The Cold War dominated the latter half of the twentieth century and warped both of the main antagonists—the United States and the Soviet Union, which the Cold War helped destroy. How they reached their present situations is thus worth study, both to show how the world got to where it is and to provide several concepts of international relations.

Chapter 1 looks at the big picture—the transformation of the international system in the twentieth century and what seems to be emerging in the twenty-first century. Chapter 2 reviews America’s encounters with the world and uses them to illustrate the slippery and changeable concept of national interest. Over various periods of U.S. foreign policy—the independence war, manifest destiny, imperialism, World Wars I and II, isolationism, and the Cold War—U.S. national interests and the strategies to carry them out have changed in response to new threats and opportunities. George F. Kennan’s celebrated “containment” policy, for example, may be brilliant for one era but unworkable for the next (as Kennan himself lamented).

Chapter 3 shows how we got into and out of the Vietnam War, something most young people know little about. The gap here between political generations is great. Few high schools get around to Vietnam in their crowded history curricula. Vietnam was a searing U.S. national tragedy, altering our foreign policy, undermining the economy and our confidence in government, and spawning a counterculture generation. We learn that government can be “wrong, terribly wrong,” in the words of Robert McNamara.

Chapter 4 brings us to U.S. foreign policy today. Can we lead in this new, complex world situation? Do we wish to practice interventionism? Have we turned isolationist? Should we be motivated by ideals or self-interest? Do we have the economy, armed forces, and congressional support with which to lead a world that often does not follow us? Finally, do the institutions of our foreign policy tend to lead to policy errors and bureaucratic politics?

With Chapter 5 we turn to our Cold War antagonist, the Soviet Union, and how it came to be, how Russia turned into the tyrannical Soviet Union. Russia raises questions of geopolitics: Is geography destiny? What role does ideology play in foreign policy? Was the Cold War inevitable?

Chapter 6 explores why the Soviet Union collapsed. It considers how misperception of the outside world, hegemony over a costly empire, a failed détente, and increasingly critical elites driven by the fear of falling behind undermined regime legitimacy. Was Soviet foreign policy largely internally or externally generated? Russia under Putin returned to authoritarianism and hostility. Our difficulties with Russia are not over.
Chapter 1

Strange New World: Power and Systems in Transformation

Instead of quick in and quick out, U.S. forces had to occupy Iraq and even train its army. Many Americans questioned major overseas military activity. (John Moore/Getty Images)
International relations (IR) depend a lot on power, the ability of one country to get another to do (or sometimes not do) something. International laws and institutions are too weak to rely on them the way we rely on domestic laws and institutions. In domestic politics, when we have a quarrel with someone, we “don’t take the law into our own hands; we take him to court.” In IR, it’s sometimes the reverse. There is no court, and self-help may be the only option available.

A system is the way power is distributed around the globe. An international system is a sort of “power map” for a certain time period. If you can correctly figure out what the current system is—who’s got what kind of power—you know where you stand and how and when to use your power. For example, if many countries have roughly equal power, it is likely a “balance of power system” (explored presently). If one country has overwhelming power, enough to supervise the globe (unlikely), it might be a “unipolar system.” The turbulent twentieth century witnessed four IR systems.

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 “antibalance-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 decays.
4. Post–Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union ends bipolarity, but ideas on the new system are unclear, ranging from multipolar (several power centers) to zones of chaos and from globalization to clash of civilizations. We will consider several possibilities.

Do not reify these periods and systems. They are just attempts to get a handle on reality; they are not reality itself. Reification is a constant temptation in the social sciences. Students especially like to memorize neat tables in preparing for exams. Okay, memorize them, but take them with a grain of salt. Notice that in the foregoing breakdown one period overlaps with the next. The European empires, for example, did not turn off with a click in 1945; they phased out over three decades. To try to understand a confusing world, social scientists are forced to simplify a very complex reality into

Questions to Consider

1. What is power?
2. How can some types of power be unusable?
3. What is an international system?
4. What systems has the world gone through over a century?
5. What kind of a system is now operating?
6. Is this new system stable or unstable?
7. Are states and sovereignty still the foundations of IR?
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. Typically, military power is 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. In 2008 President Bush asked Saudi Arabia to increase its oil production. Riyadh—to Bush’s face—said no. Massive U.S. military power was unable to sway Saudi Arabia’s oil power. In our age, energy resources have become one of the most important sources of power. Russia, with an unimpressive army, kept Europe respectful by oil and natural-gas exports. U.S. dependency on imported petroleum is the Achilles heel of American power, one that we paid little attention to until recently.

