling orphaned, when we lamented the withdrawal of support from the world's policeman. And what about the days when the turmoil was criticized by stigmatizing "rogue states" and "barbarians" of all kinds suspected of wanting to reattack the new Rome? What of the nth variation on the famous "yellow peril" bandied about the minute Chinese competition crops up a bit too noticeably?

Contrary to those who ramble on about the "new turmoil" or "chaos" of the world—another instance of laziness—, I am convinced that we can see clearly to describing the current international system, if we can place it in a historical context instead of fossilizing it there, describe the rifts rather than deny them, understand the real issues by looking beyond appearances. Changes, rifts and key issues are the matrices of that analysis, whose main hypothesis is fueled by a striking contrast: the former powers played alone for too long in the international arena to really know how to deal with globalization today. Pining for the days when the Congress of Vienna (1815) put an end to Bonaparte's imperial undertakings two centuries ago, they daydream about a world they could govern alone in the name of their so-called "special responsibility." This book shows that their plan makes no sense and would be very dangerous if it did. The book's purpose, running counter to the dominant analyses heard in the media and in chancelleries today, is to open up new paths for a fairer and more efficient foreign policy that would endorse this beautiful Bambara proverb:

"You can't shave someone's head if they're not there."

## NOTE

1. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1977).



## CHAPTER 1

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# The Old Order: From the “Balance of Power” to the Oligarchs’ Club

**Abstract** To understand the confused evolution or the indignities of the international system at the beginning of the twenty-first century one needs to first grasp what came before it and understand the way international relations have been configured throughout the modern era. This chapter will consider the issues of sovereignty, competition, and power as the fragile cornerstones of the Westphalian order, before turning to the strengths and weaknesses of the oligarchic governance.

**Keywords** Balance of power · Oligarchy · Sovereignty · Territoriality Westphalian state · Power

One cannot understand the confused evolution or the indignities of the international system at the beginning of the twenty-first century without first grasping what came before it and succinctly describing the way international relations have been configured throughout the modern era.

It all began with two totally unprecedented dynamics that emerged in the Renaissance and gradually became established in Europe, then in the rest of the world. For the first time in the history of humanity, the international order was envisaged in a collective manner. Until the end of the Middle Ages, in Europe and elsewhere, imperial constructions and traditional monarchies coexisted, as well as city states that were not concerned with building even the beginnings of an international system. The

issue of coexisting with others was never conceived as such, or at any rate was only imagined within the city or the kingdom. Relations with neighbors, rivals, and competitors naturally existed but were overshadowed from a political and legal standpoint.

Yet it was precisely through two legal instruments of an unprecedented nature—the Münster and Osnabrück Treaties putting an end to the Thirty Years War in 1648 and founding what was called the “Peace of Westphalia”—that nearly all the European states would negotiate together a kind of order not named as yet but already resembling an early international system. Naturally, one should not indulge in anachronism and presume that this was their explicit objective. Still, the end of the Thirty Years War defined the future core principle for all diplomacy on the Old Continent: striving to imagine and build a livable space, substituting the juxtaposed sovereignty of territorial states in place of the imperial order and that of universal Christianity; the independence of the Swiss Confederation and the United Provinces (of the Netherlands) was recognized, and the Habsburg Empire itself was henceforth composed of three hundred and fifty sovereign states barely restricted in the exercise of this new prerogative.

This unprecedented dynamic went beyond the mere negotiated construction of European coexistence. It was not only a matter of collectively establishing an order, but of explicitly mobilizing new principles in order to found it, and defining the legal categories that would serve as the basis of the international system being created, ensure its sustainability and subject its actors to new norms. As proof that the break with the past was complete, the Peace of Westphalia was the first formally multilateral negotiation in history, foreshadowing the future.

What were these new emerging norms then? First, the principle of *sovereignty* establishing, as Jean Bodin was already theorizing, that no state could be forced by a “greater, smaller, or equal” one.<sup>1</sup> Then, the principle of territoriality whose fundamental accessory was the clear and unequivocal definition of the concept and the reality of *borders*, but still more of the idea that the political exists only through the territorial jurisdiction outlining its reality. Finally, we can see the first formalization of the principle of *international negotiation*. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the art, technique, and law of negotiating began to be created when the states themselves were not fully constituted. For that, they had to wait until the nineteenth century!

These innovations would weigh heavily on the future, explaining the arrogant side of the heirs of the Peace of Westphalia. For the latter, the cause was understood. They were indeed the inventors of an international order they believed would be long-lived, and even of the very idea of an international order. Through the domination they wielded over the following centuries and, in particular in the nineteenth century through colonialism, this concept that grew out of Westphalia would become established the world over. Moreover, the task was easy, for the first non-European partners were in fact themselves Europeans: the United States which, when established as a state, was inspired by philosophy and law from the Old Continent, and the Latin-American nation-states which built their independence by drawing from major European jurists. As for the vast countries of Africa and Asia, subject to European invasion at the end of the nineteenth century, they were gradually subjugated or marginalized. In both cases their forced and often violent integration into the international system was a way of asserting the sustainability of the order that came out of the Westphalian adventure.

The fact remains that colonialism constituted a huge paradox, with the Westphalian state system encountering the still keen memory of the prior imperial form that never stopped haunting European nations and was reinvented through overseas expansion. That memory has remained very present for European actors, even if one recalls that the system growing out of Westphalia was meant precisely to marginalize and make extinct that political system, embodied at the time by the Holy Roman Empire, with its concomitant territorial fragmentations and denial of autonomy. And yet, the "temptation of empire" endured, either in its traditional continental form, as revived several times in France by the Napoleonic adventure, or in the extraverted version growing out of the construction of the colonial empires, of which France and Great Britain, as well as Portugal and Spain, were sponsors. If this imperial memory has never totally left the European stage, it is because behind the spirit of Westphalia there is an aporia that was not immediately grasped and is even completely glossed over at times in the present.

### SOVEREIGNTY, COMPETITION AND POWER

The basis for that aporia lay in the incongruities in the principle of sovereignty: the international order was a juxtaposition of sovereign states competing with one another. That competition already showed the