LONGMAN CLASSICS *in* POLITICAL SCIENCE

Understanding International Conflicts

An Introduction to Theory and History

FIFTH EDITION

JOSEPH S. NYE, JR.

Foreword by STANLEY HOFFMANN

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For MHN, as always, and our grandchildren

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Foreword

Professor Nye is a man of many talents. He has written with clarity, elegance, and erudition about topics that are also great interests of mine: international and regional organization, the interplay between interdependence and traditional interstate competition, the political and ethical role of nuclear weapons, American foreign policy during and after the Cold War, the limits and possibilities of international governance, etc. He gracefully acknowledges having been my student, and we have taught together the Harvard course on conflict which served as a basis for this book. But I have learned at least as much from him as he thinks he has learned from me—not only because of his expertise in international economic affairs, but also because he has brought to his understanding of world politics a precious practical experience as a high official in the Carter and Clinton Administrations. And he has brought to his study of international conflicts a thoughtful serenity worthy of one of those great American statesmen of the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth—a serenity made of a talent for rising high above the daily events, of a curiosity for and knowledge of political philosophy which helps him ask questions of permanent importance and put events in perspective, of a gift for understanding how theory can nourish the study of history, and how the latter leads inevitably to philosophical and ethical conclusions. These are the skills of such authors as Tocqueville, Max Weber and Raymond Aron. Particularly valuable in these days of methodological battles are his understanding of the limits of generalization and of the many ways of interpreting events. His sense of reality never amounts—even in the study of those cold monsters, the states—to a cynical rejection of ethics, and in the study of power it is not surprising that he attaches great importance to what he has called soft power: not the power to coerce, bully, browbeat, and bribe, but the power to attract, to persuade, to influence through wisdom, example, and attentiveness. These are qualities whose importance in world affairs is often undervalued, and which are more necessary than ever in American foreign policy.

A discriminating and penetrating intelligence has alerted him to the important innovations introduced, in the twentieth century, into strategic and economic affairs, and yet safeguarded him from faddish enthusiasms and fashionable slogans. He is a man of deep values and generous beliefs, but also of great discernment, detachment, and determination. All these virtues are present in this book. It is, in my opinion, the best textbook available to intelligent students of world politics. It blends perfectly history, political philosophy, political theory, and analysis. It prefers explaining events to drowning the reader in excessive detail. It does what any good social scientist ought to do: *explain* (i.e., show the causes), *interpret* (give us the

meaning), *evaluate* both politically and morally. It distinguishes the world of interstate conflict from that of "complex interdependence," the term crafted by Nye and by his friend and mine, Robert Keohane. It shows the tensions between the need to fight terrorism, to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to support democracy against tyrannies, and the need to preserve the norms of international law and international legitimacy. It shows both the originality and the limits of globalization and of the information revolution. Above all, it is a wise book—wise because of Nye's ability to see the many sides of an issue and the many arguments an event can provoke; wise because of his almost distinctive distrust of excesses (in the case of U.S. foreign policy, both those of "declinism," which prospered—and he warned against—a dozen years ago, and those of unilateralism, the *hubris* of today, which his latest books eloquently denounce. It is also wise because of the impeccable mix of humanity, common sense, prudence, and integrity that characterizes a personality so richly successful in writing, in teaching, in reflecting on the variety of human experiences, and in acting as an imaginative, far-sighted, and dynamic academic entrepreneur. I admire his balance and his gifts, and I like him as a fine and good man whose friendship I deeply appreciate.

Stanley Hoffmann
Buttenwieser University Professor
Harvard University

Preface

This text grows out of the course on international conflicts in the modern world that I taught as part of the Harvard core curriculum for more than a decade. It is also informed by five years of experience as a policy-maker at the assistant secretary level in three large bureaucracies in Washington. Its aim is to introduce students to the complexities of international politics by giving them a good grounding in the traditional realist theory before turning to liberal and constructivist approaches that became more prominent after the Cold War. I try to present difficult concepts in clear language with historical examples so students will gain a practical understanding of the basic vocabulary of international politics.

Twice in the first half of the twentieth century the great powers engaged in devastating world wars that cost nearly 50 million lives. The second half of the century was wracked by a cold war, regional wars, and the threat of nuclear weapons. Why did those conflicts happen? Could they happen again in the twenty-first century? Or will rising economic and ecological interdependence, the growth of transnational and international institutions, and the spread of democratic values bring about a new world order? How will globalization and the information revolution influence international politics in this new century? No good teacher can honestly answer such questions with certainty, but we can provide our students with conceptual tools that will help them shape their own answers as the future unfolds. That is the purpose of this book.