Sometimes, as the United States discovered in Vietnam, power is unusable. The crux of power, remember, is getting the other country to do something—in the case of North Vietnam, to stop its forcible reunification with South Vietnam. Can American power really stop coca cultivation in the Andes, an area where governments either cannot stop the activity or (in the case of Bolivia) supports it? U.S. military power in 2003 beat the Iraqi army in three weeks but could not calm or control Iraq. If all your types of power—political, economic, and finally military—do not work in a particular situation, you turn out to be not as powerful as you thought.

Power cannot be closely calculated or predicted. The Soviet Union looked powerful but suddenly collapsed due to a faulty economy and tensions among its many nationalities. You often know who’s more powerful only after a war. Typically, before the war, both sides figured they were pretty powerful. The war serves as a terrible corrector of mistaken perceptions. Washington often relies too much on a bigger and better army, which does not always work. Remember, military is only one kind of power. No one—not the British, the Soviets, or the Americans, all very powerful—tamed Afghanistan. One’s power may be unsuitable to the problem at hand. Artillery and tanks may not work against religiously motivated guerrillas. Attempting to persuade another country may provoke resentment: “Who are you to tell us what to do?” (Washington often gets such replies from Beijing and Tehran.) Accordingly, power of whatever sort is best exercised cautiously. The question for our day is what kind of power we should emphasize—military, economic, or political?
The European Balance-of-Power System

As we will consider in Chapter 7 on colonialism, in the nineteenth century Europe carved up the globe into empires and spheres of influence. Some say they did it for economic gain, but imperial costs usually outweighed profits. Prestige and fear of someone else getting the territory were big motivators. It was perhaps a foolish system and terribly unfair to the “natives,” but it was a reasonably stable system and had several advantages for preserving peace. By denying their subjects self-rule, the imperial powers also denied them the possibility of going to war. Britain held down the latent violence between Hindus and Muslims in India. Upon India’s independence in 1947, vio-

Concepts

Systems

A system is something composed of many components that interact and influence each other. If the logic of a system can be discovered, one can roughly predict its evolution or at least warn what could go wrong. Statesmen who understand the current international system can react cleverly to threats and opportunities.

The crux of systems is in the term “interact.” If something is truly a system, you cannot change just one part of it because all the other components also change. Systems thinking originated in biology. The human body is a system of heart, lungs, blood, and so on. Take away one component, and the body dies. Alter one, and the others try to adjust to compensate. Systems can be stable and self-correcting or they can break down, either from internal or external causes.

After World War II, systems thinking spread to almost every discipline, including international relations. Thinkers—some focusing just on Europe, others on the entire globe—found that various systems have come and gone over the centuries, each operating with its own logic and producing variously stable and unstable results. Obviously, an unstable system does not last.

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 think about how a clever statesman may create and manipulate a system to get desired results. If he presses here, what will come out there? Will it be bad or good?

To some extent, international systems are artificial creations of varying degrees of handiwork. A system that obtains the assent of the major powers and goes with the forces of history may last a long time. A system that harms one or more major players and goes against the forces of history will surely soon be overturned. Systems do not fall from heaven but are crafted by intelligent minds such as Metternich and Bismarck. This brings an element of human intelligence and creativity into international politics. It’s not just science; it is also an art that brings with it hopeful thinking.

Does the world form a political system? It is surely composed of many parts, and they interact. The trouble is few thinkers totally agree on what the systems were, their time periods, and the logic of their operation. Looking at the four systems of the twentieth century, some would say there are only three, because the first and second should really be merged (the second was merely the decayed tail end of the first). Others would say, no, actually there are five, adding the period of the Axis dictatorships as a separate system.

International-systems thinking is inexact, not yet a science. We have still not settled on what the present system is. In this chapter, we consider several attempts to describe the current system and note that none of them is completely satisfactory. With each proposed system, ask two questions: (1) Does it exist, and (2) will it persist? That is, does the proposed system match reality, and, if so, is it likely to remain stable and last for some time?
changeable alliance erupted as two lands emerged from the Raj, India and Pakistan, and they have fought four wars since. Their next war could be nuclear; both have the bomb. The imperial system, then, was not all bad.

