

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN WORLD POLITICS

Competing Perspectives

THIRD EDITION



Barry B. Hughes



CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN WORLD POLITICS: COMPETING PERSPECTIVES

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PREFACE

Welcome new readers and welcome back to those instructors who have used previous editions! This third edition continues to use a framework that has always tried to provide a solid and substantial kit of tools to the student for long-term use. It also continues its attempt to use those tools to convey a comprehensive and coherent understanding of global continuity and change in the modern era.

The presentation begins from the premise that an understanding of world politics has four principal elements. The first is an extensive foundation of information including knowledge of the current world and some familiarity with its history. The book provides a significant base of factual knowledge—not abstractly, but as needed to give flesh to a broader framework of understanding. The second element is analysis. Large numbers of important concepts and theories allow a serious student of world politics to move from particularistic description to generalization, from knowledge to analysis. This book extensively and systematically introduces those concepts and theories (bold type emphasizes their introduction).

The third element is interpretation. Many books on world politics present information and analysis as if to say “these are the facts and here is how to interpret them.” Yet anyone who reads the opinion page of a daily newspaper or who watches the debates on issues of world politics knows that analysts choose facts selectively and that their interpretations of even the most basic facts vary. All students of world politics need to understand that the field combines science and controversy, insight and competing interpretations. This text maps the primary competing perspectives on the “big questions” and helps the reader understand that the contributions of scientific analysis have often been within, not across, those worldviews.

The fourth and final element is insight into dynamics. Perhaps because the Cold War froze international politics into a fairly rigid pattern for nearly four decades, analysis and interpretation of world politics have frequently failed to

emphasize sufficiently how rapidly international relations can change and have neglected to consider the bases of change. This book seeks to convey some understanding of the forces that now transform our world.

They say that “the third time’s the charm.” (They also say “three strikes and out,” but we will ignore that contrary perspective.) There is much continuity in this edition. There is also much change. Most important, the book breaks free of the straightjacket that “idealism” imposed on the discussion of what the book now calls “liberal” and “communitarian” perspectives. The change allows much more coherent discussions of global developments in democracy, human rights, and institutional development, on the one hand, and of nationalism and religious fervor on the other. The book still recognizes the possibilities of both integrating and fragmenting idealisms, but it can now compare and contrast them much more sharply.

In addition, the elaboration of liberalism in this edition clarifies the relationship between political and economic/commercial liberalism, as earlier editions did the relationship between realism and mercantilism. That considerably smoothes our transition from political behavior to political economy. Readers of past editions will note a variety of other important changes, including more extensive treatment of nationalism and an elaboration of strategic trade theory. You will see limited change in the sequence of chapters, but I hope you will notice improvements in presentation throughout.

I firmly remain one of the optimists—we have made great intellectual progress in this discipline during the last few decades. I have tried to write a book that not only collects and synthesizes our growing understandings of the world but also pushes the limits of them. I have tried to present a comprehensive, coherent, and understandable portrait of global politics.

The Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS) has been an exceptional environment in which to undertake a work that covers as much ground as this one does. The GSIS brings together congenial, intellectually-stimulating colleagues from a mixture of disciplines, and it attracts first-class students with whom to develop ideas interactively. My intellectual debts in the preparation of this book are, of course, much broader. It is only really possible to thank specifically those who saved me from some of my errors and confusions, by commenting on substantial parts or all of this edition or previous editions: Marc Belanger, *Dickinson College*; Mark A. Boyer, *University of Connecticut*; Stuart A. Bremer, *SUNY-Binghamton*; James A. Caporaso, *University of Washington*; Harold Damerow, *Union County College*; Richard Eichenberg, *Tufts University*; Peter M. Haas, *University of Massachusetts*; W. Ladd Hollist, *Brigham Young University*; Joseph Lepgold, *Georgetown University*; David P. Levine, *University of Denver*; Michael McGinnis, *Indiana University*; Michael Niemann, *Trinity College*; Brian M. Pollins, *Ohio State University*; James Lee Ray, *Florida State University*; Neil Richardson, *University of Wisconsin*; Dale L. Smith, *Florida State University*; Marvin S. Soroos, *North Carolina State University*; and Jutta Weldes, *Kent State University*. In addition, James Chung, Steven Durand, and Shannon Blake pro-

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With more time and additional advice, I hope in future editions to correct, develop, and sharpen this argument and presentation further; I welcome suggestions. Finally, I offer my thanks for the time you spend in reading and thinking about this book and convey my hopes that it will reward you.

Barry B. Hughes



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FORCES OF CHANGE

The political equivalents of earthquakes periodically restructure international relations. For instance, World War II and events of the years immediately following it substantially reorganized the globe. Most of the surface features of the early twentieth century world were still intact in 1938 when World War II began. That world was highly Eurocentric. Britain was the dominant country in many parts of the globe, but Germany posed an increasingly strong challenge to it. European empires divided much of the world among themselves. The United States and Russia were important but somewhat peripheral powers.

Pressures for change had, however, built below the surface throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The outcomes of the war revealed many of the discrepancies between the old surface forms and the new underlying realities. In particular, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged from war as the dominant military powers. An event in the final months of fighting confirmed the U.S. position: On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, and thereby initiated the atomic weapons era. The Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949.

