


Session 1. Part 2



Power and Systems

Session 1



- President Obama meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. Both understood that their relations were partly cooperative and partly conflictive. (Ju Peng/Xinhua/Newscom)

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1

Differentiate international relations and domestic politics.



1.2

Explain and give examples of the balance-of-power system.



1.3

Demonstrate how an IR system may be inherently unstable.

1.4

Evaluate why the Cold War lasted so long without blowing up.

1.5

Argue which IR system best fits the current world situation.

1.6

Evaluate the rise and durability of states.

1.7

Explain why sovereignty has always been partly fictional.

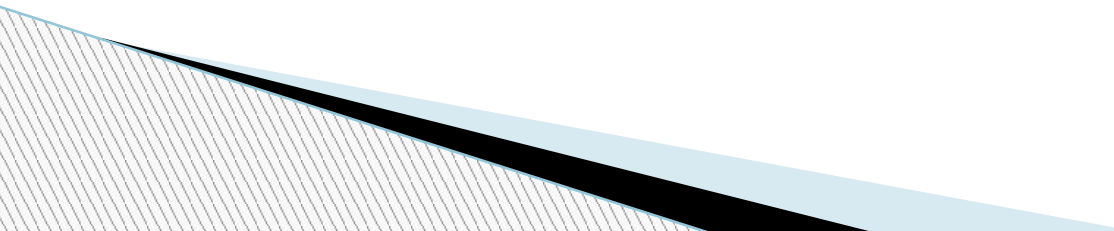
POWER IN OUR DAY

1. *Pre-World War I.* Dominance of the great European empires in the nineteenth century until 1914. In systems theory, this period exemplifies a balance-of-power system, but by 1910 it had decayed.
2. *World War I through World War II.* The empires destroy themselves from 1914 to 1945. With several major players refusing to respond to threats, the interwar period might be termed an "anti-balance-of-power" system. It is inherently unstable and temporary.
3. *Cold War.* The collapse of the traditional European powers leaves the United States and USSR facing each other in a *bipolar* system. But the superpowers block and exhaust themselves from 1945 through the 1980s, and the bipolar system falls apart.
4. *Post-Cold War.* The collapse of the Soviet Union ends bipolarity, but ideas on the new system are disputed, ranging from *multipolar* (several power centers) to *zones of chaos* and from *globalization* to *Chinese-U.S. duopoly*. We will consider several possibilities.

