

A WORLD



IN DISARRAY

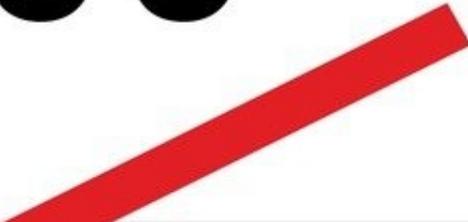


*American Foreign Policy
and the Crisis of the Old Order*

RICHARD



HAASS



ALSO BY RICHARD HAASS

Foreign Policy Begins at Home

War of Necessity, War of Choice

The Opportunity

The Bureaucratic Entrepreneur

The Reluctant Sheriff

Intervention

Conflicts Unending

Beyond the INF Treaty

Congressional Power

EDITED VOLUMES

Honey and Vinegar

Transatlantic Tensions

Economic Sanctions and American Diplomacy

Superpower Arms Control

A World in Disarray

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND
THE CRISIS OF THE OLD ORDER

RICHARD HAASS

PENGUIN PRESS | NEW YORK | 2017



PENGUIN PRESS

An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC

375 Hudson Street

New York, New York 10014

penguin.com

Copyright © 2017 by Richard Haass

Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader.

ISBN 9780399562365 (hardcover)

ISBN 9780399562372 (e-book)

While the author has made every effort to provide accurate Internet addresses and other contact information at the time of publication, neither the publisher nor the author assumes any responsibility for errors or for changes that occur after publication. Further, the publisher does not have any control over and does not assume any responsibility for author or third-party Web sites or their content.

Version_1

*To my teachers:
Robert Tufts, Tom Frank, Albert Hourani, Alastair Buchan, and Michael Howard*

Contents

[Also by Richard Haas](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Foreword](#)

[Introduction](#)

PART I

[1. From War Through World War](#)

[2. Cold War](#)

[3. The Other Order](#)

PART II

[4. The Post–Cold War World](#)

[5. A Global Gap](#)

[6. Regional Realities](#)

[7. Pieces of Process](#)

PART III

[8. What Is to Be Done?](#)

[9. Thwarting Thucydides](#)

[10. World Order 2.0](#)

- [11. Regional Responses](#)
- [12. A Country in Disarray](#)

[*Acknowledgments*](#)

[*Notes*](#)

[*Index*](#)

Foreword

A World in Disarray concludes with the chapter “A Country in Disarray.” The 2016 presidential campaign, which ended after this book was completed, underscored this judgment by highlighting multiple divisions within American society that are both long-standing and deep.

One result of the election is greater uncertainty over the future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy. As the subtitle of this book suggests, support for the old order has crumbled, the result of heightened economic anxiety at home (often associated with globalization, free trade, and immigration) and growing doubts about the costs and benefits associated with what the United States has been doing abroad, including fighting several open-ended wars in the Middle East and supporting allies in Europe and Asia. It is significant that Donald Trump, the winning candidate, called for putting America First.

The rest of the world has taken note. Assumptions about the willingness of the United States to continue doing what it has been doing in the world are being questioned as never before by friends, foes, and everyone in between.

All this, along with an inbox best described as daunting in the quantity and quality of the challenges filling it, is what awaits the forty-fifth president, who, like his predecessors, will enjoy great latitude in matters of national security. It is of course impossible to know what sort of foreign policy will emerge from the United States and how other countries and entities will react. Still, it is difficult not to take seriously the possibility that one historical era is ending and another beginning.

Introduction

On June 23, 2016, a narrow majority of those British citizens who went to the polls voted in favor of a referendum that called for an end to their country's membership in the European Union. Those voting for "Brexit" may have wanted to voice their frustration with low levels of economic growth, anger over immigration, fears of unemployment, or unhappiness with a portion of their taxes going to an institution based in Brussels that often seemed remote in order to support countries that often seemed to be profligate. Some voters may simply have wanted to register a protest against the politicians ruling the country. But whatever the motives, the results were profound, affecting not just the future of the United Kingdom and Europe but that of the United States and the entire world as well.