Second, by carving up the globe in an agreed-upon fashion, the great empires mostly avoided wars among themselves. All powers understood that Britain had India, France had Indochina, the Netherlands had the East Indies, and so on. This has been called a balance-of-power system.

Some historians and political scientists claim that during certain periods the power of the several major nations was similar, and they arranged this power, by means of alliances, to roughly balance. If country A felt threatened by country B, it would form an alliance with country C, hoping to deter B from aggression. Later, all of them might form an alliance to protect themselves from the growing power of country D. It did not always work, but it helped to hold down the number and ferocity of wars. For a balance-of-power system to function, theorists say, it took at least five major players who shared a common culture and viewpoint and a commitment not to wreck the system. Balance of power was like a poker game in which you decide you'd rather keep the game going than win all the money, so you refrain from bankrupting the other players. Graphically, it looks like this:

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**balance of power** Theory that states form alliances to offset threatening states.

**Westphalian** System set up by 1648 Peace of Westphalia that made sovereignty the norm.

**sovereignty** Concept that each state rules its territory.

**Metternichian** Conservative restoration of balance of power after Napoleon.

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Historians see two great ages of balance of power, from 1648 to 1789 and again from 1814 to 1914. The Thirty Years War, mostly fought in Germany, pitted Catholics against Protestants and was the bloodiest in history until World War II. By the time it was settled in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia, Europe’s monarchs had had enough of bashing each other and so constructed a balance-of-power system that endured until the French Revolution (1789) and Napoleonic wars (ending in 1814). The Westphalian system also established the concept of sovereignty (see discussion later in this chapter).

Napoleon overturned the old system with unrestrained ambition and a mass army that conquered most of Europe. When Napoleon played poker, he tried to bankrupt all the other players. (He also cheated.) Gone was the restraint that had characterized the old system. Once Napoleon was beaten, Europe’s conservatives met under the guidance of Austrian Prince Metternich to construct a new balance-of-power system, sometimes called the Metternichian system. It worked moderately well for some decades, but only as long as monarchs restrained their ambitions and shared the values of legitimacy and stability. This slowly eroded with the effects of nationalism in the
The European Balance-of-Power System

The nineteenth century—especially with German unification in 1871—until it disappeared by World War I. There has not been a balance-of-power system since then. Some say there cannot be one again.

Some scholars reject the balance-of-power theory, pointing out that there were nasty wars when power was supposed to be balanced, for example the Seven Years War (what Americans call the French and Indian War) of the 1750s or the Crimean War of the 1850s. Balance-of-power theorists counter by saying these were relatively small wars that did not wreck the overall system.

Some writers hold that not balance of power but hierarchy of power acts to preserve peace. When nations know their position on a ladder of power, they are more likely to behave. The aftermath of a great, decisive war leaves a victor on top and a loser on the bottom, and this brings a few decades of peace. Critics say balance-of-power proponents have mistaken this hierarchy for a balance that never existed. All such hierarchies are temporary and eventually overturned as weaker states gain power and dominant states lose it.

Either way, the nineteenth-century system started decaying when two newcomers demanded their own empires. Germany and Japan upset the system with demands for, as Berlin put it, “a place in the sun.” German unification (1871) and Japan’s Meiji Restoration (1868) produced powerful, dissatisfied nations eager to overturn the existing system. Tremors started around the turn of the century as Germany armed the Boers who were fighting the British, engaged Britain in a race to build battleships, and confronted France by boldly intervening in Morocco. At this same time in the Pacific, the Japanese took Taiwan from China, attacked and beat the Russians, and seized Korea.

If someone had told Prussian Chancellor Bismarck that the unified Germany he created in 1871 would lead to two world wars and Europe’s destruction, he would have been aghast. Bismarck was a conservative, yet his handiwork brought radical, systemic change. Remember, in systems you cannot change just one thing, because everything else changes too. Bismarck supervised a giant change in the political geography of Europe—German unification—but this rippled outward, changing the global political system.