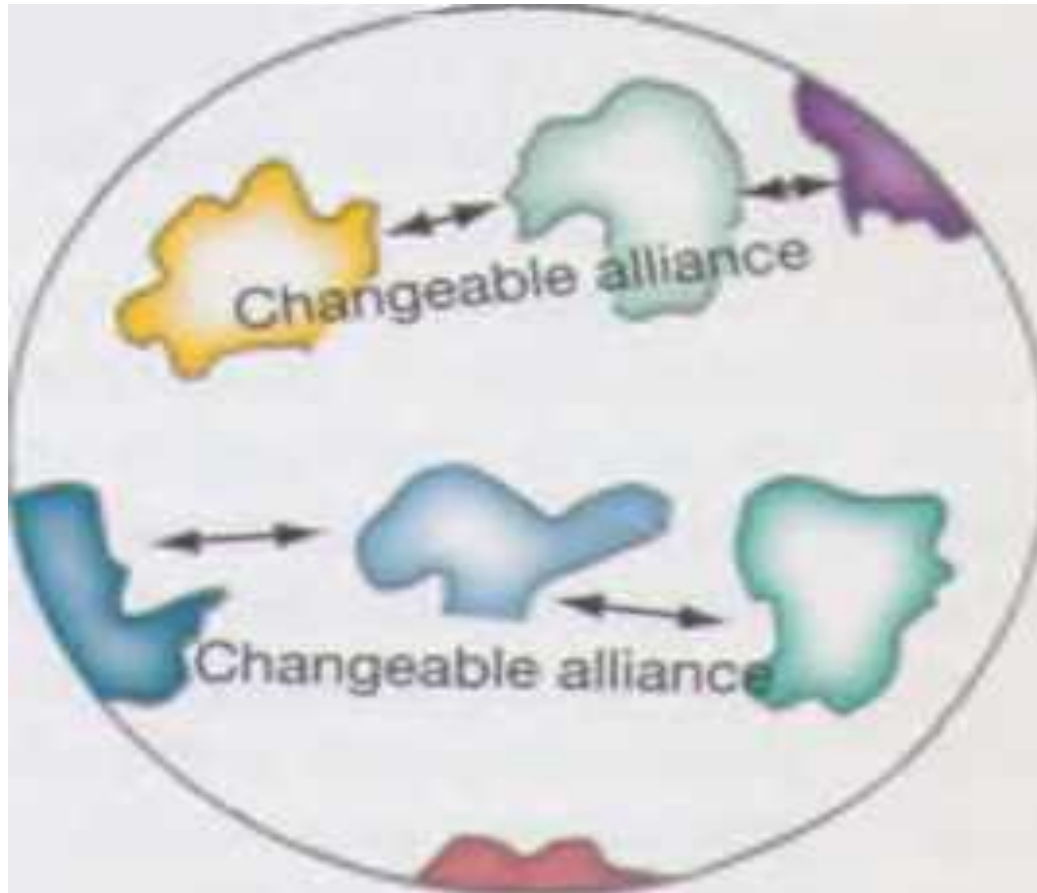
CONCEPTS : POWER

*Power is widely misunderstood. It: is not big countries beating up little countries. Power is one country's ability to get another country to do what it wants: A gets B to do what A wants. There are many kinds of power: rational persuasion, economic, cultural, technological, and military. Rational persuasion is the nicest but rarely works by itself. Military power is the least nice and is typically used only as a last resort. Then it becomes **force**, a subset of power. When Ethiopia and Eritrea quarreled over their border, they mobilized their armies and got ready to use force.*

Countries use whatever kind of power they have. President Obama urges Iran to put its nuclear program under international control. Tehran demands conditions. U.S. military power is massive, but Tehran has oil power. In our age, energy resources have become one of the most important sources of power.



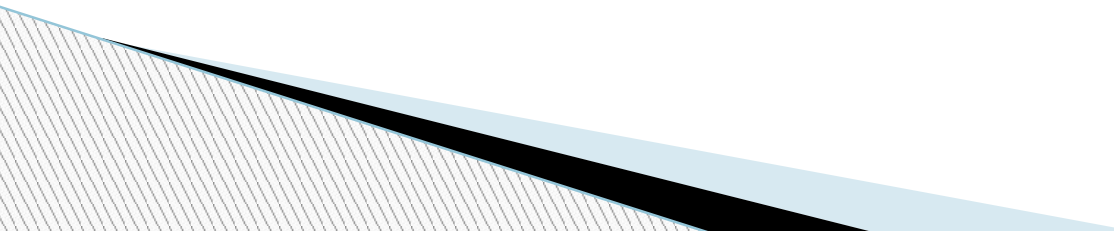
THE EUROPEAN BALANCE-OF-POWER SYSTEM



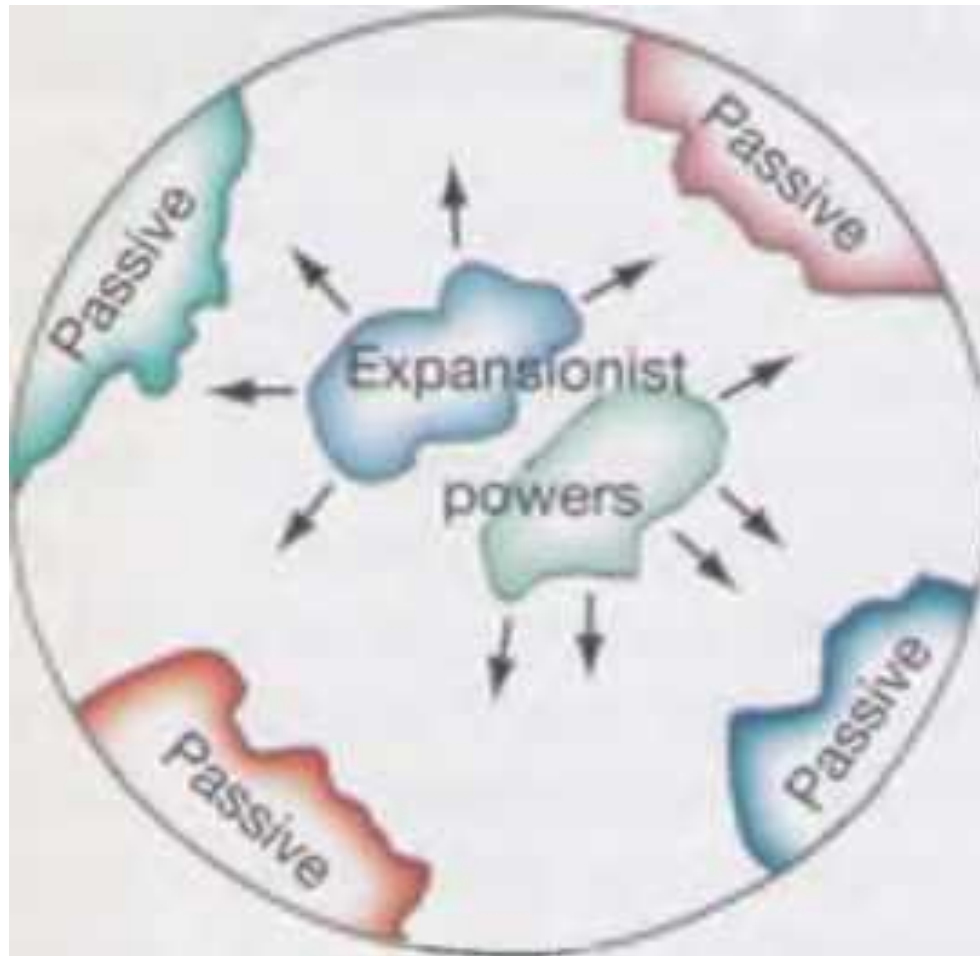
CONCEPTS : SYSTEM

A system is something composed of many components that interact and influence each other. If you can analyze the logic of a system, you can roughly predict its evolution or at least understand what could go wrong. Statesmen who grasp the current international system can react cleverly to threats and opportunities. Those who do not can damage their own country.

