

POLS1102: The Contemporary International System

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Required Readings

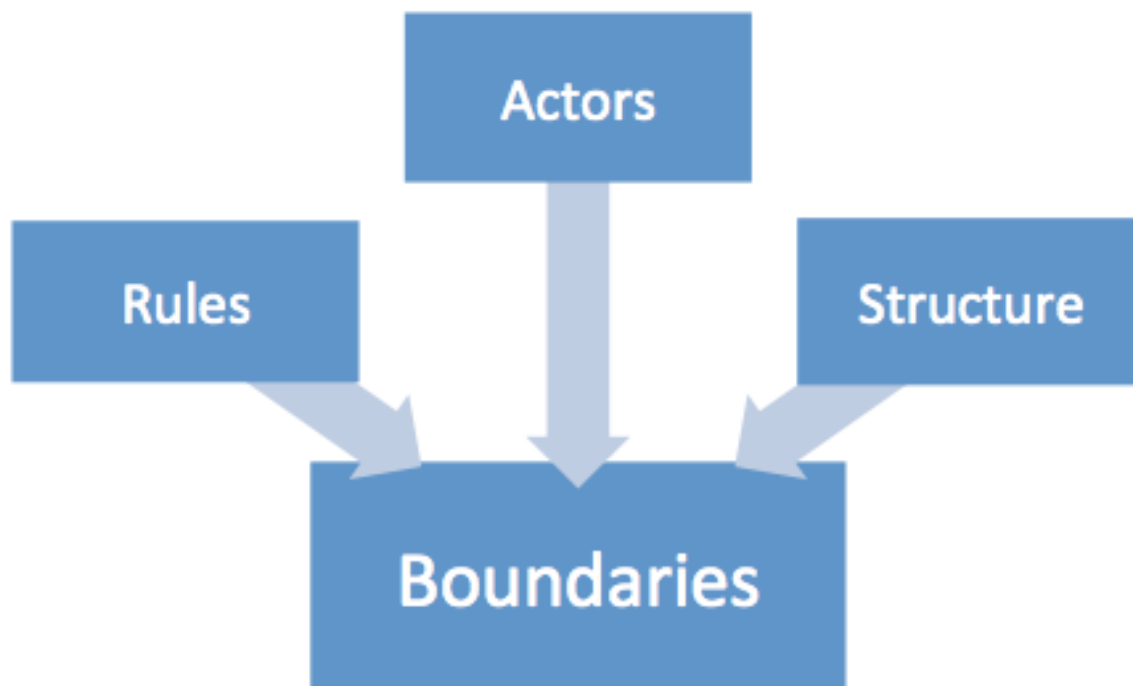
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Lecture 1: The Evolution of the International System

What is a system?



Actors: *Agents or political units that play a significant role in international politics.*

- *Very flexible* - Reflects the time period.
 - *Example:* Pre-WWI = Empires.
- *Do not* have to be '*political*' in nature.
 - *Example:* Corporations and international organisations.

Structures: Who holds the power? How is power distributed?

- *Unipolar* - One dominant actor.
- *Bipolar* - Two dominant actors.
- *Tripolar* - Three dominant actors.
- *Multipolar* - Multiple dominant actors.

Rules: Principles of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

- *Do not* have to be *codified*.

Boundaries: *Limitations to the scope of a system.*

- *Do not* have to be *clear-cut*.
- Are usually *not fixed* - May expand or contract.
- May be *physical* or *ideological*.
 - *Example:* Indian international system is separated from the Chinese system by a mountain range.