



Henry Kissinger, *Porządek światowy*,
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The publication of the Polish-language version of the book *World Order* [*Porządek światowy*] by Henry Kissinger was undoubtedly an important event on the Polish publishing arena of 2016. It is not the first work of this author published in Poland (Kissinger, 1996, 2009, Kissinger, 2005, Kissinger, 2014). The Polish version of this publication was prepared just a few months after its original release in the United States (Penguin Press). *World Order* is an essay of global importance and at the same time it can be considered as a kind of testament of Kissinger. Polish readers do not need much of introduction as to who Henry Kissinger is – as this influential author, long-time lecturer at Harvard University, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1973), the US National Security Advisor (1969–1975), and the US Secretary of State (1973–1977)

is widely known in Poland. This particular work can be perceived as Kissinger's credo; for about sixty years, the author has participated in some of the key events of world politics – and in this one book he decided to pass on the fruits of his reflection on the subject to a wider audience. In the following short review, we will look more closely at the content of the publication and comment on its main theses from the point of view of the theory of international relations and security. All page references to the book are based on page numbering of the Polish edition.

The book consists of nine chapters and its main theme is the evolution of the global political order over the past centuries. According to Henry Kissinger, “world order” describes the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. Applying these concepts in practice creates an international order, relying, according to

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the author, on two components: a set of legitimization rules and a balance of power (Kissinger, 2016, pp. 16–17). For decades, Kissinger has been considered to be one of the main advocates of the theory of political realism in international relations (cf. Donnelly, 2000; Halizak & Czaputowicz, 2014). The author of *World Order* emphasizes that for the last several hundred years the so-called Westphalian order, i.e., the concept of a world divided into sovereign states, which are themselves the main subjects of international relations and together form the international community, has been a dominant one (Kissinger, 2016, p. 33). This does not mean, however, that it was the only way to understand the notion of “world order” or that it was universally recognized. Kissinger emphasizes in the introduction that there has never been a truly globally accepted concept of a world order. What we call the Westphalian order is the outcome of centuries-long expansion of several European countries, which resulted in the transfer of principles developed in Europe to the entire globe (cf. Kuźniar, 2005; Pietraś & Marzęda, 2007). The most stable international orders in history – as the author explains – owe their durability to a common understanding of the surrounding world among its actors (Kissinger, 2016, p. 43). Meanwhile, the current global order is being questioned and – moreover – there is no consensus as to the new principles on which a new such order could be based. The book in question is an attempt to trace the history of the Westphalian world

order and to draw conclusions about the prospects for its development in the modern world. The author’s intention is clear and scientifically relevant.

In Chapter One, Kissinger looks at the political development of European states in the early modern era. He discusses the genesis of the Westphalian order and the main political forces of that time, highlighting the role of Great Britain as a regulator of the balance of power on the European continent. Chapter Two offers a description of the functioning of the Westphalian order up to the beginning of the 20th century, when, after conquest of other continents, the European powers decided to use the Westphalian framework to gain advantage over others and thus break the balance of power in Europe. After two World Wars, Europe was significantly weakened and, as a result, lost its political dominion over the world. The initiative passed instead into the hands of the US and the USSR. The United States saw itself as the defender of the West, propagating and maintaining the Westphalian principles in the name of the American concept of liberty of nations. The USSR, in turn, inherited the legacy of the Tsarist Russia, which in the 18th and 19th centuries became the second – next to Great Britain – guarantor of the balance of power on the European continent. The end of the Cold War rivalry and the shifting of global centers of politics and economy towards Asia nowadays should give raise to reflection on further usefulness of the Westphalian framework, especially when European states

have focused their efforts on the processes of political and economic integration. According to Kissinger, the modern world finds itself in a situation in which Europe had been back in the 17th century. This time, however, non-European regions will participate in the shaping of a new model of international order and security (Kissinger, 2016, p. 93).

In Chapters Three and Four, Kissinger analyzes the development of Islamic civilization and the concepts of world order developed by Muslim states, in particular Iran. He points to the fact that currently the balance of power is no longer based only on military and industrial potential. As a result of scientific development (!), several countries gained access to nuclear weapons, which significantly changed the nature of the international order (no conquest ever has given the USSR such power as did breaking the American monopoly in nuclear weapons production). From this point of view, Islamic states obtaining access to nuclear weapons (Pakistan already has such weapons) can be a factor that significantly undermines the current international order, especially in the context of a growing risk of proliferation of such weapons.

In Chapter Five, the author comes to an important conclusion that the material factors alone can no longer explain the mechanisms of development of international relations (Kissinger, 2016, p. 167). An example is the expansion of European countries in Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Asia was a victim of the concept of world order

imposed by Europeans through the institutions of colonialism. Lack of understanding of Asian cultural diversity in Europe has led to numerous crises across the entire Asian continent. In this chapter, as well as in Chapter Six, right after Kissinger analyzes the regional orders created throughout history by India, China, and Japan. Here, he once again points out that Asia of today resembles Europe of the past modern era, as it currently consists of several strong countries with differing ambitions. Furthermore, many Asian leaders explicitly declare their attachment to the Westphalian global order principles. However, lack of consideration given to West African and South American issues, also important from the point of view of the West's expansion, raises some doubts as to the fullness of the picture painted by Kissinger.