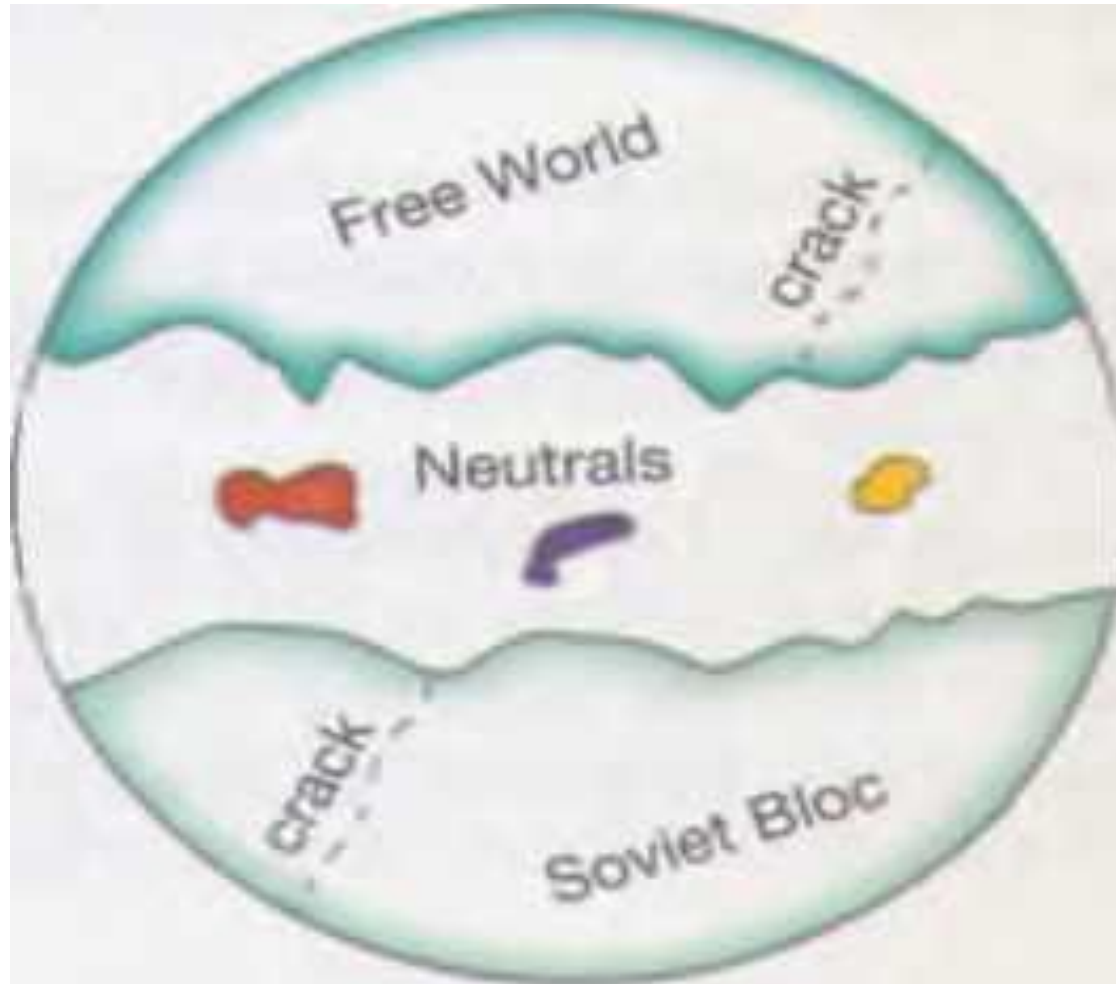
"The strong point about systems thinking is that it trains us to see the world as a whole rather than just as a series of unrelated happenings and problems. It also encourages us to see how a clever statesman may create and manipulate events to get desired results. If he presses here, what will come out there? Will it be bad or good?"