If Brexit actually happens, depending on its terms it could lead to the breakup of the United Kingdom and a partial unraveling of the EU. If this was to occur, the historic project of European integration born in the wake of the Second World War, an accomplishment that has brought unprecedented prosperity and stability to a continent that had all too often known war, would be placed at risk. Also at risk would be the so-called special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom, often America's closest and most important partner and ally in the world.

But even if Brexit or the worst of it is somehow avoided, that it garnered the support it did in a country such as the United Kingdom tells us that there are fewer givens in the world than many of us—indeed, most of us—assumed. Populism and nationalism are on the rise. What we are witnessing is a widespread rejection of globalization and international involvement and, as a result, a questioning of long-standing postures and policies, from openness to trade and immigrants to a willingness to maintain alliances and overseas commitments. This questioning is by no means limited to Great Britain; there are signs of it throughout Europe, in the United States, and nearly everywhere else.

All this is a far cry from the optimism and confidence that were just as widespread a quarter of a century before. One source of this mood was the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 (11/9 of all days), an event that heralded the peaceful and successful demise of the Cold War, the unprecedented struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union that had defined much of international relations for the four decades following the end of the Second World War.

This was followed less than a year later by a remarkable coming together of the world to turn back Saddam Hussein's effort to conquer Kuwait, something that would have had enormous consequences if it had been allowed to stand. The administration of George Herbert Walker Bush, the forty-first president of the United States, saw what Iraq had done and its likely consequences not just in immediate and local terms

but also historically, as the opening event of the post–Cold War era. The president and those around him (including me, then a special assistant to the president and the principal adviser for the Middle East, Persian Gulf, and South Asia on the National Security Council staff) saw developments as constituting a precedent that could well give the new geopolitical era its character. Depending on what was done in response to Saddam’s aggression and act of conquest, the post–Cold War world could be one of international order or disorder on a large scale.

It was thus for reasons both local and global, direct and indirect, that the United States did what it did and in the way it did it. Toward that end, the United States worked closely with the other fourteen members of the United Nations Security Council to repudiate Iraq’s aggression and to establish and subsequently enforce a sanctions regime designed to ensure that Iraq would not benefit from its conquest and would pay an enormous price for it. A large coalition of dozens of countries contributing in different ways was built to make sure Iraqi aggression did not threaten Saudi Arabia and, when diplomacy backed by sanctions failed to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait, to force Iraq out of that country and to restore Kuwait’s independence and government.¹

The policy succeeded for the most part, and both Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, spoke of their hope that the collective effort to reverse Iraqi aggression and restore Kuwaiti sovereignty would set a precedent for what would follow. This was something the president highlighted in his September 1990 address to a joint session of Congress:

The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times . . . a new world order can emerge: a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavor. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we’ve known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. This is the vision that I shared with Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev in Helsinki. He and other leaders from Europe, the Gulf, and around the world understand that how we manage this crisis today could shape the future for generations to come.²

Now, some twenty-five years later, it is clear that no benign new world order materialized. What exists in many parts of the world as well as in various venues of international relations resembles more a new world *disorder*. If there were a publicly traded stock called “World Order Incorporated,” it would not have crashed, but it would have suffered a correction, losing at least 10 percent of its value. The world might even be entering bear market territory, something normally associated with a fall

of 20 percent. What is worse, no rally is in sight; to the contrary, the trend is one of declining order.

This is not to deny the existence of important examples of stability and progress in the world, including an absence of great-power conflict, a degree of international cooperation managing some of the challenges associated with globalization, and considerable coordination among governments and institutions in regard to many aspects of international economic policy. There is as well the fact that more people than ever are leading longer and healthier lives, that hundreds of millions of men, women, and children have been lifted out of extreme poverty, and that more people enjoy what can be termed a middle-class life than at any other time in history. Indeed, there is a body of writing that argues just this: we are better off than the apostles of doom and gloom would have you believe. Or to paraphrase that old saw about Wagner's music being better than it sounds, the world is better than it looks.³

