

# ITI 1202: Introduction to Global Politics

Unit 3: Realism and Liberalism (1)

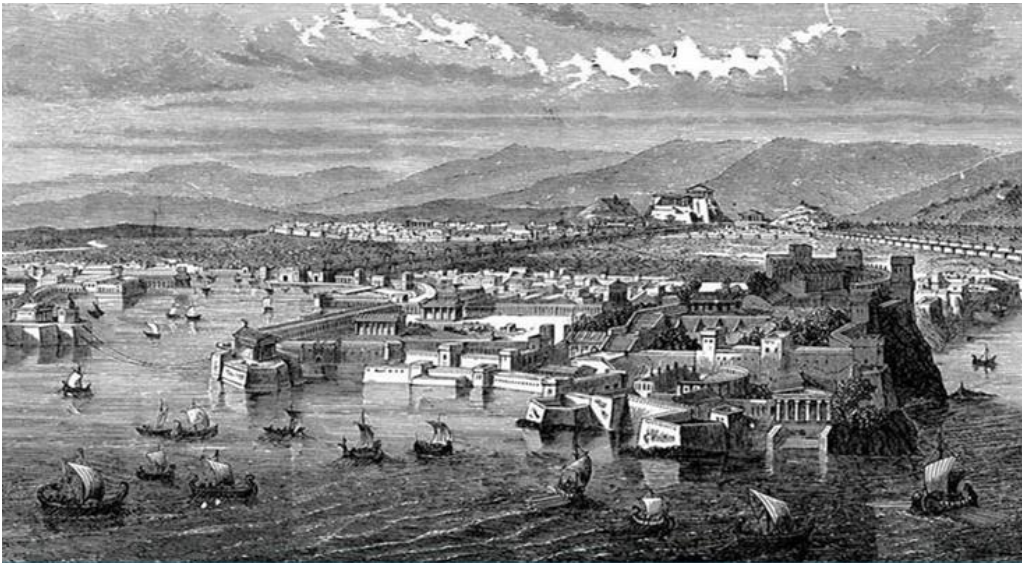
# Realism

- Realism believes that the world, imperfect as it is from a rational point of view, is the result of forces which are inherent in **human nature**.
- To improve the world, one must work with these forces, not against them.
- This being inherently a world of opposing interests and of conflict among them, moral principles can never be fully realized, but at best approximated through the ever-temporary balancing of interests and the ever-precarious settlement of conflicts.

# Realism

- This school of thought (Realist School), then, sees in a system of checks and balances as a universal principle for all pluralistic societies.
- Hans Morgenthau – “It appeals to historic precedent rather than to abstract principles and aims at the achievement of the less evil rather than of the absolute good.”
- In *History of the Peloponnesian War*, written in the fifth century BCE, Thucydides made several famous generalizations about relations between Greece’s city-states.

# Realism



- “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”
- “Of gods we trust and of men we know; it is in their nature to rule whenever they can.”
- “What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear that this caused in Sparta.”
- “So far as right and wrong are concerned . . . there is no difference between the two.”

# What is Realism?



- Thucydides' Athenians speak the language of **realpolitik**, or political realism. The tone of the speech is worldly and cynical, its message thoroughly pragmatic and uncompromising.
- For the Athenians, political interaction between different peoples is ultimately a **struggle for power**, and in this struggle the prime motivations are fear one's **security** and **self-interest**.

# What is Realism?

- They have no time for moral scruples, for in the end all agree that **might is right**; the battle for domination is rooted in **human nature** and everyone would act as they do, given the same opportunities
- Thus, the state augments its security by increasing its domestic capacities, building up its economic prowess and forming alliances with other states based on similar interests
- It is an approach to international relations that came to the fore in the mid-20th century and is still prominent today.

# Central Assumptions of Realism

1. The state is the principal actor in war and in politics in general.
2. The state is assumed to be a unitary actor.
3. The decision-makers acting in the name of the state are assumed to be rational actors.
4. The state has the right to protect itself from its enemies, both external and internal.