THE UNSTABLE INTERWAR SYSTEM



THE BIPOLAR COLD WAR SYSTEM

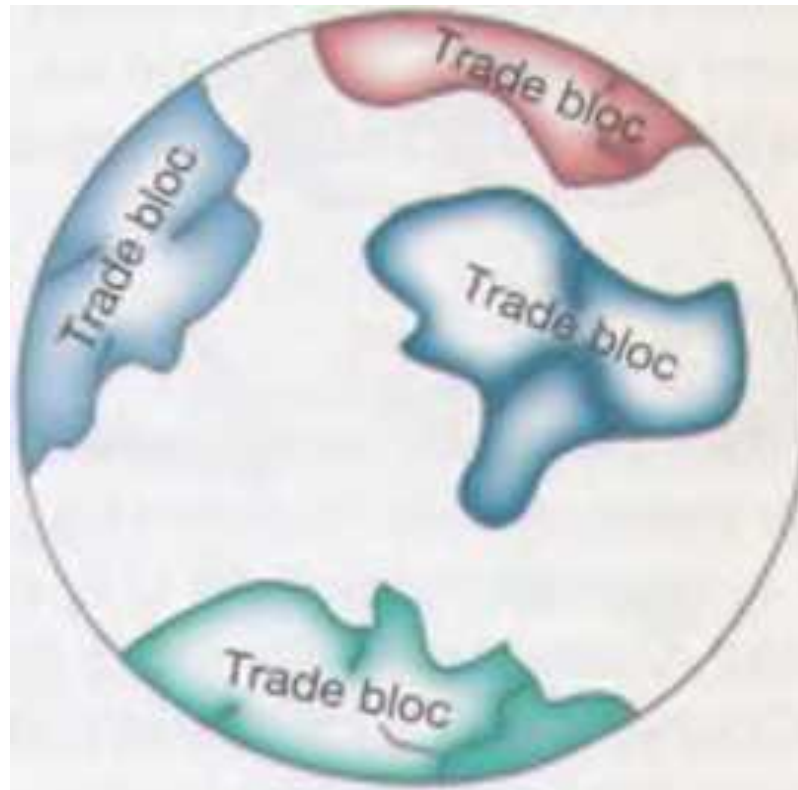


'Was the bipolar world stable? It did not blow up in nuclear war and lasted nearly half a century, but it could not endure, for at least five reasons:

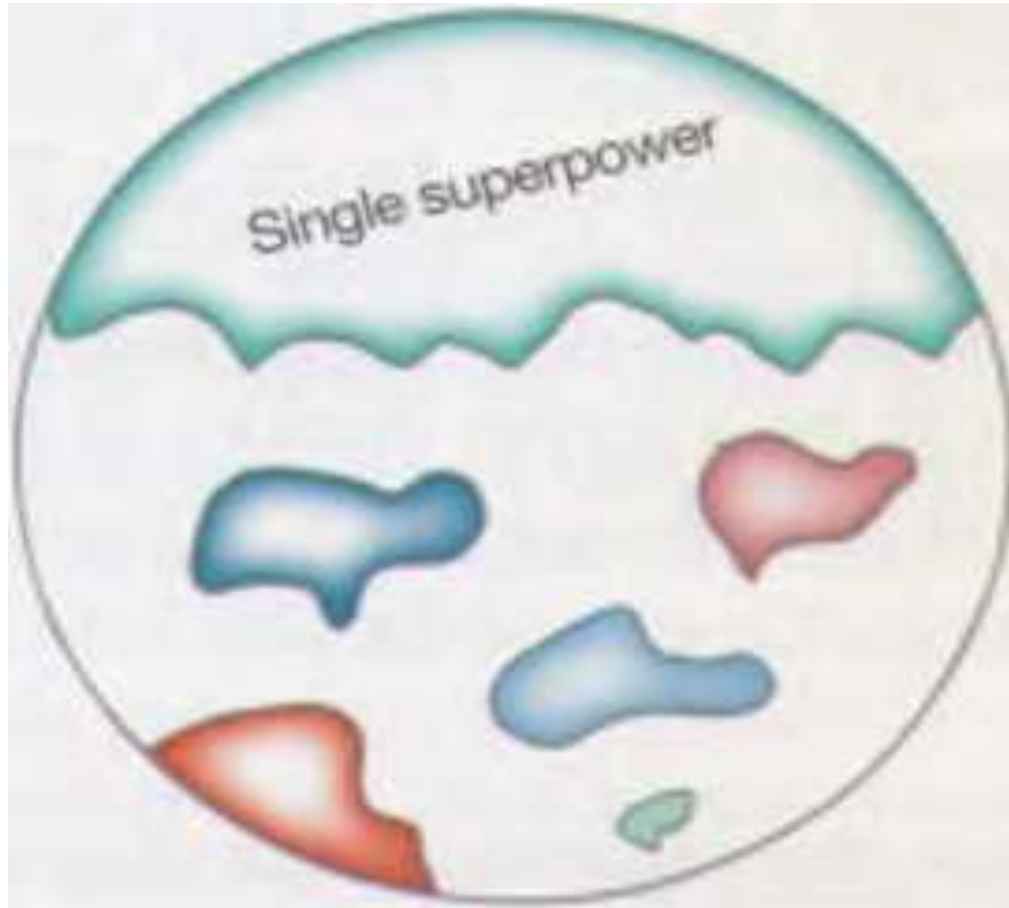
1. The bipolar system locked the superpowers into frantic *arms races* that grew increasingly expensive, especially for the weakening Soviet economy. More and more bought them less and less security, for the armies and weapons could not protect the superpowers or extend their power; their attempts to expand power collided with nationalism.
2. *Third World nationalism* arose, and both superpowers made the mistake of fighting it. Playing their zero-sum game, the two superpowers tried to get or keep peripheral areas in their "camps." They pushed their efforts into the Third World until they got burned—the Americans in Vietnam and the Soviets in Afghanistan.
3. At least one of the two camps *split*. One of the polar "continents" cracked apart, and a large piece drifted away: the Sino-Soviet dispute. Dominance breeds resentment. The other "continent" developed some hairline fractures, as NATO grew shakier.
4. The economic growth of the *Pacific Rim* countries made both superpowers look foolish. While the military giants frittered away their resources in expensive weapons and dubious interventions, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian inlands boomed.
5. The expensive arms race on top of an inherently defective economy and botched reforms led to the *Soviet collapse* in 1991. America, by outlasting its antagonist, in effect "won" the Cold War. The world that emerged from the bipolar system, however, is not completely to America's liking.