Before Bismarck, Germany had been a patchwork of small kingdoms and principalities. After unification, Germany had the location, industry, and population to dominate Europe. Bismarck thought unified Germany could live in balance and at peace with the other European powers. He was neither a militarist nor an expansionist. Instead, after unification, Bismarck concentrated on making sure an alliance of hostile powers did not form around his Second Reich. Trying to play the old balance-of-power game, Bismarck made several treaties with other European powers proclaiming friendship and mutual aid.

But the Bismarckian system was not as stable as the earlier Metternichian system (see page 6). Bismarck’s unified Germany had changed the European—and to some extent global—political geography. German nationalism was now unleashed. A new Kaiser and his generals were nationalistic and imperialistic. They thought Bismarck was too cautious and fired him in 1890. Then they started empire building, arms races, and alliance with Austria. The French and Russians, alarmed at this, formed what Kennan called the “fateful alliance.” Thus, on the eve of World War I, Europe was arrayed into two hostile blocs, something Bismarck desperately tried to avoid. Without knowing or wanting it, Bismarck helped destroy Europe.
If there had been a balance-of-power system during the nineteenth century, it was no longer operative by the start of the twentieth century. Balance of power requires at least five players who are able to make and remake alliances. Flexibility and lack of passion are the keys here. Instead, by 1914 Europe was divided into two hostile, rigid alliances. When one alliance member went to war—first Austria against Serbia—it dragged in its respective backers. By the time the war broke out, the balance-of-power system was no longer functioning.

**The Unstable Interwar System**

World War I was the initial act of Europe’s self-destruction. Some 10 million of Europe’s finest young men died. Four empires—the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish—collapsed. From the wreckage flowered the twin evils of communism and fascism. The “winners”—Britain and France—were so drained and bitter they were unable to enforce the provisions of the Versailles Treaty on the defeated nations. The international economy was seriously wounded and collapsed a decade later.

World War I led directly to World War II. The dissatisfied losers of the first war—Germany and Austria—joined with two dissatisfied winners—Italy and Japan (Japan participated in a minor way by seizing German possessions in China and the Pacific during World War I)—while another loser, Russia, tried to stay on the sidelines.

Another connecting link between the two wars was the failure of any balance-of-power system to function, this time by design. Balance-of-power thinking stood discredited after World War I. Many blamed the cynical manipulations of power balancers for the war. This is an unfair charge, as the system had already broken down before the war. Maybe balance of power is a defective system, but the start of World War I by itself does not prove that point. At any rate, the winning democracies—Britain, France, and the United States—chose not to play balance of power, and from their decision flowed the catastrophe of World War II.

What do we call this strange and short-lived interwar system? It was not balance of power because the democracies refused to play. The dictators, sensing the vacuum, moved in to take what they could. We might, for want of a better term, call it an “antibalance-of-power system.” Britain and France, weary from the previous war and putting too much faith in the League of Nations and human reason, finally met force with force only when it was too late; Germany nearly beat them both. Graphically, it looked like this:
Stalin's Soviet Union also refused to play (see Chapter 5). Here it was a case of ideological hatred against the capitalist powers and the conviction they were doomed anyway. The United States also refused to play balance of power. Isolationism plus verbal protests to Japan over the rape of China were thought to keep us at a safe distance from the conflagration (see Chapter 17). We did not need much military might; we had two oceans. In 1941, both the Soviet Union and the United States learned they could not hide from hostile power.

Europe destroyed itself again in World War II. Into the power vacuum moved Stalin's Red Army, intent on making East Europe a security zone for the Soviet Union. The Japanese empire disappeared, leaving another vacuum in Asia. The Communists, first in China and North Korea, then in North Vietnam, took over. The great European empires, weak at home and facing anticolonial nationalism, granted independence to virtually all their imperial holdings (see Chapter 7). Britain, the great balancer of the nineteenth century, ceded its place to the United States. The age of the classic empires was over, replaced by the dominance of two superpowers.

**The Bipolar Cold War System**

As we shall discuss in Chapters 2 and 5, the Cold War started within a couple of years of the end of World War II as Stalin's Soviet Union, intent on turning East Europe into a belt of Communist-ruled satellites, proved its unfitness as a partner for Roosevelt's grand design for postwar cooperation (see Chapters 2 and 21). Many feared that Stalin was also getting ready to move beyond East Europe. Probably by the spring of 1947, the Cold War was on, for that is when the United States openly stated its opposition to Soviet expansion and took steps to counter it.