Many aftershocks followed the earthquake of the war and these two nuclear explosions. Among the most important was that the wartime alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union, formed to combat Germany and Japan, quickly disintegrated. The two new superpowers then rapidly drew much of the rest of the world into new relationships around themselves. By 1949, the United States, Britain, and France forged alliance structures with former enemies Germany¹ and Japan; together they faced former allies, the Soviet Union and China, across an "iron curtain." The Cold War, a forty-year long political, economic, and military struggle without direct military confrontation, had begun. The United States led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the

¹That is, they joined forces with the Federal Republic of Germany, the two-thirds of Germany that they occupied at the end of the war.

Soviet Union soon dominated the Warsaw Pact. The two alliances enrolled most of the economically more developed countries of the world.

Among the aftershocks of the early postwar period was decolonization. The war had temporarily reduced or eliminated control by the Western European states over their extensive colonial empires in Africa and Asia; Britain and France tried to reestablish imperial positions. They failed and the empires crumbled.

Even as new global surface forms stabilized during the Cold War, underlying pressures for more change did not stop building. A variety of demographic, economic, environmental, and technological forces continued to operate. For instance, world population more than doubled by 1990. Germany and Japan rose from the ruins of World War II to engage the United States and other new friends in intense economic competition. Humanity put increasing pressures on its biologic and physical environments. New communications technologies linked the peoples of the world as never before.

The world continued to experience small shocks throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Then, in 1989–1991, it was rocked by another large-scale earthquake (Chapter Two describes and analyzes this period). The epicenter was the Soviet Union, which installed a reforming leadership in 1985, but shock waves rapidly radiated to Central Europe. In 1989 and 1990 Communist parties in the Soviet Union and all of its Eastern allies gave up their dominant role or began to share power with movements for political reform. By 1992 the Warsaw Pact had dissolved and the Soviet Union had disintegrated into fifteen new states.

The ramifications of the new shock spread globally. Rapid movement toward both unilateral and negotiated reductions in arms developed. The United States and Russia began to see opportunities for cooperation in the resolution of problems around the world. Longstanding political configurations in the Middle East, Central America, and elsewhere in the globe began to shift.

Other developments added to the pace of change during this period. Twelve countries in Europe, which had fought an almost uncountable number of wars during the preceding four hundred years, met a 1992 deadline for the development of a common economic market and added three more members in 1994. Japan increasingly emerged as the new financial leader of the world; its foreign aid surpassed that of the United States, and it began to request leadership roles in institutions like the International Monetary Fund. South America completed a movement toward democratization, at one time boasting democratic governments throughout the continent for the first time ever. South Africa moved to dismantle its apartheid system.

The sum total of changes wrought by these two extraordinary periods in the last half-century is astounding. Yet beneath the mosaic of change, many patterns of continuity persist. Two are especially apparent. First, countries remain the dominant actors in world politics. Some, like the United Kingdom, France, or Portugal can trace their existence back several centuries. Even in the roster of countries there is, of course, change. The United States came onto the scene little more than two hundred years ago, Germany has been united for scarcely more

than one hundred years, and Bangladesh will not celebrate its fiftieth anniversary until 2021. Schoolchildren around the world must now learn the locations of new countries such as Croatia, Belarus, and Georgia.

Second, warfare among countries (or tribes or city-states or empires) predates our historic knowledge and appears to be a constant of human existence. In 1992 thirty conflicts were under way that together had claimed more than two million lives. Not a day passes without a war-related death somewhere in the world. Economic competition among countries is a related constant, and many of the methods by which countries seek relative advantage today are little changed from those of three hundred years ago.

What are the major forces of global change and the primary elements of continuity in world politics? What kind of world are they jointly creating? The years since the end of World War II constitute little more than an average working lifetime. How dramatically might world politics evolve during the working lives of the students reading this book?

This volume cannot foresee the future world, any more than someone in early 1939 or even in 1988 could have forecast the world of today. It can convey an understanding of important forces at work, however, and present alternative and often clashing perspectives for considering the implications of those forces. The rest of this chapter sketches eight forces that appear especially potent in their contribution to global change.² Many popular and scholarly works read uniformly optimistic or pessimistic implications into the workings of these forces.³ Each force, however, has potentially both positive and negative consequences; often the implications for individual human beings will depend on the country of their citizenship or on their social position.

The simultaneous operation of several forces, with substantial and complex interaction among them, presents tremendous difficulty for anyone attempting to understand the present state of world politics or anticipate its future—it is perhaps impossible to know even the relative importance of these forces, much less to comprehend the product of their interplay. We have seen that world politics is a bit like the surface of the earth, which often exhibits long periods of relative calm even while massive “tectonic plates” continue their long-term drift just below the surface. Periodically, and as yet unpredictably, the underlying forces dramatically disrupt surface features. Identification of geologic plates was a critically important step for geologists toward understanding the effects of their movement, including the location of earthquake zones. Identification of the

²Some readers may be surprised not to see technological advance among the forces listed here. In fact, that advance is imbedded in the following discussions of longevity, food and energy availability, economic transformation, military weaponry, and even social mobilization.

³For almost uniformly optimistic or positive interpretations of major global trends, see Kahn, Brown and Martel (1976); Toffler (1980); Naisbitt (1982); and Bailey (1995). For consistently pessimistic or negative perceptions, see Meadows, et al. (1972 and 1992), Lester Brown (1981), the Council on Environmental Quality (1981), and the Worldwatch Institute’s annual volumes on the State of the World.