WHAT KIND OF NEW SYSTEM?

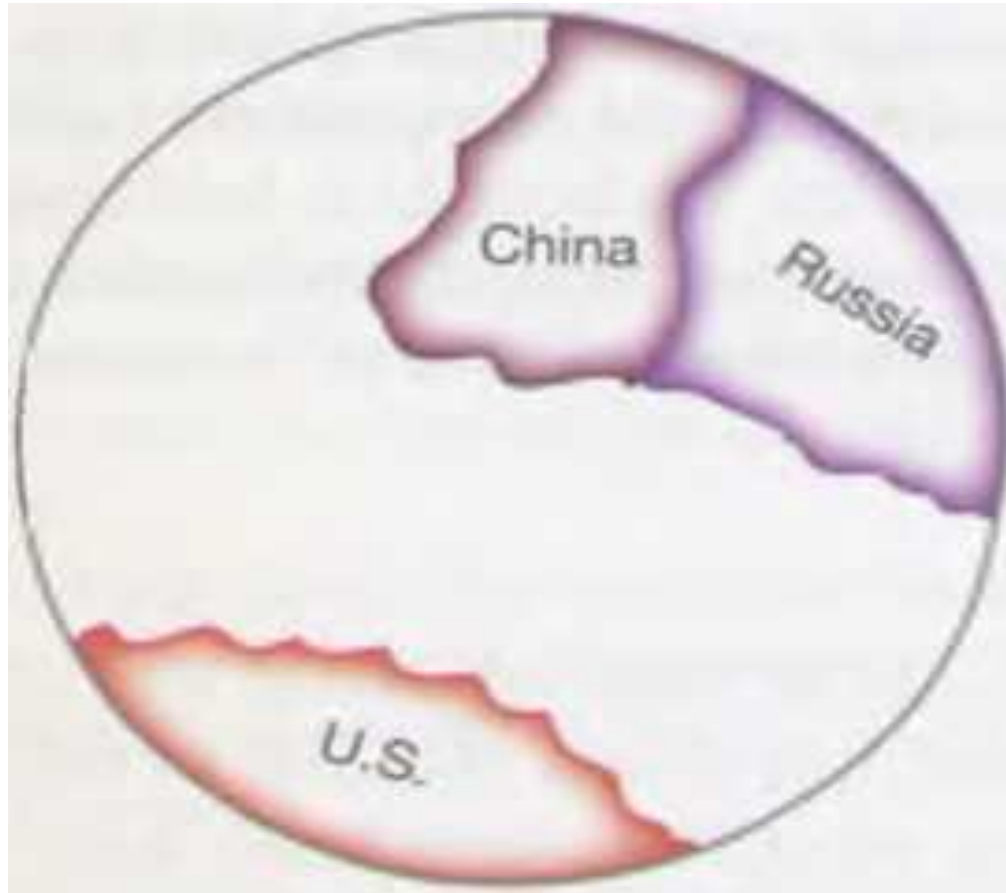
Multipolar?