# Elements of Realism

1. a pessimistic view of human nature;
2. a conviction that international relations are necessarily conflictual and that international conflicts are ultimately resolved by war;
3. a high regard for the values of national security and state survival;
4. a basic skepticism that there can be progress in international politics which is comparable to that in domestic political life.



# I. Pessimistic view of human nature

- In realist thought, humans are characterized as being preoccupied with their own well-being in their competitive relations with each other.
- Human Beings do not wish to be taken advantage of. They consequently strive to have the 'edge' in relations with other people—including international relations with other countries.
- Human beings are considered to be basically the same everywhere. Thus, the desire to enjoy an advantage over others and to avoid domination by others is universal.

# I. Pessimistic view of human nature

- Hans Morgenthau sees men and women as having a ‘will to power.’
- Realists believe that the acquisition and possession of power, and the deployment and uses of power, are central preoccupations of political activity.
- International politics is ‘power politics’ –an area of rivalry, conflict, and war between states in which the same basic problems of defending the national interest and ensuring the survival of the state, and the security of its people, repeat themselves over and over again.

- **Thomas Hobbes's** Doctrine of **the State of Nature** – refers to that pre-civil condition as the 'state of nature.'
- It is an extremely adverse human circumstance in which there is a permanent 'state of war' 'of every man against every man;' in their natural condition every man, woman, and child is endangered by everybody else, life is constantly at risk, and nobody can be confident about his or her security and survival for any reasonable length of time.
- People are living in constant fear of each other.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbzbUj7M4E8>

# State of Nature = Anarchy

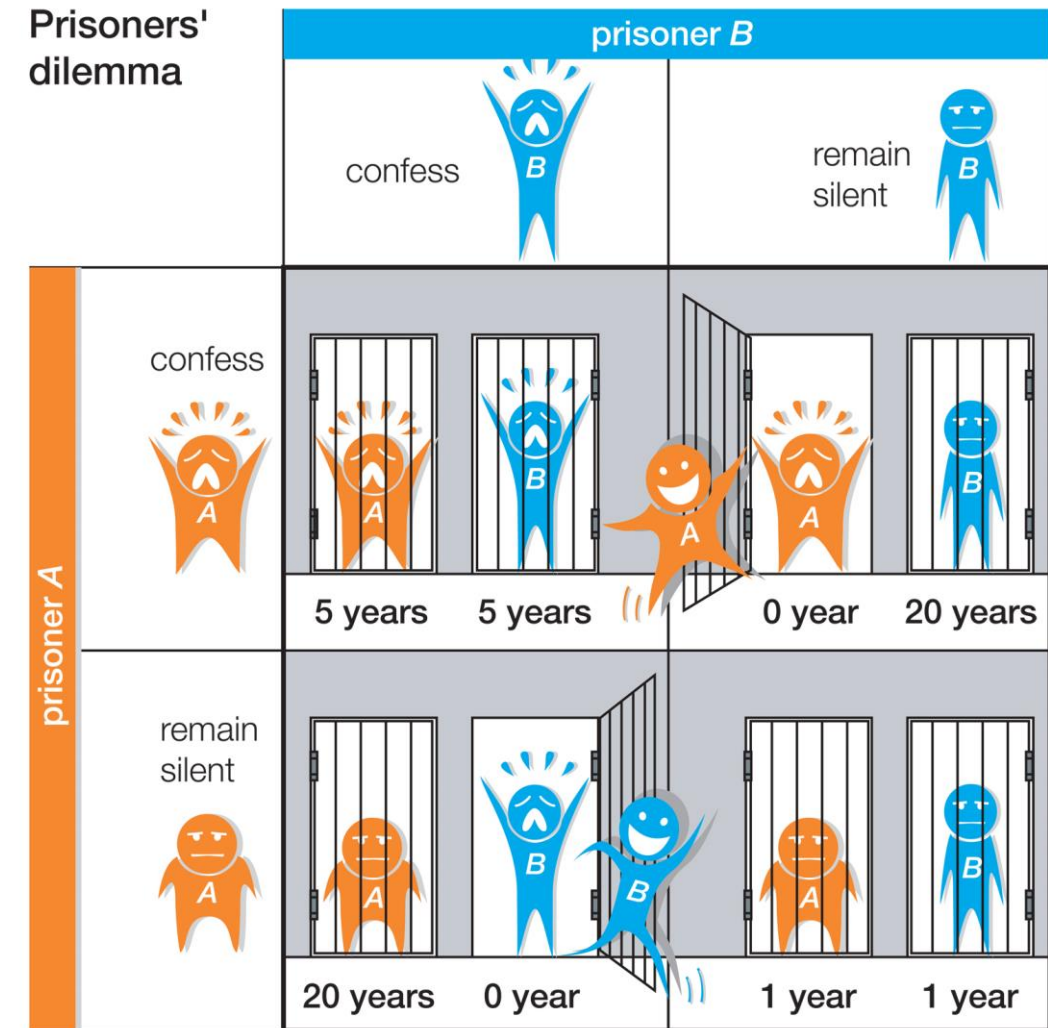
- According to Hobbes, there is no escape from the international security because there is no possibility of forming a global state or world government. The main point about the international state of nature is that it is a condition of actual or potential war.
- The state is organized and equipped for war in order to provide domestic peace for its subjects or citizens. Domestic peace can be realized in this way. However, international peace is an unrealizable dream and a dangerous illusion. Why?