In Chapters Seven and Eight, the author of *World Order* analyzes the phenomenon of the influence of the United States, which became a globally important actor almost exclusively due to accumulation of internal power, in general without having participated in the power plays the European states engaged in until the end of the 19th century. However, starting from the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, through the terms served by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt to post-war presidents (especially H. Truman, R. Nixon, G. Ford, and R. Reagan), the United States took on a key role in building up the Westphalian order globally. It did so by skillfully combining the use of its real power (*Ro-*

osevelt's realism) and the principles of liberalism and democracy (*Wilson's idealism*). As can be seen, the potential of the USA is understood here according to Westphalian principles – as the existence of two parallel pools of resources: power and legitimation. Next, Kissinger discusses various problems of the contemporary US foreign policy, such as the peace process in the Middle East and the participation of US troops in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, in contrast to the critical analysis of international expansion of European countries (caused by “greed, cultural chauvinism” and other similar sentiments, cf. Kissinger, 2016, p. 167), the international military activity of the USA has, in Kissinger's opinion, a much better justification. He sees the role of the US as a somewhat messianic one even, with policy decisions rooted in idealistic universalism and optimistic aspiration for human betterment (Kissinger, 2016, p. 308). According to the author of the book, a truly special characteristic of the American nation (sic!) is that the aim of the wars it wages is not only to punish its opponents, but also to improve the lives of their people. We find here echoes of the theory of just war, with the author clearly declaring his position in the internal American debate about the place of the United States in the new world order. However, it is difficult not to notice certain subjectivity to Kissinger's line of argumentation.

Chapter Nine stands out as unusual because for the first time in his career, Henry Kissinger addresses the topic of the Internet

and the technological revolution of the 21st century. The chapter contains highly valuable descriptions of the impact of technological innovations on human consciousness, decision-making processes, wisdom, knowledge acquisition, and state security policy (cf. Kissinger, 2016, pp. 326–329, 334–335). This is, unexpectedly, one of the best fragments of the entire publication. The author explains that during its preparation he benefited from the help of researchers of the younger generation who have more expertise in modern technologies than he does.

In the concluding chapter, the author analyzes the factors shaping the world order nowadays. He notes that after 1948, thanks to America, there was a brief moment in the history of mankind when one could speak about a really global world order, which was a combination of American idealism and the traditional concept of balance of power. This rather nostalgic and pro-American commentary seems to be an appeal to the leaders of Western states to develop new rules of conduct, as the old Western principles – previously considered universal – are no longer obvious to the emerging new powers on other continents (Kissinger, 2016, pp. 340–341). The second important statement is the conclusion that the collapse of “any” international order results from either redefinition of the principles of legitimacy or a change in the balance of power. Here, H. Kissinger in fact contradicts his earlier declarations (as per the previous chapters, there were many different concepts of international order de-

veloped on various continents), again universalizing the notion of world order – in Westphalian terms. An important summary of the book are the remarks focused on the crisis of four important dimensions in the contemporary structure of the world order: crisis of statehood, conflict between the international – read: global – economic system and the political structures, still based around nation-state, lack of effective mechanisms for cooperation between states, and finally the need to establish a new concept of world order (Kissinger, 2016, pp. 344–347). These are the newest challenges for the decision-makers of the modern world.

The writing style of the book is accessible and flows well. *World Order* presents matured, seasoned opinions of one of key commentators of the global political scene. It is also a convincing application of the foundations of political realism in the analysis of international relations. The categories Kissinger references most often – such as sovereignty, balance of power, the state, diplomacy, and leadership – are key elements of this particular intellectual tradition. The author often recalls events he has witnessed in person, he also focuses on foreign policy issues and mechanisms of perception of the international system, but not on the system itself. This term is used in the entire work just once it would seem (Kissinger, 2016, p. 140). This allows to include Kissinger among authors associated with classical realism, i.e., non-structural (despite the term *World Order* in the title of the

work). An interesting tactics of the author is the introduction of characters representing the tradition of political realism (Richelieu, Talleyrand, Metternich, Bismarck, Kautilja) into individual chapters, which deepens the humanistic dimension of his argumentation. The author juxtaposes views or behavior strategies of specific individuals (historical figures) against the historical course of events, thus proving their validity or lack thereof. Thanks to this approach, the book can be placed firmly within the interpretive traditions of realism. A similar style of writing was characteristic of the works of Hans Morgenthau, Raymond Aron, or early Kenneth Waltz (Morgenthau, 2010; Aron, 1995; Waltz, 1959).

From the point of view of the theory of international relations, the author's theses about the declining significance of the material factors in the analysis of international relations and the key role of internal policy in achieving the full potential of a state are among the most interesting, and are especially important in the era of globalization. Nevertheless, the above theses are only auxiliary to the main line of argumentation, and are not the subject of deeper reflection. Kissinger almost completely neglects the role of economic and socio-psychological factors in the development of international relations, both in the past and in the modern times. Instead, he focuses mainly on the political activity of some superpowers creating the framework for the contemporary international system. This allows for a great clarity of argumentation, but also

means that the author's conclusions remain very general and are not supported by external data. One should bear in mind, however, that we are dealing with an essay rather than an academic dissertation based on standardized quantitative and qualitative data.

The publication *World Order* can be an interesting reading for students of first years of social studies, journalists, opinion leaders, and also serve as an inspiration for diplomats and state officials. The

book also further expands the list of publications written by practitioners of the American politics (memoirs, diaries, analyses of decision-making processes written by decision-makers or experts participating in important events of world politics), which will further aid in both research and didactics in the field of foreign policy and security analysis (cf. Deibel, 2002). From this point of view, *World Order* is an essential reading for everyone who is interested in the issue of "who rules the world".