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BOOK REVIEWS

World Order: Reflections on the Characters of Nations and the Course of History

Henry Kissinger. London: Penguin Books, 2015. Pp. x + 420. ISBN

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World Order is expertly written by a man whose name is associated with both global peace and war crimes, Henry Kissinger. The book is carefully crafted to reflect Kissinger's extensive knowledge and experience in American foreign policy, global politics and history. Having received numerous excellent reviews, the book is believed to be the summation of Kissinger's thinking about statecraft, strategy, characters of nations, the course of history, the future of the world, and in particular the world order.

This book comprises nine chapters which are preceded and succeeded by an introduction and a conclusion, respectively. The introduction is aimed at setting the scene by presenting different concepts of world order, including Europe's Westphalian peace, China's harmony under heaven, Islam's realm of war, and America's universal relevance of democratic principles. This section also defines three levels of order: world order, international order, and regional order, each of which is based on two principles – a set of commonly accepted rules and a balance of power.

The first chapter focuses on Europe and its order, the establishment of the Peace of Westphalia and its operations, and the French Revolution and its aftermath. In this part, the history of world order in Europe is analyzed, followed by a series of events (i.e. the Thirty Years' War) that led to the Peace of Westphalia which paved the way for a modern concept of world order. The chapter also examines the course of the French Revolution and its impact on the European balance of power which was maintained by the Westphalian system.

Chapter 2 further elaborates on the European balance of power system and its end. In this chapter, the author pinpoints the ups and downs of the balance of power in Europe by discussing the significant role and dominance of Russia in the region and the restoration of the balance of power in Europe through state negotiations in the Congress of Vienna in 1814. In addition, the author continues to discuss the European balance of power between the World

Wars and after World War II. Clearly, the principles of the balance of power laid down during the Treaty of Westphalia, almost four centuries ago, have deteriorated. As a result, the future of Europe is postulated by the author and a few questions regarding the uncertainty of European balance of power are raised in this chapter.

Having examined Europe and its balance of power system, the book then turns its emphasis to Islamism and the Middle East by looking at the Islamic world order, the Arab Spring and the Syrian war, the Palestinian issues, and the decline of the Arab states. In this section, the author unearths the world of Islamic empire and religion by describing the history of Islam and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Then the author compares the Westphalia system with the Islamic world by stating that stability is the guiding principle of world order in the Westphalia system while purity is the principle of the Islamic world. The Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the decline of the Muslim world are also briefly presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on Iranian-American relations and the approaches to order. In this chapter, the tradition of Iranian statecraft and the Khomeini Revolution are discussed, followed by the issues of nuclear proliferation in Iran. Regarding the Iranian statecraft, Kissinger mentioned that "Iran has perhaps the most coherent sense of nationhood and the most elaborated tradition of national interest-based statecraft." Moreover, Iran's statecraft is based on the Persian Empire's tradition.

Chapter 5 takes a different perspective and deals with Asia and world order from the perspective of major Asian countries such as Japan and India. The author, in this chapter, compares Asian and European concepts of balance of power by stating that the Asian concept of balance of power is the modern version of the Westphalian system of international order; however, unlike Europe's international system of equal sovereignty, Asia's international system is based on the principle of hierarchy, not sovereignty. Toward the end of chapter 5, the writer poses a question about an Asian regional order and highlights the influential role of Indonesia in Southeast Asia in balancing China, the United States, and the Muslim world. Likewise, South Korea and North Korea, engulfed by major world economies, also play crucial roles in balancing power in East Asia.

Chapter 6 primarily concerns China, its role in world order and its partnership with the United States. This chapter underscores the role of China in Asia's international order and world order by taking into account the Chinese concept of "All Under Heaven" and "the Middle Kingdom" which represent China's supreme position throughout history. With the wealth of its economy and the ability to produce desirable goods, China can and will still be able to exert its political, economic, and cultural influence in the regional and global context. Thus, China's views and support are frequently sought in every international forum, making China the only global competitor for the United States in its search for world order. To conclude chapter 6, Kissinger puts forward his perspective on the Sino-American relationship by explaining how Chinese and Americans view each other differently and negatively. He then suggests that the modern balance of power be based on the concept of partnership rather than confrontation or military deployment; by so doing, Chinese and Americans would experience constructive cooperation which could lead to a more peaceful world in the future.