The world lined up in one of two camps—or at least it looked that way—as there was no third major power to challenge either the Soviets or the Americans. Academic thinkers described this

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**E. H. Carr and Realism**

British professor E. H. Carr called the interwar period *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939*, the title of his scathing and influential critique of the failure of the democracies to recognize world power realities. In so doing, Carr laid the groundwork for the Realist school that was picked up and amplified after World War II by Hans Morgenthau in the United States (see Chapters 2 and 19).

Carr divided thinkers on international relations into two schools: utopian and Realist. The utopians are optimists, children of the enlightenment and liberalism, and hold that reason and morality can structure nations’ international behavior toward peace. Woodrow Wilson and his League of Nations are prime examples. Realists, on the other hand, are pessimists and stress power and national interest. This does not necessarily mean perpetual war, for if statesmen are clever and willing to build and apply power, both economic and military, they can make aggressors back down. Implicit in this is a balance-of-power theory.

Between the two great wars, Carr saw utopian fools unwilling to stand up to dictatorial beasts. The trouble with Realism is that you can’t tell what is realistic until many years later, when you see how things turn out. Should you be constantly tough and ready to fight? What difficulties will that lead to? The application of a simplified version of Realism after World War II helped create and perpetuate the bipolar system of the Cold War, a dangerous system that led to a number of good-sized (but no nuclear) wars.
Chapter 1 Strange New World: Power and Systems in Transformation

The world divided into two power centers, as in the Cold War. Bipolarity was a dangerous but in some ways comforting system. West and East blocs watched each other like hawks, constantly looking for opportunities to exploit in the other bloc and guarding against possible attack. It was a tense world, with fingers too close to nuclear triggers. Graphically, it looked like this:

The bipolar system was seen as a “zero-sum game” in which whatever one player won, the other lost. If the Communist bloc stole a piece of the Free World, it won, and the West lost. To prevent such reverses, war was always possible (Korea and Vietnam), even nuclear war (Cuba). Because both superpowers possessed nuclear weapons, though, they always kept their conflicts at arm’s length, fighting by proxy and not directly. Both understood that a direct conflict could quickly turn nuclear, ending both the system and their dominance. They hated each other, but they were not reckless. Better, each thought, to be prince of its half of the world than run the risk of mutual wipeout. At no time did Americans tangle directly with Soviets. Still, everyone was jumpy, worried about possible gains and losses.

Some on both sides still hearken back to those days when life was simpler because you knew exactly who your friends and enemies were. The weaker allies of the superpowers, East and West Europe, mostly kept quiet and obeyed their leading power. NATO and the Warsaw Pact looked firm. Most members of each alliance had superpower military bases on their soil and accepted them as a form of protection. The comforting part about bipolarity was that you knew where you stood. For many today, life is too confusing.

If you look closely at the Cold War, however, you notice that it was never strictly bipolar. Some thinkers label it a “loose bipolar” system to account for the fact that between the two big “continents” were many “islands,” neutral countries that deliberately avoided joining either camp. Both superpowers wooed these neutrals.

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, for the armies and weapons thus produced did not succeed in protecting the superpowers or in extending their power; attempts to expand power collided with nationalism.

2. Third World nationalism arose, and both superpowers got burned 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. Eventually, both had to ask themselves, “What good is this war?”

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 (see Chapter 6). Dominance breeds resentment. The other “continent” developed some hairline fractures, as NATO grew shakier (see Chapter 16).

4. The economic growth of the Pacific Rim countries made both superpowers look like fools. While the military giants frittered away their resources in expensive weapons and dubious interventions, Japan and the Four Tigers turned their region into an economic giant (see Chapter 17).

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?**

The two momentous events of 1991 started discussions over how to name and describe the new system then being born, a task not yet accomplished. Notice that all of the possible systems suggested below have a question mark after them. Do not reify them.

