

# SOCIETIES FACING NEW FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Thursday 26 september, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Auditorium



Bertrand Badie, Tanguy Gaudeul and Grégory Rayko

Tanguy Gaudeul is the founding president of La Boîte à Bac, a company that creates innovative educational content for high school students. He came to present a five-episode web series in partnership with the Normandy For Peace Forum. It explores the new forms of violence that our societies are experiencing, whether they are identity-based, environmental, technological or health-related. Violence, yes, but he prefers to temper the extent of it. 'There are fewer casualties in armed conflicts today than there were 20 or 30 years ago. However, this violence is ongoing.' He also explained the difficulty of finding images to illustrate recent conflicts, such as those in Ethiopia's Tigray region, a civil war that began in November 2020 and pits the Ethiopian federal government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

More than an increase in violence, what has changed is our exposure to this violence, which is more visible than before thanks to social networks. 'Our world is changing profoundly, we have almost abolished space and time,' explained Bertrand Badie, professor emeritus at Sciences Po Paris, who remembers a time when violence was invisible, which could give the impression that there was less of it. 'We tend to identify with

## MODERATION

**Grégory Rayko**, Head of the international column of The Conversation France

## SPEAKERS

**Bertrand Badie**, University Professor Emeritus at Sciences Po Paris

**Tanguy Gaudeul**, Founding President of La Boîte à Bac

what we see, and when we talk about 42,000 dead in Gaza, including 15,000 children, we cannot be insensitive, despite the fact that the Israeli government prevents journalists from going to the field so that these deaths remain anonymous.' Because while, as Grégory Rayko, head of the International section at The Conversation France, points out, the way in which we perceive violence depends very much on the virtual sphere in which we live – in other words, our social bubble – we must not go overboard. 'There is still an objectification of information,' stated Bertrand Badie. 'It's increasingly difficult today to hide the violence. During the colonial era, France and other countries had no qualms about hiding what was going on. There were atrocities that were only discovered much later thanks to historians. This invisible violence has become very rare.'

One of the contemporary paradoxes is this capacity for destruction which has never been so great. This is the gamble of the atomic weapon, which becomes a deterrent when tensions escalate. 'Since 1949, the day the USSR obtained the atomic weapon after four years of US monopoly, no one has used this weapon for 75 years.' Tanguy Gaudeul noted the development of new technologies by rich countries, which, in turn, makes high-tech violence more accessible. 'Drones are the perfect example. Although they're very sophisticated in the US military, they're now produced at very reasonable prices by other countries such as Iran and are used by non-state actors.' This is also a contemporary paradox: economic powers spend lavishly to equip themselves with new technologies against their enemies, who end up appropriating these new tools and turning them against them.

## ***Our world is changing profoundly, we have almost abolished space and time***

Bertrand Badie

Online, there's no lack of violence. We feel it on social networks, which encourage a polarisation of debates in order to generate traffic. Some countries, such as Russia, have understood this well and exploited it through the use of troll farms, where staff are paid to spread pro-Russian propaganda and false information in order to destabilise Western democracies. Fighting this violence is not impossible, and legal tools exist. But political courage is still needed



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to use them. 'It's very difficult to hold Facebook or Twitter responsible, even though we could do so,' noted Tanguy Gaudeul.

When it comes to climate change, which is also a vector of inequalities and violence, China seems, against all expectations, to be becoming aware of the issues. In this regard, Bertrand Badie quoted Jacques Chirac, the former President of the French Republic who appeared in the web series where he delivered this now iconic phrase: 'Our house is burning and we are looking the other way,' he said, adding that if anyone had looked the other way, 'it was him, throughout his presidency,' he said ironically. Bertrand Badie remembers the pollution clouds from these first trips to China. He has seen a change in the discourse over the past few years. But the words need to be followed by actions. And that's where the problem lies: 'In China, as elsewhere, when you ask people to pay for an immediate benefit, everyone understands this very well. But if we ask people to pay now for a result in 60 years, as is the case with the environmental cause, people are less inclined to agree. The ambiguity of politics is that it plays this rhetorical card to exonerate itself.' Furthermore, the professor highlighted Western hypocrisy, which consists of pointing the finger at China for the pollution generated by its industry, while it produces goods 'that we don't produce because of our standards, but that we consume anyway.'

These paradoxes, misinterpretations and hypocrisies foster conflicts in the world and the violence that results from them. But looking for a cause for a conflict to stem this new violence may be a mistake, concluded Bertrand Badie. 'Causes don't exist, in physics yes, but in social science, the word cause means nothing. It's the human brain that interprets, reformulates and decides whether or not to take data into account.'