This is not a complete textbook with all the concepts or history a student will need. Instead, it is an example of how to think about the complex and confusing domain of international politics. It should be read not for a complete factual account, but for the way it approaches the interplay of theory and history. Neither theory nor history alone is sufficient. Those historians who believe that understanding comes from simply recounting the facts fail to make explicit the hidden principles by which they select some facts rather than others. Equally mistaken are the political scientists who become so isolated and entangled in a maze of abstract theory that they mistake their mental constructs for reality. It is only by going back and forth between history and theory that we can avoid such mistakes. This text is an example of such a dialogue between theory and history. When combined with the suggested reading and the study questions, it can provide the central thread for an introductory course or for individual readers to teach themselves the equivalent of such a course. Alternatively, it can be used in a supplementary text in a course as an example of one approach to the subject. Issues of ethics are discussed throughout the text, but particularly in Chapters 1, 5, and 6.

The fifth edition of this book, the second as part of the "Longman Classics in Political Science" series, has been updated with new materials on constructivist theory and soft power (Chapters 1, 3, and elsewhere); Middle East conflicts (Chapters 6 and 9); the impact of globalization (Chapters 7 and 8); transnational threats to global security, such as terrorism (Chapters 8 and 9); power and interdependence in international political economy (Chapters 7 and 8); and intervention and American power (Chapters 6 and 9). The text has been revised and updated throughout to reflect more recent developments on the international scene such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the rise of China as a world power, and the growing role of NGOs, transnational corporations, terrorist networks, and other nonstate actors in international affairs. In addition, each chapter's suggested readings have been updated with new editions and more current texts for reference. Finally, a new glossary has been added.

Over the years I sometimes taught this course with junior colleagues Stephan Haggard, Yuen Khong, Michael Mandelbaum, and M. J. Peterson. I have learned from all of them, and, I am sure, unconsciously stolen a number of their ideas. The same is true of Stanley Hoffmann, who has taught me since graduate days and has been a constant source of inspiration. I am grateful to him and to Robert Keohane who has provided so many ideas as well as friendship. David Dressler, Charles Maier, and Ernest May helped by commenting on the manuscript. Others who reviewed the manuscript and offered constructive comments include June Teufel Dreyer, University of Miami; Kathie Stromile Golden, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs; J. Douglas Nelson of Anderson University; George Shambaugh of Georgetown University; Edward S. Minalkanin of Southwest Texas State University; Michael Barnett of University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kelechi Kalu of University of North Colorado; Howard Lehman of University of Utah; Dan Reiter, Emory University; Peter D. Feaver, Duke University; Richard A. Melanson, Brown University, and John Williams of East Carolina University. I want also to thank my head course assistants: Vin Auger, Peter Feaver, Meryl Kessler, Sean Lynn-Jones, Pam Metz, John Owen, Gideon Rose, and Gordon Silverstein. Veronica McClure was a wonderful colleague in transcribing and correcting my prose. Richard Wood, Dan Philpott, Zachary Karabell, Carl Nagin, Neal Rosendorf, and Alex Scacco helped on earlier editions. Matt Kohut provided invaluable assistance, prodigious energy, and exceptional good judgment in preparing this edition. I am fortunate to have had their help. Over the years I have also learned greatly from my students. To all, I am deeply grateful.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Is There an Enduring Logic of Conflict in World Politics?

Marble relief commemorating Athenians who died in the Peloponnesian War

The world is shrinking. The *Mayflower* took three months to cross the Atlantic. In 1924, Charles Lindbergh's flight took 24 hours. Fifty years later, the Concorde did it in three hours. Ballistic missiles can do it in 30 minutes. At the beginning of the new century, a transatlantic flight costs one-third of what it did in 1950, and a call from New York to London costs only a small percent of what it did at

midcentury. Global Internet communications are nearly instantaneous and transmission costs are negligible. An environmentalist in Asia or a human rights activist in Africa today has a power of communication once enjoyed only by large organizations like governments or transnational corporations. On a more somber note, nuclear weapons have added a new dimension to war that one writer calls "double death," meaning that not only could individuals die, but under some circumstances the whole human species could be threatened. And as the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington illustrated, technology is putting into the hands of nonstate actors destructive powers that once were reserved solely to governments. As the effects of distance shrink, conditions in remote poor countries like Afghanistan suddenly become highly relevant to America and Europe.