**MULTIPOLAR?**

Many now see the world as multipolar—a system of several centers of power, some of them trading blocs and all of them engaged in tough economic competition. No one nation or bloc dominates in this system. It would somewhat resemble the old balance-of-power system, but the blocs are bigger than the old nations, largely immobile, and competing by economics rather than warfare. Graphically, it would look like this:

![Multipolar System Diagram](image)

This model does not perfectly fit reality. The blocs—the European Union, the Pacific Rim, and others—cannot look after their own security; all need U.S. help. The West Europeans at first claimed they could settle things in the former Yugoslavia by themselves, but within a few years they were demanding that the United States step in. South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan are powerful trade competitors with the United States, but all want free security from America. Without U.S. leadership in the world, little gets done. Would a multipolar system work if trade disputes became too great?
Chapter 1 Strange New World: Power and Systems in Transformation

UNIPOLAR?

UNIPOLAR One power center.

Some thought the great events of 1991—the quick U.S. defeat of Iraq and Soviet collapse—produced a unipolar system. The United States would lead in constructing what President Bush senior called a “new world order” with the Gulf War as a model: The United States leads the United Nations and the middle-sized powers to stop an aggressor. In this model, only the United States now has the ability to project military power overseas, the political clout, and the vision to lead. Graphically, it would look like this:

![Graphical representation of unipolar system]

The neo-conservatives of the younger Bush administration especially liked the unipolar view of the world and tried to implement it in Iraq in 2003. But a unipolar system is unlikely. America is clearly now the only military superpower, but economic and political factors limit its leadership role. Are the American people and Congress willing to pay money and send troops to far corners of the globe? For how long? And are other lands willing to follow America in such enterprises? Or are they more likely to resent us? Notice how little we get our way in the world. Even a small power like Iraq did not bend to our will without war, and few allies supported us in that war.

COUNTERWEIGHT?

COUNTERWEIGHT?

As the Bush 43 administration followed a unipolar model, many European lands, Russia, China, and other countries spoke of the need for a “counterweight” to U.S. power. They saw us as domineering and too eager for war. A counterweight model would look like a unipolar model stood on its head:
Here, instead of following the United States, many other countries agree among themselves to oppose and ignore us. They would provide no support for U.S.-led causes and would sharply criticize us on everything from unnecessary use of force to economic domination. We would be labeled international bullies and politically isolated in the world. Whatever we wanted, they would oppose. In the face of massive U.S. military power, however, they would pose no security threat to us.

There are problems with this model too. The rest of the world is disorganized and able to cooperate on little. Some oppose the United States on one question but support us on another. And when there is a serious problem, many beg for U.S. help; they understand that only we have the power to curb dangerous aggressors and murderous civil wars. In reaction to U.S. policy on Iraq, the world tended to form a counterweight—such as Russia’s and China’s vague Shanghai Cooperation Organization—but not a strong or consistent one.

**STRATIFIED?**

A **stratified** model combines the unipolar and multipolar models and may fit reality better. It sees roughly three layers. At the top are the rich, high-tech countries. The second layer is that of middle-income industrializing lands. The third layer is a “zone of chaos” dominated by crime, warlords, and chronic instability. It is startling to realize that the world’s biggest single industry is now crime, much of it connected to the flow of drugs from the poor countries to the rich countries. Graphically, it would look like this:

![Image of stratified model]

The top-layer countries can zap conventional targets with their advanced weapons, but they cannot control the chaos of the bottom-layer countries, whose guerrillas and drug cartels offer no good targets. Somalia, Colombia, and Afghanistan are examples of chaos that the top-layer countries would like to avoid but cannot. Many of the world’s natural resources—particularly oil—are in these chaos zones, so the first layer is inevitably drawn into their difficulties. And the first layer’s appetite for illicit drugs means the bottom layer gets its tentacles into the top layer.

**GLOBALIZED?**

Even before the Cold War ended, **globalization** began to emerge (see Chapter 18). In an ideal globalized system, most countries become economic players in the world market, a capitalist competition where goods, money, and ideas flow easily to wherever there are customers.
The motto of a globalized system: Make money, not war. The few countries that do not play, such as Cuba and North Korea, live in isolation and poverty. After some years, most countries want to play. Globalization can help promote worldwide economic growth. It might look like this:

But there are many problems that limit and could end a globalized system. Most countries—including the United States—fear totally free trade. They see their industries closing under a wave of imports and respond with traditional protectionist measures to lock out foreign goods. Furthermore, is globalization a cause or a consequence of peace? Are the two intertwined? If so, what happens to one when the other is disrupted? Prosperity does not necessarily bring peace, as newly affluent countries demand respect, resources, and sometimes territory. As China got richer, it defined its borders more grandly, reaching far out into the South and East China Seas where there may be undersea oil. Globalization does not seem to work everywhere. East Asia has zoomed ahead, but Latin America has grown little, suggesting that sound policies and flexible cultures may be key factors. China turned itself into the "factory of the world" with which few countries can compete. How many low-cost producers can the world take? Some resent the American and capitalist culture of a globalized system: "McWorld." Globalization may have already peaked and may be declining.