As attractive as this optimistic worldview might be, it doesn't hold up. To the contrary, it is difficult to argue that what took place with the end of the Cold War and the defeat of Iraq constituted a historic turning point for the better. Saddam Hussein's thwarted attempt to use military force to accomplish his foreign policy goals turned out to be anything but an exception. With the advantage of a quarter century of hindsight, his illegitimate challenge to the status quo looks more like a harbinger of what was to come than the arrival of a new and more stable world. Indeed, it would be naïve and even dangerous to ignore worrisome developments and trends in the world, including increased rivalry among several of this era's major powers, the growing gap between global challenges and responses, the reality of and the potential for conflict in several regions, and political dysfunction and changes going on within many countries, including the United States, that are likely to make it more difficult to design and implement a foreign policy that can help the world contend with all the threats to order.

As for the title of this book, I want to say before going any further that the word "disarray" was chosen advisedly. I scoured the dictionary and thesaurus alike and could not find another word or term that better captured what exists. I say this to highlight that "anarchy" and "chaos" were rejected. Neither applies to the world, although, as will be discussed, what is taking place in the Middle East is too close for comfort. All that said, to speak of there being a new world order is to indulge in fantasy. "Disarray" captures both where we are and where we are heading in the world better than any other word.

The questions that flow from this assessment are many and important. Why and how did this happen? How did the world get from that moment of optimism to where it is today? Was this journey inevitable or might things have turned out differently? And where are we precisely? What about today's world should be thought of as simply the latest chapter in the long march of history and what constitutes something fundamentally different? To be sure, many things look bad, but how bad in fact are they? Might they get worse? And of course there is the question of what, if anything, can and should be done about them.

The purpose of *A World in Disarray* is to address these and related questions. The book, as often seems to be the case in my experience, was not planned. It began with a phone call in 2014 from Richard Dearlove, the former head of MI6 (the UK external

intelligence service, akin to the CIA) and then the master of Pembroke College at the University of Cambridge. He explained to me that the university had a lecture series and asked whether I might be interested in being the “scholar-practitioner” during the coming academic year. Any resistance on my part evaporated once I learned the title: the Humanitas Visiting Professor of Statecraft and Diplomacy. It was too good a name and opportunity to pass up.

I prepared and delivered three lectures in April 2015; each went on for about an hour and was followed by some thirty minutes of questions and answers. I also participated in a symposium in which three academics and numerous others were given the opportunity to criticize what I had to say, after which I was given the opportunity to criticize the criticisms. As is often the case, the discipline of writing and speaking helped me to develop ideas I had been working with and on for some time. The feedback of others was icing on the cake—or what I hope is cake.

This book is substantially different from those lectures. In part this reflects the different formats: what works as a talk tends not to work if simply transcribed on paper. But the difference between what I had to say in Cambridge and what I am putting forth in these pages also reflects the evolution in my own thinking. There was more to the subject—much more, actually—than I initially realized.

The lectures and subsequent writing did not take place in a vacuum, much less against a backdrop of relative peace and prosperity. To the contrary, 2015 and the first half of 2016 were a time of considerable turbulence and difficulty in the world. The post–World War I order was unraveling in much of the Middle East. Iran’s nuclear ambitions and the growing reach of the Islamic State had put much of the region on edge. Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya all shared many of the characteristics of failing or failed states. Syria in particular emerged as an example of what could go wrong: hundreds of thousands of Syrians had lost their lives and more than half the population had become internally displaced or refugees, in the process threatening to overwhelm not just Syria’s neighbors but Europe as well. In part as a result, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world swelled to more than sixty million. Russia had seized Crimea for itself and was actively destabilizing eastern Ukraine; it also demonstrated for the first time in decades a willingness and an ability to act boldly in the Middle East. Greece and its various creditors were having difficulty arriving at a formula by which new loans could be extended; the risk was a crisis that would begin but not necessarily be contained within Greece and the Eurozone. The prospect of Brexit raised existential questions for the future of both the United Kingdom and Europe. Seventy years after the end of the war in the Pacific, China was expanding its claims in the South China Sea amid growing nationalism and tensions in a region characterized by numerous territorial disputes and much historical bitterness. Internally, Chinese authorities, fearing the political fallout of a slowing economy, were cracking down politically and intervening in currency and stock markets alike.