Yet, some other things about international politics have remained the same over the ages. Thucydides's account of Sparta and Athens fighting the Peloponnesian War 2500 years ago reveals eerie resemblances to the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1947. The world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a strange cocktail of continuity and change. Some aspects of international politics have not changed since Thucydides. There is a certain logic of hostility, a dilemma about security that goes with interstate politics. Alliances, balances of power, and choices in policy between war and compromise have remained similar over the millennia.

On the other hand, Thucydides never had to worry about nuclear weapons or the ozone layer or global warming. The task for international relations students is to build on the past but not be trapped by it, to understand the continuities as well as the changes. We must learn the traditional theories and then adapt them to current circumstances. The early chapters of this book will provide you with a historical and theoretical context in which to place the phenomena of the information revolution, globalization, interdependence, and transnational actors that are discussed in the later chapters.

International politics would be transformed if separate states were abolished, but world government is not around the corner. And while nonstate actors such as transnational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, and terrorist groups present new challenges to governments, they do not replace states. The peoples who live in the nearly 200 states on this globe want their independence, separate cultures, and different languages. In fact, rather than vanishing, nationalism and the demand for separate states have increased. Rather than fewer states, this new century will probably see more. World government would not automatically solve the problem of war. Most wars today are civil or ethnic wars. Between the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the end of the twentieth century, 111 armed conflicts occurred in 74 locations around the world. Seven were interstate wars and nine were intrastate wars with foreign intervention.[1] In fact, the bloodiest wars of the nineteenth century were not among the quarreling states of Europe but the Taiping rebellion in China and the American Civil War. We will continue to live in a world of separate states for quite some time, and it is important to understand what that means for our prospects.

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL POLITICS?

The world has not always been divided into a system of separate states. Over the centuries there have been three basic forms of world politics. In a *world imperial system*, one government controls most of the world with which it has contact. The greatest example in the Western world was the Roman Empire. Spain in the sixteenth century and France in the late seventeenth century tried to gain similar supremacy, but they failed. In the nineteenth century, the British Empire spanned the globe, but even the British had to share the world with other strong states. Ancient world empires—the Sumerian, the Persian, the Chinese—were actually regional empires. They thought they ruled the world, but they were protected from conflict with other empires by lack of communication. Their fights with barbarians on the peripheries of the empire were not the same as wars among roughly equal states.

A second basic form of international politics is a *feudal system*, in which human loyalties and political obligations are not fixed primarily by territorial boundaries. Feudalism was common in Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. An individual had obligations to a local lord, but might also owe duties to some distant noble or bishop as well as to the pope in Rome. Political obligations were determined to a large extent by what happened to one's superiors. If a ruler married, an area and its people might find their obligations rearranged as part of a wedding dowry. Townspeople born French might suddenly find themselves made Flemish or even English. Cities and leagues of cities sometimes had a special semi-independent status. The crazy quilt of wars that accompanied the feudal situation were not what we think of as modern territorial wars. They could occur within as well as across territories and were related to these crosscutting, nonterritorial loyalties and conflicts.

A third form of world politics is an *anarchic system of states*, composed of states that are relatively cohesive but with no higher government above them. Examples include the city-states of ancient Greece or Machiavelli's fifteenth-century Italy. Another example of an anarchic state system is the dynastic territorial state whose coherence comes from control by a ruling family. Examples can be found in India or China in the fifth century B.C. Large territorial dynasties reemerged in Europe about 1500, and other forms of international polities such as city-states or loose leagues of territories began to vanish. In 1648, the Peace of Westphalia ended Europe's Thirty Years' War, sometimes called the last of the great wars of religion and the first of the wars of modern states. In retrospect, that treaty enshrined the sovereign territorial state as the dominant form of international organization.

Thus today when we speak of international politics, we usually mean this territorial state system, and we define *international politics* as politics in the absence of a common sovereign, politics among entities with no ruler above them. International politics is often called anarchic. As monarchy means one ruler, *anarchy*—"an-archy"—means the absence of any ruler. International politics is a self-help system. Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century English philosopher, called such anarchic systems a "state of nature." For some, the words *state of nature* may conjure

up images of a herd of cows grazing peacefully on a farm, but that is not what Hobbes meant. Think of a Texas town without a sheriff in the days of the Old West, or Lebanon after its government broke down in the 1970s, or Somalia in the 1990s. Hobbes's state of nature is not benign; it is a war of all against all because there is no higher ruler to enforce order. As Hobbes famously declared, life in such a world tends to be nasty, brutish, and short.