## II. The international state system is anarchy

- It is a system with no higher, overarching authority, no **world government**. The state is the preeminent actor in world politics.
- International relations are primarily relations of states. The main point of foreign policy is to advance and defend the **interests of the state**.
- There is an international hierarchy of power among states and the most important states in world politics are great powers.

# II. The international state system is anarchy

- International relations are understood by realists as primarily a struggle between the great powers for domination and security.
- Lesser and weaker powers are secondary importance.



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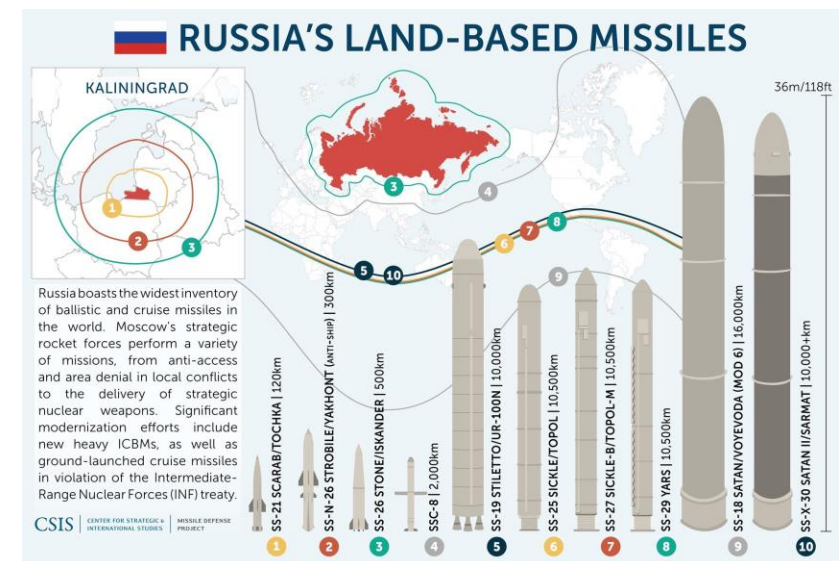
# III. National security and state survival

- The state is considered to be essential for the good life of its citizens.
- The state is thus seen as a protector of its territory, of the population, and of their distinctive and valued way of life. The national interest is the final arbiter in judging foreign policy.