Slower economic growth was by no means limited to China; to the contrary, it had become a worldwide reality, both a cause and a result of lower energy and commodity prices. Central bankers could only do so much in the absence of sound fiscal policy and serious structural reform. Many of the most important countries in Latin America, including Argentina, Mexico, and in particular Brazil, were mired in domestic political

problems that were undermining confidence in their respective governments and, as a result, their economic performance. Three African countries were contending with an outbreak of the Ebola virus; countries everywhere were bracing for homegrown signs of the disease. Months later yet another disease—the Zika virus—broke onto the world scene. Climate change was outpacing global efforts to contend with it despite the efforts of Pope Francis and others to galvanize more of an international response. It was far from certain that the December 2015 climate conference in Paris, widely described as a success, would lead to significant changes for the better in either the behavior of individual countries or the scale of the problem. Cyberspace was a new frontier of growing capabilities and threats but few rules, with North Korea’s hacking of Sony in apparent retaliation for a film that depicted the assassination of its young leader but one example. More traditional terrorism was becoming commonplace not just in the Middle East but far beyond, including Paris, Nice, Brussels, and San Bernardino, California.

Making matters worse were developments at the national level. An increasing number of governments were having difficulty dealing with the domestic political consequences of slowing economic growth, reduced levels of employment (or higher levels of unemployment), widespread concerns over how retirement and health care were to be funded, and increased inequality. Adding to the difficulty in some instances were dysfunctional politics (related to parties, persons, or both) that made it more difficult than ever to foster compromise around needed policies. Populism and extremism gained ground in mature democracies and authoritarianism in other countries. The result was the opposite of a virtuous cycle: challenges stemming from globalization contributed to many of these domestic developments, while these same developments made it more difficult for governments to deal effectively with global challenges.

All this is what is visible. But below the surface are structural changes that are also certain to have significant effects. States, long the dominant building blocks of international relations, are losing some—and in select cases much—of their sway to other entities. Power is more distributed in more hands than at any time in history. The same holds for technology. Decision making has come to be more decentralized. Globalization, with its vast, fast flows of just about anything and everything real and imaginable across borders, is a reality that governments often cannot monitor, much less manage. The gap between the challenges generated by globalization and the ability of a world to cope with them appears to be widening in a number of critical domains. For its part, the United States remains the most powerful entity in the world, but its share of global power is shrinking, as is its ability to translate the considerable power it does have into influence, trends that reflect internal political, social, demographic, cultural, and economic developments within the United States as well as shifts in the outside world. The result is a world in which centrifugal forces are gaining the upper hand.

I am not alone in such thinking. It is instructive that the most senior American military officer, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, started off his foreword to the country’s new military strategy as follows: “Today’s global security environment is the most unpredictable I have seen in 40 years of service. . . . [G]lobal disorder has significantly increased while some of our comparative military advantage has begun to

erode.”⁴ Half a year later, in early 2016, the U.S. director of national intelligence stated, “Emerging trends suggest that geopolitical competition among the major powers is increasing in ways that challenge international norms and institutions.”⁵ Just days earlier, Henry Kissinger had opined that “the momentum of global upheaval has outstripped the capacities of statesmanship.”⁶ Such pessimism grew exponentially in the aftermath of the British vote to leave the EU. One British columnist put it this way: “Make no mistake about it. Britain’s vote to leave the EU is the most damaging blow ever inflicted on the liberal democratic international order created under U.S. auspices after 1945. Pandora’s box is well and truly open.”⁷

Those looking for a partisan agenda in these pages will come away disappointed. I take issue with many of the policies of recent Democratic and Republican presidents alike. Quite simply, my motivation for writing this book grows out of a judgment that the twenty-first century will prove extremely difficult to manage, representing as it does a departure from the almost four centuries of history—what is normally thought of as the modern era—that came before it. I am deeply concerned about the potential consequences. Mark Twain said that history may not repeat itself but it rhymes. On occasion this is true. But my larger point is that the future is less likely to rhyme with the past (much less suggest harmony) than it is to strike a note that is qualitatively different and more often than not discordant.