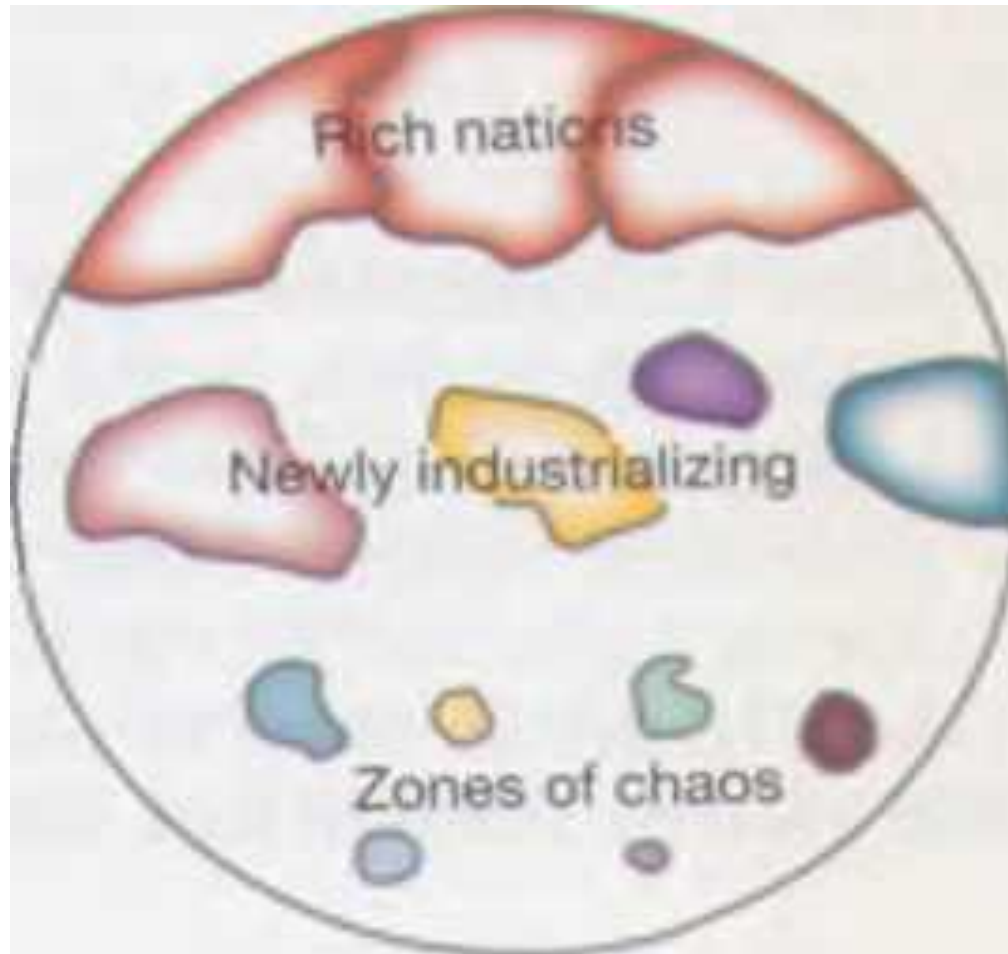
Unipolar?



Counterweight?



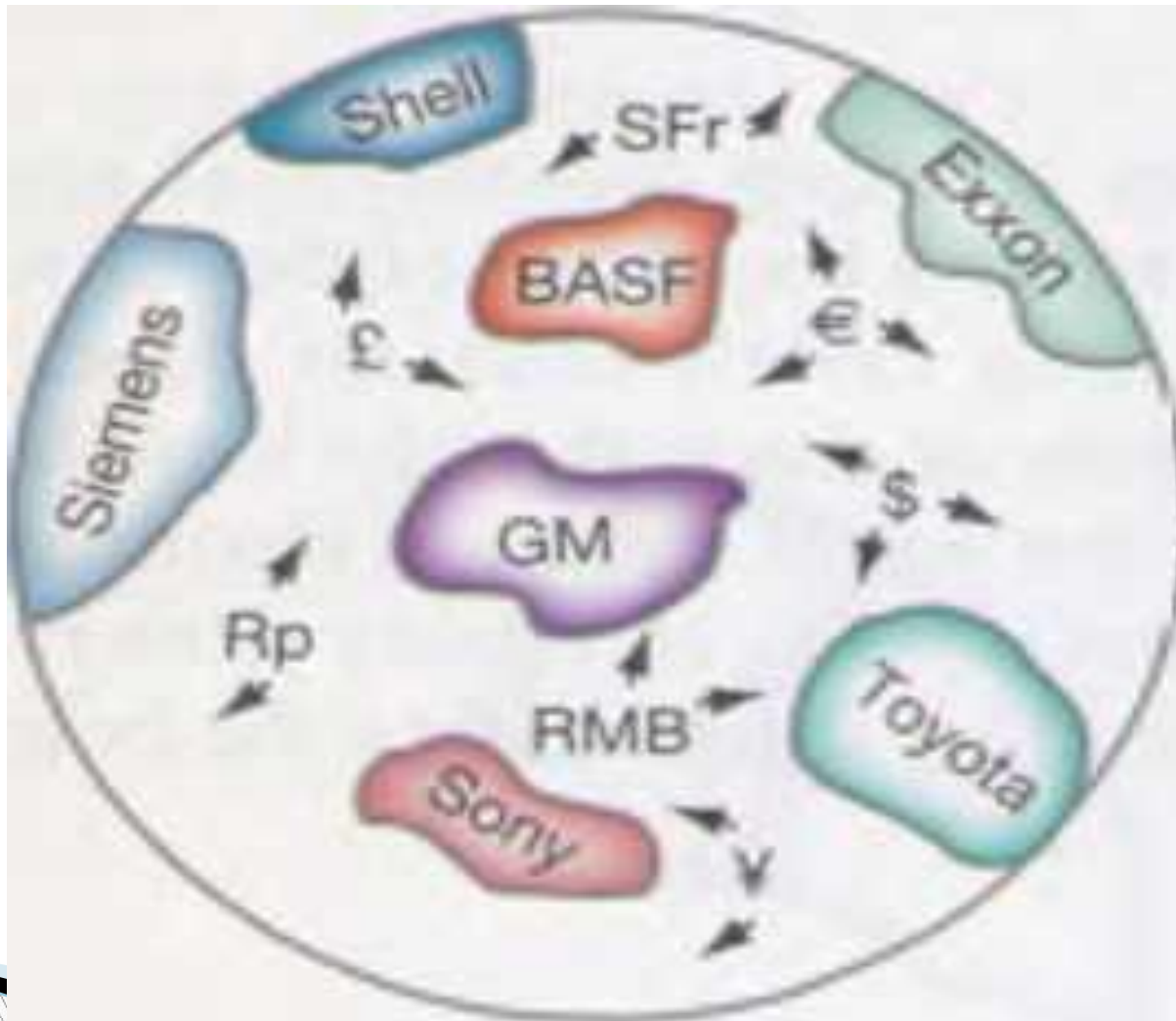
Stratified?