# III. National security and state survival

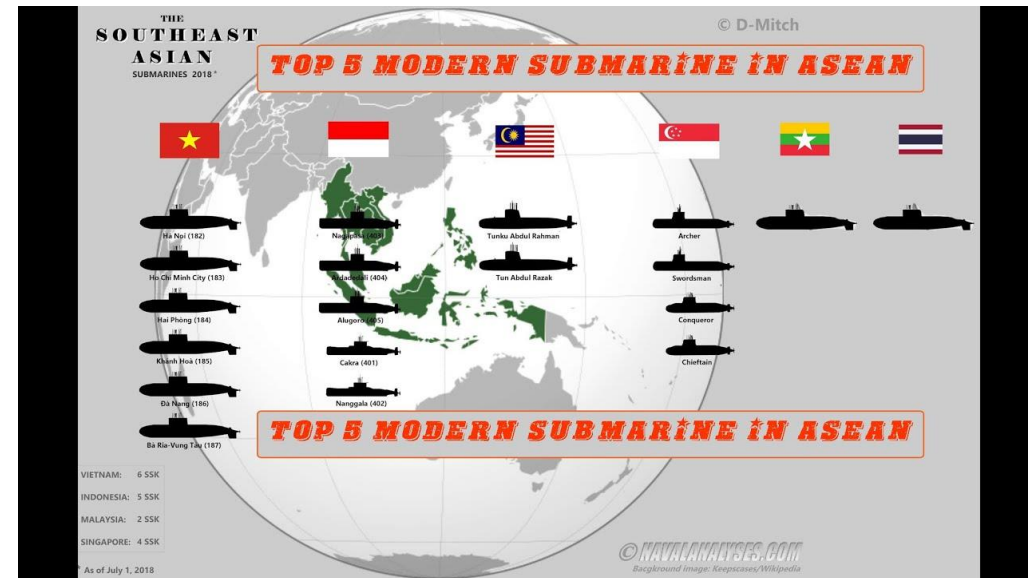
- The fact that all states must pursue their own national interest means that other countries and governments can never be relied upon or completely trusted.
- That makes treaties and all other agreements, conventions, customs, rules, laws, and so on between states merely expedient arrangements which can and will be set aside if they conflict with the vital interests of states.





# Machiavellianism

- There are no international obligations in the legal or ethical sense of the word between independent states.
- The only fundamental responsibility of a statesman is to advance and to defend the international interest.
- Why states cannot be trusted?



# Machiavellianism

- Power (the Lion) and deception (the Fox) are the two essential means for the conduct of the foreign policy, according to the political teaching of [Niccolò Machiavelli](#).
- The supreme political value is national freedom, i.e., independence.
- The main responsibility of the ruler is always to seek advantages and to defend the interests of their state and thus ensure its survival.



# Machiavellianism

## Aukus: French president says Australian PM lied over submarine deal

🕒 31 October



GETTY IMAGES

Emmanuel Macron with Scott Morrison at the Elysee Palace in Paris in June

## AUKUS drama

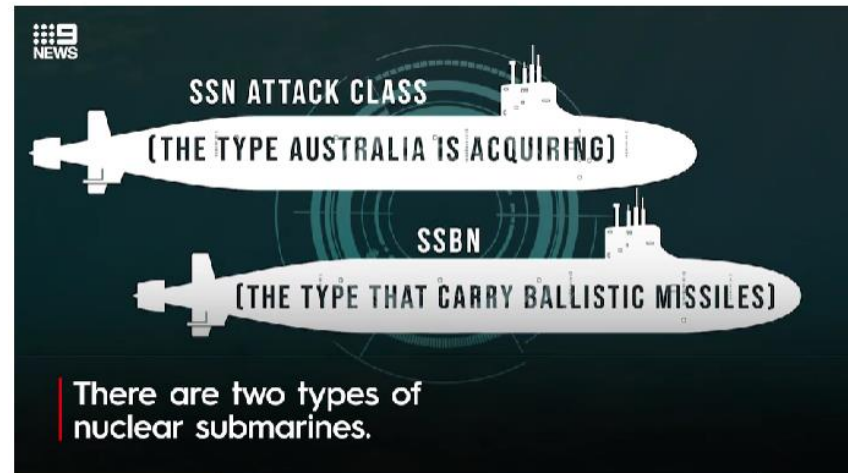
A "cheated" France has joined China in taking aim at Australia as the drama over the nuclear submarine deal with the US and UK refuses to go away.