The result is that there are legal, political, and social differences between domestic and international politics. Domestic law is generally obeyed and if not, the police and courts enforce sanctions against lawbreakers. International law, on the other hand, rests on competing legal systems, and there is no common enforcement. There is no international police to enforce the law.

Force plays a different role in domestic and international politics. In a well-ordered domestic political system, the government has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In international politics, no one has a monopoly on the use of force. Since international politics is the realm of self-help, and some states are stronger than others, there is always a danger that they may resort to force. When force cannot be ruled out, the result is mistrust and suspicion.

Domestic and international politics also differ in their underlying sense of community. In a well-ordered domestic society, there is a widespread sense of community that gives rise to common loyalties, standards of justice, and views of what is legitimate authority. In international politics, divided peoples do not share the same loyalties. Any sense of global community is weak. People often disagree about what seems just and legitimate. The result is a great gap between two basic political values: order and justice. In such a world, most people place national before international justice. Law and ethics play a role in international politics, but in the absence of a sense of community, they are not as binding as they are in domestic politics.

Of the three basic systems—*world imperial*, *feudal*, and *anarchic system of states*—the last is most relevant to international politics in the contemporary world, though, as we shall see in the last chapters, some people speculate that the twenty-first century may see the gradual evolution of a new feudalism, or less plausibly, an American world empire.

Two Views of Anarchic Politics

International politics is anarchic in the sense that there is no higher government, but even in political philosophy there were two different views of how harsh a state of nature need be. Hobbes, who wrote in a seventeenth-century England wracked by civil war, emphasized insecurity, force, and survival. He summarized it as a state of war. A half-century later, John Locke, writing in a more stable England, argued that although a state of nature lacked a common sovereign, people could develop ties and make contracts, and therefore anarchy was less threatening. Those two views of a state of nature are the philosophical precursors of two current views of international politics, one more pessimistic and one more optimistic: the *realist* and *liberal* approaches to international politics.

Realism has been the dominant tradition in thinking about international politics. For the realist, the central problem of international politics is war and the use of force, and the central actors are states. Among modern Americans, realism is exemplified by the writings and policies of President Richard Nixon and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger. The realist starts from the assumption of the anarchic system of states. Kissinger and Nixon, for example, sought to maximize the power of the United States and to minimize the ability of other states to jeopardize U.S. security. According to the realist, the beginning and the end of international politics is the individual state in interaction with other states.

The other tradition is called *liberalism*, and it can be traced back in Western political philosophy to Baron de Montesquieu and Immanuel Kant in eighteenth-century France and Germany, respectively, and such nineteenth-century British philosophers as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. A modern American example can be found in the writings and policies of political scientist and President, Woodrow Wilson.

Liberals see a global society that functions alongside the states and sets part of the context for states. Trade crosses borders, people have contacts with each other (such as students studying in foreign countries), and international institutions such as the United Nations create a context in which the realist view of pure anarchy is insufficient. Liberals complain that realists portray states as hard billiard balls careening off one another in the attempt to balance power, but that is not enough because people do have contacts across borders and because there is an international society. Realists, claim liberals, overstate the difference between domestic and international politics. Because the realist picture of anarchy as a Hobbesian "state of war" focuses only on extreme situations, in the liberals' view it misses the growth of economic interdependence and the evolution of a transnational global society.

Realists respond by quoting Hobbes: "Just as stormy weather does not mean perpetual rain, so a state of war does not mean constant war."[2] Just as Londoners carry umbrellas on sunny April days, the prospect of war in an anarchic system makes states keep armies even in times of peace. Realists point to previous liberal predictions that went awry. For example, in 1910 the president of Stanford University said future war was impossible because the nations could not afford it. Books proclaimed war to be obsolete; civilization had gone beyond war. Economic interdependence, ties between labor unions and intellectuals, and the flow of capital all made war impossible. Of course, these predictions failed catastrophically in 1914, and the realists were vindicated.

Neither history nor the argument stopped in 1914. The 1970s saw a resurgence of liberal claims that rising economic and social interdependence was changing the nature of international politics. In the 1980s, Richard Rosecrance, a California professor, wrote that states can increase their power in two ways, either aggressively by territorial conquest or peacefully through trade. He used the experience of Japan as an example: In the 1930s, Japan tried territorial conquest and suffered the disaster of World War II. But since then, Japan has used trade and investment to become the second largest economy in the world and a significant power in East Asia.