This book is divided into three parts. The first traces the history of international relations from the rise of the modern state system in the mid-seventeenth century through the two world wars of the twentieth century and on to the end of the Cold War. The premise is that there was considerable continuity in how the world worked during that stretch (think of it as World Order 1.0) even though the history itself varied dramatically, both for good and very much for ill.

The second part looks back at the last quarter century. The argument here is that the past twenty-five years since the end of the Cold War constitute a break with the past and that something very different is afoot in the world. The analysis extends to the principal regions of the globe as well as to the world as a whole. It attempts to depict not just where we are—the state of the world—but also how we got there and what it portends.

The third and final section of the book is more prescriptive. It makes the case that it is important to do everything possible to constrain great-power competition so it does not come to resemble history’s norm. At the same time, the world needs an updated operating system—call it World Order 2.0—that takes into account new forces, challenges, and actors. U.S. foreign policy, along with the foreign policies of many others, will need to adjust. One critical element of this adjustment will be adopting a new approach to sovereignty, one that embraces the obligations of governments as well as their rights. Another component will require implementing a new approach to multilateralism, one more flexible in terms of structure and more open as regards participation than the relatively permanent and state-dominated arrangements we have grown used to. Yet a third new element of foreign policy will require accepting a more conditional approach to relationships with other countries, one less fixed than is normally the case. A fourth and final aspect of what the United States needs to do to succeed in the world is to define national security in broader

terms than is traditional, taking into account to a much greater degree (and doing something about) what are normally thought of as domestic challenges and problems. I realize that such thinking represents a challenge to a good deal of what passes for current orthodoxy, but these are no ordinary times. It will not be business as usual in a world in disarray; as a result, it cannot be foreign policy as usual.

PART I

1. From War Through World War

It is tempting to begin this book with answers to the questions of what is wrong with the world, why, and what to do about it, if for no other reason than there is no shortage of material to consider. But it is better, and in fact necessary, to take a step back, first, to understand how we arrived where we are and, second, to discern what about this world is genuinely new and different.

The best place to begin is with the concept of world order. For many reasons, the concept, from its modern inception nearly four centuries ago to the present, is central to this book. “Order” is one of those terms that is used a great deal, but like a lot of popular terms, it is used differently by different people and can obscure as much as illuminate. It is best used and understood in a neutral, descriptive way, as a reflection of the nature of international relations at any moment. It is a measure of the world’s condition. It includes and reflects arrangements that promote peace and prosperity and freedom as well as developments that do not. In short, “order” is not the same as “orderly”; to the contrary, the term “order” implicitly also reflects the degree of disorder that inevitably exists. One can have world orders that are anything but stable or desirable.

The term is experiencing something of a revival. *World Order* is, among other things, the title of a recent book by Henry Kissinger.¹ Kissinger, the preeminent foreign policy practitioner of the second half of the twentieth century, is also one of the most influential writers not just on this subject but on many aspects of diplomatic history and international relations. And for these and related reasons I will come back to him more than once in the course of this book. I want to begin, though, with another academic, an Australian, Hedley Bull.

I came to know Hedley when I was a graduate student at Oxford in the mid-1970s. We became friends, and his thinking and writing came to have a major influence on me. Bull wrote in 1977 what I find to be the most important contemporary book in the field of international relations, *The Anarchical Society*. Its subtitle, appropriately enough, is *A Study of Order in World Politics*.²

Bull writes about international *systems* and international *society*. It is a distinction with a difference. An international system is simply what exists at the international level absent any policy decisions, in that countries and other entities along with various forces interact with and affect one another. There is little or nothing in the way of choice or regulation or principles or rules. An international society, by contrast, is something both different from and very much more than a system. What distinguishes a system from a society is that the latter reflects a degree of buy-in on the part of participants, including an acceptance on their part of limits on either what is sought or discouraged, how it is to be sought or discouraged, or both. It is rules-based. These

rules (or limits) are accepted by the members of the society for the simple reason that they determine it is their best (or least bad) course of action given the choices that are realistically available. Such rules as there are can be enshrined in formal legal agreements or honored tacitly and informally.