**Matt Young**  
@MattYoung 6 min read November 25, 2021 - 7:32AM news.com.au



## French Foreign Minister says Australia 'cheated' France in Indonesia

By 9News Staff | 8:18am Nov 25, 2021





# Machiavellianism

- That requires strength; if a state is not strong it will be a standing invitation for others to prey upon it; the ruler must therefore be a lion. That also requires cunning and—if necessary—ruthlessness in the pursuit of self-interest: the ruler must also be a fox.
- Machiavellian assumption is that the world is a dangerous place. But it is also, by the same token, an opportune place. If any political leader hopes to survive in such a world, he or she must always be aware of the dangers, must anticipate them, and must take the necessary precautions against them.

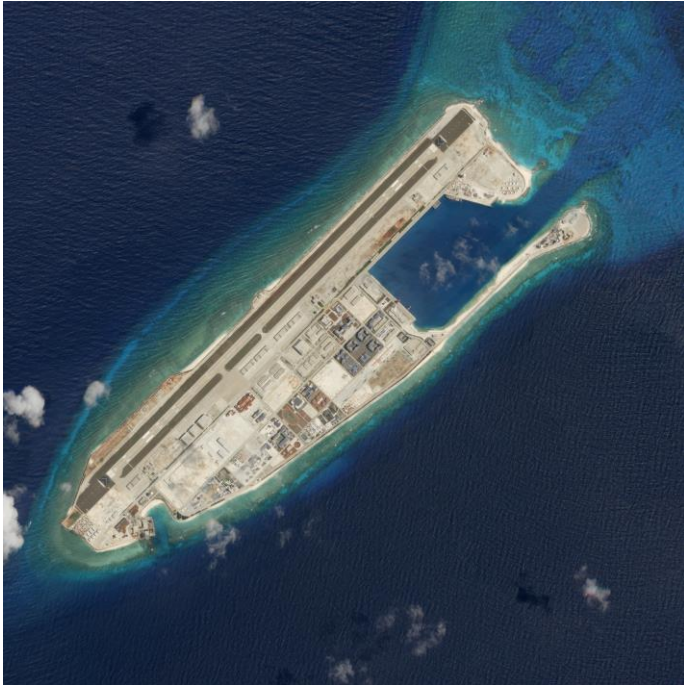
# Machiavellianism

- And if they hope to prosper, to enrich themselves, and to bask in the reflected glory of their accumulated power and wealth, it is necessary for them to recognize and to exploit the opportunities that present themselves and to do that more quickly, more skillfully and—if necessary—more ruthlessly than any of their rivals or enemies.
- Do not wait for things to happen. Anticipate the motives and actions of others. Do not wait for others to act. Act before they do.

# Machiavellianism



graphic by Lindsey Burrows



# IV. There can be no progressive change in world politics

- That also means that realist theory is considered to be valid not only at particular times, but at all times, because the foregoing basic facts of world politics never change. Why?
- **Thucydides** said in effect that political animals are highly unequal in their power and capabilities to dominate others and to defend themselves. All states, large or small, must adapt to that given the reality of unequal power and conduct themselves accordingly. If states do that, they will survive and perhaps even prosper.