U.S.-China Duopoly?

- Some claim the new global system is a **duopoly** of power between the United States and China, the so-called "G2" (Group of Two), indicating they are the only ones that really count now. G8 and G20 meetings are unimportant because, compared to the United States and China, the others are mid-sized players. The duopoly model envisions a world jointly led by the United States and China. But this so-called "Chimerica" is a **chimera**.

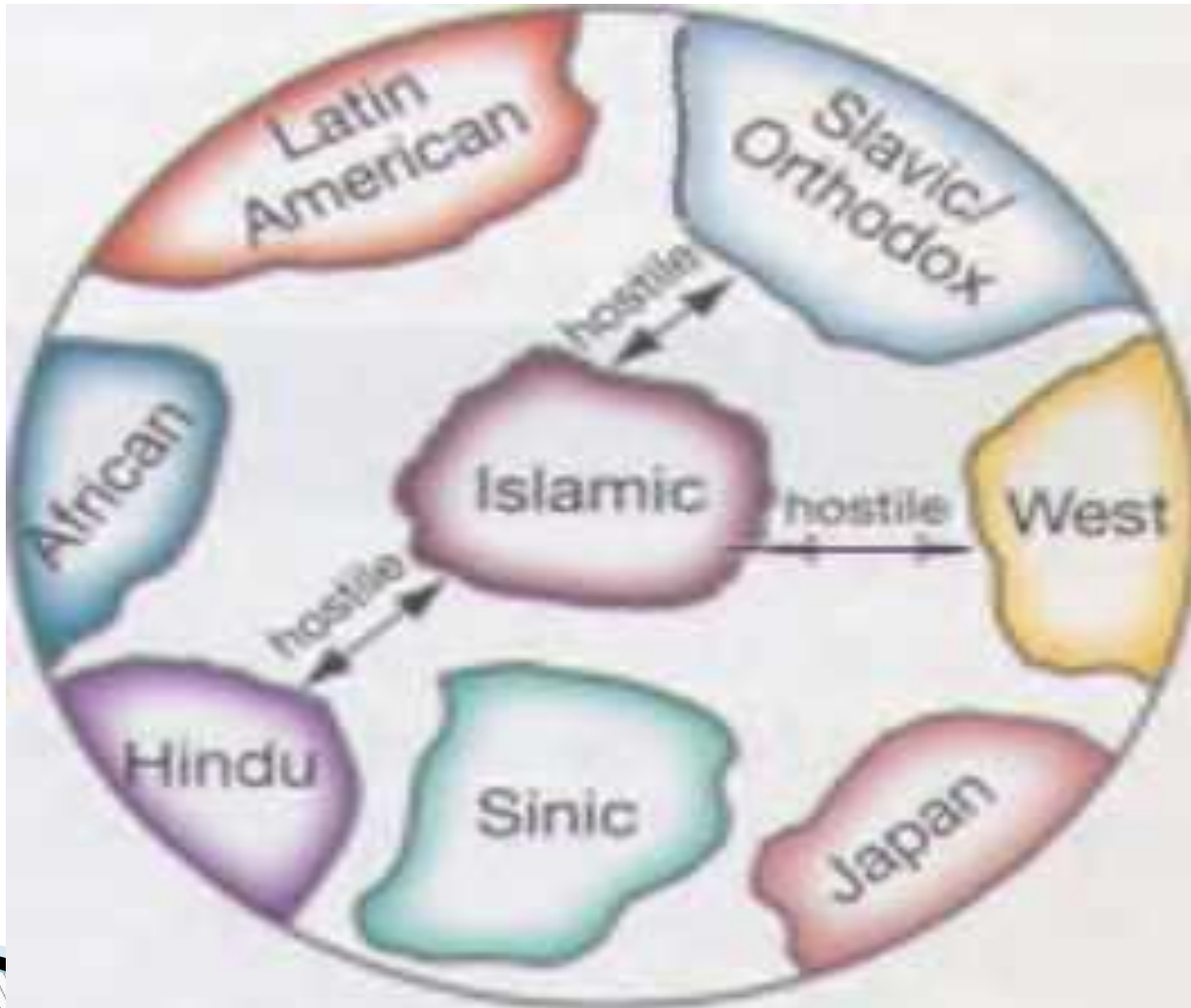
Globalized?