In the international sphere, the notion of “society” as described by Bull has specific meaning. First, the principal “citizens” of this society are states, a word used interchangeably here and elsewhere in these and other pages with both “nation-states” and “countries.” Second, a founding principle of this society is that states and the governments and leaders who oversee them are essentially free to act as they wish within their own borders. How those individuals come to occupy positions of authority, be it by birth, revolution, elections, or some other way, matters not. Third, the members of this international society respect and accept not just this freedom of action on the part of others (in exchange for others in turn accepting that they can act as they wish within their own borders) but also the existence of other members of this society. States therefore seek to avoid war among themselves. It is not far off to describe this approach to international relations as being something of a “live and let live” cross-border understanding.

But history is always more than just the narrative of consensus; it is also at least as much a narrative of disagreement and friction. The mix of success and failure, of order and disorder, is central to the work of Bull. As suggested by the title of his book, history at any moment or in any era is the result of the interaction between forces of society and anarchy, of order and disorder. It is the balance between the two, between society and anarchy, that determines the dominant character of any era.

This is a useful framing concept for approaching and understanding the world. At any moment, it provides a snapshot of where things are. And if enough snapshots are saved and strung together from days or months or years before, it provides a moving picture of trends.

Before going any further, it is essential to make clear just what is required for there to be order. Here I want to return to Henry Kissinger and to an early book of his, *A World Restored*.³ The book was published some sixty years ago and based upon Kissinger’s doctoral dissertation, something that should probably give every graduate student more than a little pause. Replete with vivid character portraits, it is a wonderfully written book, one that darts back and forth between specific history and larger lessons. Kissinger writes about the building of a new international order, about a world that was in large part resurrected in the aftermath of revolution and the Napoleonic Wars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is the history of an international, that is, European order that was recognized at the Congress of Vienna—a gathering in 1814 and 1815 where, among others, the foreign ministers of Great Britain, France, Prussia, Russia, and Austria met to shape Europe’s future—and that survived for much of the nineteenth century.

The Congress of Vienna is noteworthy as an early example of an effort to promote peace and stability. The final product included any number of territorial arrangements, land swaps, recognitions of rightful rulers, and more. It is also noteworthy for what it did not do. While it did help bolster Europe’s peace for several decades, it ultimately came undone amid the emergence of revolutionary movements in or near several of the participants, a changing balance of power that reflected both Prussia’s (and later

Germany's) rise and the fading and ultimate disappearance of multiple empires. This is worth highlighting as it is a reminder of how orders can come to an end and in so doing become disorders.

It is useful to deconstruct the concept of order, to break it down into its most essential elements. One critical element of order is the concept of "legitimacy," defined by Kissinger to mean "international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy."⁴ Used in this fashion, legitimacy is a big idea, as it not just defines the rules of international relations—what is to be sought and how, as well as how these rules are to be set and modified—but also reflects the extent of their acceptance by actors with real power.

But just as essential to this notion of order, just as essential as this concept of legitimacy, was something much less intellectual. Here again I quote: "No order is safe without physical safeguards against aggression."⁵ Thus Kissinger, writing sixty years ago about a very different world, made clear that order depended both on there being rules and arrangements to govern international relations and on a balance of power.

Bull and Kissinger have a good deal in common. Both were mostly concerned with order between states, especially the major powers of a particular era. Order reflects the degree to which those with substantial power accept existing arrangements or rules for conducting international relations, as well as the diplomatic mechanisms for setting and modifying those rules. It also reflects the ability of those same powers to meet the challenges of others who do not share their perspective. Disorder, as explained by both Bull and Kissinger, reflects the ability of those who are dissatisfied with existing arrangements to change them, including through the use of violence. This emphasis is hardly surprising. After all, great-power rivalry, great-power competition, and great-power conflict constitute much of what we think of as history. This was certainly the case for the twentieth century, which was defined by two world wars and a third that mercifully remained largely cold.