# IV. There can be no progressive change in world politics

- If states fail to do that, they will place themselves in jeopardy and may even be destroyed. Ancient history is full of many examples of states and empires, small and large, which were destroyed.
- Foresight, prudence, caution, and judgement are the characteristic political ethics of classical realism that Thucydides and most other classical realists are at pains to distinguish from private morality and the principle of justice.

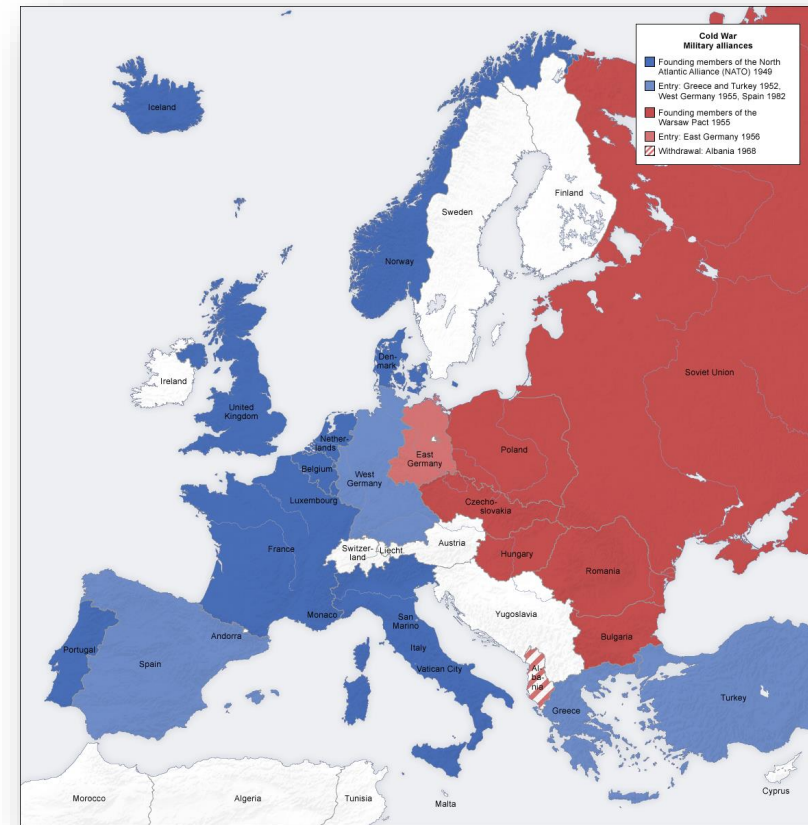


# Realism: Balance of Power

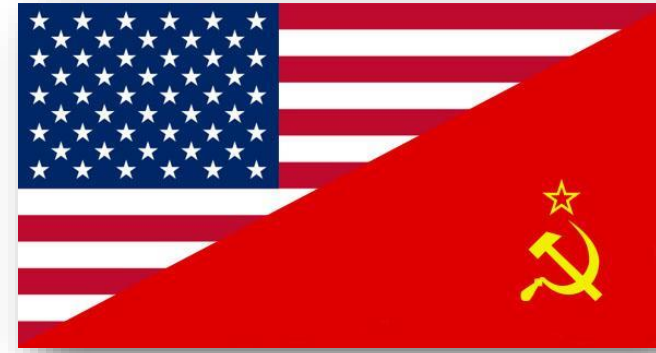
- If a country and its government wish to survive and prosper, they better pay attention to these fundamental political maxims of international relations.
- **Balance of Power** exists when there is parity or stability between competing forces. As a term in international law for a 'just equilibrium' between the members of the family of nations, it expresses the doctrine intended to prevent any one nation from becoming sufficiently strong so as to enable it to enforce its will upon the rest.

# Realism: Balance of Power

- “BOP” is a central concept in neorealist theory. Within a balance of power system, a state may choose to engage in either balancing or bandwagoning behavior.
- In a time of war, the decision to balance or to bandwagon may well determine the survival of the state.
- Preserving the balance of power as a conscious goal of foreign policy.