RESOURCE WARS?

If a globalized system falls apart, it may do so over the scramble for natural resources, especially petroleum. As Asia, particularly China, industrializes, it sucks in vast amounts of resources and makes exclusive deals with oil-producing states, blocking the free flow of natural resources to all customers. The questions of who owns the China Seas and who controls transportation corridors from the Persian Gulf and Central Asia loom larger and larger. We may already be engaged in resource wars: the 1991 and 2003 wars with Iraq (see Chapter 9).

Related to resource wars is resource blackmail. In an age of tight energy supplies, countries with oil and natural gas deflect outside pressures with credible threats to cut exports. Saudi Arabia, resentful of U.S. complaints, finds it impossible to increase oil production. Russia, unhappy with Ukraine turning westward, cut natural gas not only to Ukraine but to Europe. Everyone noticed. Iran, rolling in petroleum revenue, thumbs its nose at Western concern over its nuclear program. In the energy age, the weak have become powerful.
CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS?

Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in 1993 made intellectual waves with his theory that the post–Cold War world was dividing into eight “civilizations,” each based mostly on religion: Western (with European and North American branches), Slavic/Orthodox, Islamic, Hindu, Sinic (Chinese-based), Japanese, Latin American, and African. Some of these civilizations get along with others, but some seriously dislike and reject others. The biggest threat: Islamic civilization, which clashes violently with Western and Slavic/Orthodox civilizations. (More on this at the start of Chapter 9.) Graphically, Huntington’s “civilizational” theory would resemble the trade-bloc picture:

Indeed, some of these civilizations have formed trade blocs. The motive that guides their relations would not be trade, though, but deep-seated cultural dislikes and “kin-country rallying.” For example, Saudi Arabia and Iran, who detested Saddam’s dictatorship in Iraq, opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. One should not invade a brother Muslim country. In Huntington’s world, religion predicts international alignments better than commerce does. Few IR thinkers accept Huntington’s theory; most think it contains some truth but is exaggerated.

Which, if any, of these models matches and explains international relations today? Would a combination provide a better fit? Can you come up with an accurate picture? Or will we just have to wait some years until the situation becomes clear?

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. Thanks to gunpowder and cannons, monarchs controlled nobles and amassed centralized power, a movement called absolutism. Economies greatly expanded with new inventions (such as printing) and the opening of trade to Asia and the Americas. The Roman Catholic Church lost temporal power as monarchs declared themselves supreme and secularized their kingdoms. To support their frequent wars, monarchs improved civil administration and tax collection. By the end of the horrible Thirty Years War in 1648, powerful modern states dominated West Europe.
Because they were so powerful—able to raise and fund large armies and navies—the modern strong states spread worldwide, for they easily conquered traditional lands. After they liberated themselves from colonial rule, the lands of Latin America, Asia, and Africa also adopted the strong state form, although some were actually quite weak (see Chapters 7 and 10).

The American and French Revolutions in the late 1700s added a new twist to the strong state: mass enthusiasm and participation. Before, the affairs of state had been confined to a handful of kings and aristocrats; “subjects” (rather than citizens) kept silent and obeyed. With the spread of democratic ideas, citizens felt involved and patriotic. Nationalism, originating in the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, also spread worldwide, assuming dominant, even lunatic, proportions in the twentieth century (see Chapter 8).

Is Sovereignty Slipping?

If the new international system is to be more peaceful and cooperative than the old, states will have to give up at least part of their most basic attribute, their sovereignty. Part legal, part power, and part psychological, sovereignty means having the last word in law, able to control your country’s internal affairs and to keep other countries from butting in. In a word, it means being boss on your own turf.

