

mental principle of *pacta servanda sunt*—treaties must be kept, and the other doctrine of *rebus sic stantibus*—circumstances have not changed, took the only step open to her and declared war on Germany.

But we may ask, Have the circumstances changed since the Treaty of Guarantee was entered into? Would not Germany be justified in appealing to the doctrine of *rebus sic stantibus*? This involves the further question, What led to the treaties whereby Belgium's neutrality was guaranteed, and what is the special interest which calls for British intervention in the war? Why did Great Britain in 1831 and again in 1839 solemnly pledge herself to a treaty which her statesmen must have foreseen would at some time, sooner or later, lead to our having once again to take part in a war on the Continent of Europe? The answer to this question brings us to a doctrine which, if not a fundamental principle of International Law, is nevertheless, in one form or another, 'a political principle indispensable to the existence of International Law in its present condition'.<sup>1</sup> I mean the need for the maintenance of a balance of power among the States of Europe.

In 1813 the Powers allied to overthrow Napoleon, and with a view to limiting the power of France and its expansion to the north, and having, as they subsequently stated in a protocol of December 20, 1830, 'the object in view of forming a just equilibrium in Europe, and assuring the maintenance of the general peace',<sup>2</sup> they joined the Belgian provinces which had formerly formed part of the Austrian dominions to Holland. This union was subsequently confirmed in

<sup>1</sup> L. Oppenheim, *Peace*, § 136.

<sup>2</sup> C. Dupuis, *Le principe d'équilibre*, p. 217.