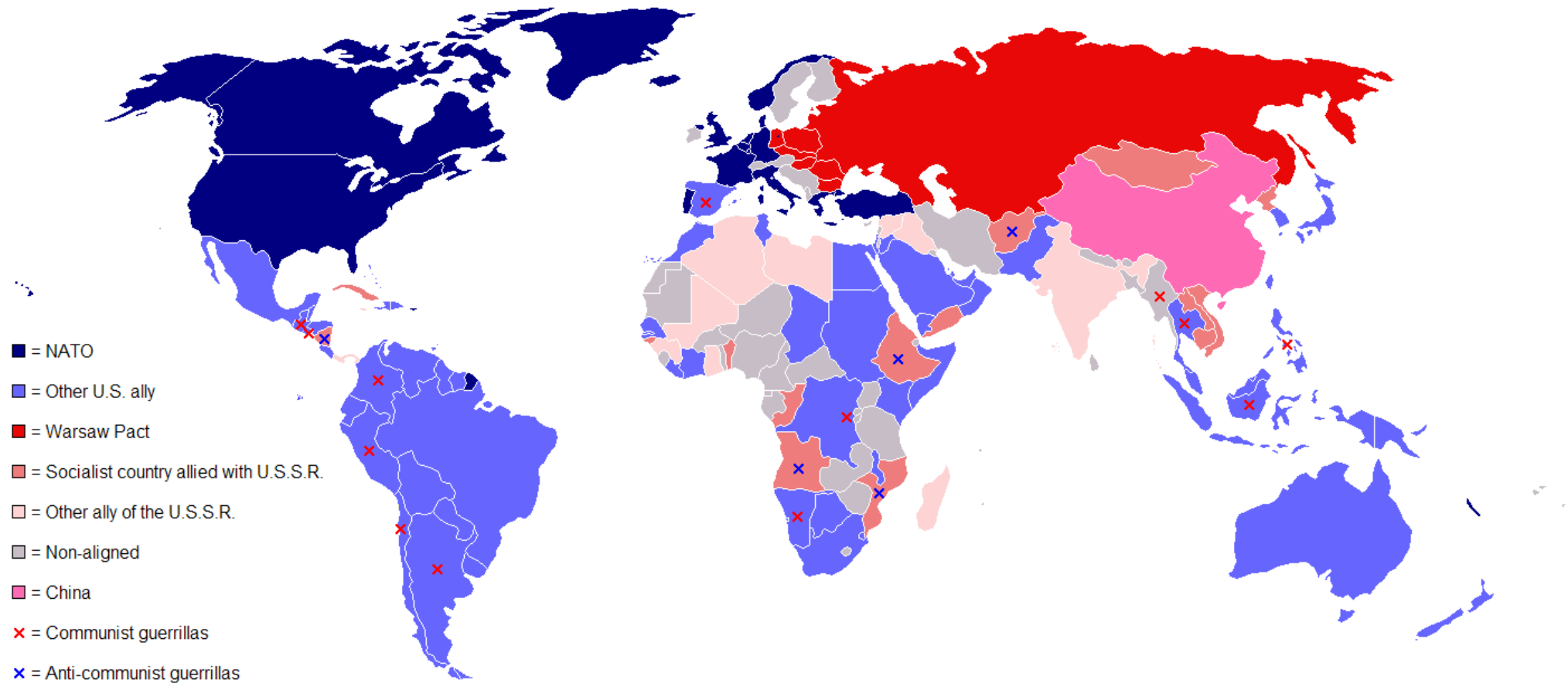


# Realism: Bipolarity



- Bipolarity is a distribution of power in which two states have the majority of economic, military, and cultural influence internationally or regionally.
- For example, in the Cold War, most Western and democratic states would fall under the influence of the USA, while most Communist states would fall under the influence of the USSR.
- After this, the two powers will normally maneuver for the support of the unclaimed areas.

# Realism: Cold War/Bipolarity



# Multipolar System