Order can be understood in this way, reflecting efforts by states to discourage the use of military force to achieve foreign policy aims. Tied to this view is that order is a respect for sovereignty, defined as allowing fellow states (and the governments and leaders in charge of them) to do much as they please within their borders. This approximates what is best understood as the classical view of order. The premise of this approach is that the principal objective of the foreign policy of any government ought to be influencing the foreign policy of other governments rather than the nature of the society over which they preside. As will be discussed later, this definition of order is not universally shared; to the contrary, it is too much for those who do not accept existing borders and not enough for those who worry most about what takes place within borders wherever they may be drawn.

The classical notion of order described above is normally attributed to the Treaty of Westphalia, the pact signed in 1648 that ended the Thirty Years War, a part-religious, part-political struggle within and across borders that raged across much of Europe for three decades. The treaty was something of a breakthrough, in that disorder and conflict born of frequent interference inside the borders of one's neighbors had been the norm. The Westphalian order is based on a balance of power involving independent states that do not interfere in one another's "internal business."

The historian Peter Wilson, who wrote one of the finest books on the Thirty Years War, put it this way: “Westphalia’s significance lies not in the number of conflicts it tried to resolve, but in the methods and ideals it applied . . . sovereign states interacting (formally) as equals within a common secularized legal framework regardless of size, power or internal configuration.”⁶

All this constituted a significant change in how the world operated. Secular sovereign states had become preeminent; empires founded on religious identity no longer dominated. Size or power didn’t necessarily matter the most, as states (all being sovereign entities) had equal rights in principle if not in practice. This approach to order may seem terribly narrow through the lens of the second decade of the twenty-first century, and in many ways it is. But in its time, in its day, in the first half of the seventeenth century, this was an enormous breakthrough. Until then, there was little order in the world other than that imposed by the strongest entity. War was a frequent occurrence between and among this or that principality or state or empire. The idea of trying to bring about a world in which there was not, to use modern parlance, nonstop intervention in the internal affairs of others was a major advance. And it helped set the stage for a considerable period of relative stability in Europe.

As noted, the Congress of Vienna in the second decade of the nineteenth century was convened to come up with a post-Napoleonic diplomatic settlement.⁷ The leaders of the day were so traumatized by what had just taken place that they operationalized the concepts of the Westphalian model, resulting in the Concert of Europe. The concert, as the word suggests, was an orchestration of how international relations in Europe would be conducted given the mind-set of those involved at the time, about how they would accept current borders and for the most part leave one another alone within their territories.⁸ It encompassed frequent high-level diplomatic consultation among representatives of the major powers. In the words of one historian, the concert “had a deeply conservative sense of mission. Based on respect for kings and hierarchy, it prioritized order over equality, stability over justice.”⁹ It was hardly the only time in history when a great shock—in this case, revolution in France and the fear it might spread—changed collective behavior. And that is what happened. And for all the problems of the nineteenth century, it compares well in many ways with the century that followed.

Indeed, it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that we witnessed wholesale breakdown of the Concert of Europe, and with it the Westphalian order. (The midcentury Crimean War between Russia and both Great Britain and France was a struggle more about who was to control territory of the fading Ottoman Empire than about anything fundamental.) What occurred were two dramatic developments. First, there arose new nation-states (most prominently Prussia, the forerunner of Germany) unwilling to accept the territorial and political status quo that had developed. They rejected the legitimacy of existing international arrangements. And they were strong enough to act. The balance of power no longer precluded action or deterred them from acting. This last point suggests the second development that so shaped the history of this period. Many of the entities that had dominated the world for centuries were failing and in some cases literally falling apart. This was true of Austria-Hungary, Russia (soon to be ravaged by revolution), and the Ottoman Empire.