Unlike chapters 5 and 6, which deal with Asia, particularly China, chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to the United States and its concept of world order. Chapter 7, entitled "Acting for all mankind: The United States and its concept of order", discusses America's expanding role on the world stage and examines America's concept of world order from the perspective of three presidents of the United States such as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt. For Theodore Roosevelt, a realist, not only was the United States seen as the greatest power without threatening regional competitors, but it was also in a unique position with this power to decide the destiny of the whole world. Woodrow Wilson, an idealist, however, saw America as the world's conscience. In other words, America's mission was to bring about peace to the world and America's intervention in World War I was not motivated by its quest for power or self-interest, but universal peace and order. Similarly, Franklin Roosevelt, who was also an idealist, placed great emphasis on building international order and peace through trust, respect for international law, friendly relations, tolerance, humanitarianism, and good will.

In chapter 8, the focus is on the America's roles and responsibilities for world order. Kissinger starts this chapter by mentioning that twelve American presidents have endeavored in an unselfish quest for the resolution of conflicts to restore and maintain universal peace and harmony. Since the end of World War II, the United States has been seen as an ambivalent superpower that is unable to decide the nature of its world role, that is, it is caught in an

idealism-realism dilemma. Throughout this chapter, Kissinger elaborates on the historical events, especially the five wars the United States fought after World War II (Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan) in order to present America's ambivalent foreign policy. Kissinger also helps his readers understand America's struggle with the so-called idealism-realism dilemma by recounting how each U.S. president from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush exercised America's global influence, restored national cohesion, and tried to build a world order.

In the final chapter, entitled "Technology, equilibrium, and human consciousness", the author examines world order in the nuclear age, the challenge of nuclear proliferation, the role of technology in world order, and the making of foreign policy in the digital era. Obviously, nuclear weapons have a dramatic impact on international order and the major focus of the foreign policy of any country, particularly the nuclear superpowers, is to ensure the other side will not use its weapons of mass destruction. Thus, the existing major nuclear countries need to closely cooperate with one another to insist on nuclear nonproliferation and the absence of the use of nuclear weapons in any conflict so that world order can be the result. The writer also stresses the significance of cyber technology and human consciousness in shaping relations between states and the international order. In concluding this final chapter, Kissinger states that wisdom and foresight are needed in the technological era, and humane, transcendent, and geopolitical judgment is crucial in establishing global order in the Internet age.

In his conclusion, Kissinger discusses the evolution of international order by citing the impact of two tendencies or imbalances: a redefinition of legitimacy and a significant shift in the balance of power. The first tendency concerns an alteration of values and norms in the international order while the second tendency is related to an inability of states to accommodate a major change in power relations. With these imbalances between power and legitimacy, Kissinger then presents four important dimensions which are missing in the twenty-first century world order, such as the nature of the state, the political and economic organization of the world, the absence of an effective mechanism for the great powers to consult and cooperate, and America's ambivalent world role. Thus, the quest for world order in our time, in the author's words, will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions, and to relate these regional orders to one another. The

domination of a region by one country militarily, finally, even if it brings the appearance of order, could produce a crisis for the rest of the world.

World Order, in sum, is not only of significant value to anyone interested in the study of international relations, but it also provides readers with fascinating insights into, just to mention a few, world history, European balance of power systems, America's world role, Asia's international order, disorder in the Middle East, the role of technology in the contemporary world order, and the future of world order itself. This book, therefore, is an indispensable resource for researchers, teachers, and students alike, and is truly a welcome addition to the field of International Relations in general and to anyone's personal bookshelf in particular.