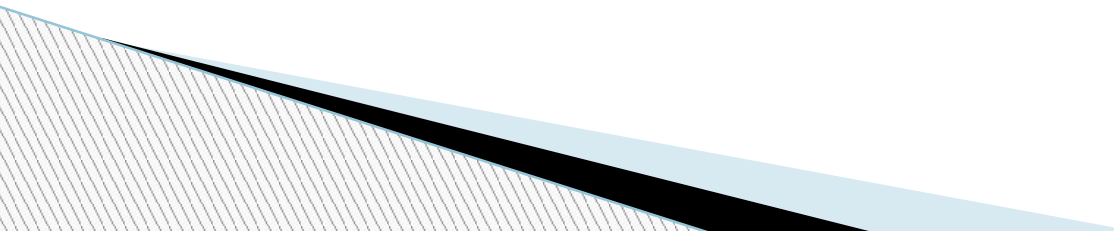
Resource Wars?

- Some thinkers warn we are moving into an "age of scarcity" marked by a scramble for natural resources, especially petroleum. Rapidly industrializing China needs ever-more resources, to secure them, China makes exclusive deals with producing states (and never asks about their human rights record). Instead of a free market, this is a tied market that blocks the free flow of natural resources to all customers, a bit like old-fashioned colonialism. The questions of who owns the China Seas and who controls transportation corridors from the Persian Gulf and Central Asia loom larger. The 1991 and 2003 wars with Iraq might qualify as resource wars.

Clash of Civilizations?



ARE STATES HERE TO STAY?

- One may hope that the emerging international system will be an improvement, but its basic components are still sovereign **states**, and they tend to trip up plans for a peaceful, cooperative world. The concept of the modern state, nation-state, or the colloquial term "country" goes back about five centuries, when important changes rippled through West Europe.
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CONCEPTS : THE STATE

States are generally defined as groups of humans having territory and government. This government, in turn, has the last word on law within its borders (sovereignty, which we consider presently). Only the state has a legitimate monopoly on coercion; that is, it can legally force citizens to do something. The mafia, of course, can force you to repay a debt, but it has no legal right to punish you. The Internal Revenue Service, on the other hand, can legally send you to prison for nonpayment of taxes.

Some use the term "nation-state," which adds the concept of nationality to state. Members of a nation-state have a sense of identity as a distinct people, often with their own language. Nation-states are fairly modern creations, probably not more than half a millennium old. International relations does not use "state" in the U.S. sense, such as the "great state of Kansas." In IR, in fact, the 50 American states are not states at all, because they lack sovereignty. They do not have the last word on law within their borders; the federal government in Washington does.

IS SOVEREIGNTY SLIPPING?

- Sovereignty has always been partly fictional. Big, rich, and powerful countries routinely influence and even dominate small, poor, and weak countries. Lebanon, for example, lost its sovereignty as it dissolved in civil war in 1975, its territory partitioned by politico-religious militias and Syrian and Israeli occupiers. Israel's pullout from the south of Lebanon in 2000 scarcely helped, as the territory was occupied by Hezbollah fighters, not by the Lebanese army.

CONCEPTS : SOVEREIGNTY

- ▣ *The root of the word sovereignty is reign, from the French for rule. The prefix is from the Old French for over, so a sovereign is someone who "rules over" a land (a king). Sovereignty is the abstract quality of ruling a country. The term gained currency in the sixteenth century when royalist scholars such as the Frenchman Jean Bodin, rationalizing the growth of the power of kings, concluded that ultimately all*
- ▣ *power had to center in a monarch. By the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, European states were declaring themselves "sovereign"—the last word in law—over their territories, and monarchs agreed to keep out of the internal affairs (such as religion) of other states. Although the age of royal absolutism passed, the concept of sovereignty remained, and now all states claim sovereignty.*