Sovereignty means countries can pretty much do as they wish. Pakistan in the past has worked closely with the United States but ignored Washington’s warnings not to produce nuclear devices. Islamabad decides what is in its national interest, not Washington. Japan also depends on the United States for its security but resists purchasing more American goods. Tokyo decides what is

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.

Most analyses of international relations take the nation-state as their starting point. State power overrides individual preferences. States can draft citizens and march them to war. Many states have a psychological hold on their citizens and inculcate and then command a sense of patriotism, not always for good ends. Along with this comes “we–they” thinking about foreign lands. “We” are peaceful folk simply trying to protect ourselves; “they” are plotting to harm us. U.S. and Iranian attitudes about each other are a current example. Each feels it is the aggrieved party.

Could the leading role of the state be eroding? States are not necessarily the first or last word in human organization. Throughout history, extended families, tribes, kingdoms, and empires have given way to more advanced forms of organization.
good for the Japanese economy, not Washington. In 1990 Saudi Arabia asked for U.S. troops to defend its territory against Iraq. But these soldiers could not drink a beer until they crossed the border into Iraq; Saudi law prohibits all alcoholic beverages (an incentive for U.S. troops to advance rapidly). Notice how sovereignty in part offsets power, in these cases, U.S. power.

**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 (e.g., 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, decided 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 notion of sovereignty remained, and now all states claim sovereignty.

The Congo exemplifies the weak state. Congolese fled civil war, massacres, and hunger in Eastern Congo, hoping to find protection from UN peacekeepers, who were able to offer little. (Walter Astrada/AFP/Getty Images)
Sovereignty has always been partly fictional. Big, rich, and powerful countries routinely influence and even dominate small, poor, and weak countries. All countries are sovereign, but some are more sovereign than others. 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. Syria still seeks to dominate Lebanon.

In our day sovereignty has been slipping. The world community, speaking through the UN, told Iran that developing weapons of mass destruction was not just Iran's business but the world's business. The world felt ashamed that it did not interfere in the massacre of 800,000 Rwandans in 1994. Can mass murder ever be a purely “internal matter”? In 1999, NATO ignored Yugoslav sovereignty in trying to prevent the mass murder of Kosovar Albanians. Nations can no longer hide their misdeeds behind the screen of sovereignty. Several nations in 2001 advanced a new doctrine, “responsibility to protect” (R2P—see page 306), that the international community can intervene in a state that's abusing its citizens, a big erosion of sovereignty.

Supranational entities have appeared. The European Union (EU) is now one giant economic market, and many important decisions are made in its Brussels headquarters, not in its members’ capitals. EU members have surrendered some of their sovereignty to a higher body. Many have given up control of their own currency—a basic attribute of sovereignty—in favor of a new common currency, the euro. Now the EU is trying to build common foreign and defense policies. The trouble here is that, if the EU goes all the way to European unification, it will not erase sovereignty but merely produce a bigger and stronger sovereign entity, one even harder to deal with. In place of many smaller states, we will face one big state. Further, the EU tends to economic protectionism, which could lead to trade wars, one of the themes of this book.

Reflections

SOVEREIGNTY AND YOU

“Why, you can’t do that to me; I’m an American!” say many young Americans who run into trouble with the local law while traveling overseas. But they can do that to you. They can do whatever they want to you; that is their right as a sovereign state. They can cane your behind until it bleeds for spray-painting cars (which Singapore did to one American youth). They can ignore (perhaps gleefully) a plea from the U.S. president for leniency. It’s their law, and they can enforce it any way they like. What can the U.S. embassy or consulate do for you? Suggest an English-speaking lawyer. That’s all. Remember, sovereignty means they are bosses on their own turf, so when you’re overseas, you have to obey their laws. Your U.S. or other foreign passport gives you no special protection.
Key Terms

absolutism (p. 15)  international relations (p. 4)  stratified (p. 13)
balance of power (p. 6)  interwar (p. 8)  strong state (p. 16)
bipolar (p. 10)  Metternichian (p. 6)  superpower (p. 4)
Bismarckian (p. 7)  multipolar (p. 11)  supranational (p. 18)
domestic politics (p. 4)  power (p. 4)  system (p. 4)
force (p. 5)  reification (p. 4)  unipolar (p. 12)
globalization (p. 13)  sovereignty (p. 6)  Westphalian (p. 6)
hierarchy of power (p. 7)  state (p. 15)

Further Reference