

## CHAPTER 3

# Geopolitical Structure and Theory

The subjects of this chapter are the geopolitical structures that are formed by the interaction of geographical and political forces and the developmental processes that guide the changes that take place within those structures. Geopolitical structures are composed of geopolitical patterns and features. “Pattern” refers to the shape, size, and physical/human geographical characteristics of the geopolitical units and the networks that tie them together, and these distinguish geopolitical units from other units. Features are the political-geographical nodes, areas, and boundaries that contribute to the unit’s uniqueness and influence its cohesiveness and other measures of its structural effectiveness.

For the most part, geopolitical structures are organized along the following hierarchically ordered spatial levels:

1. the geostrategic realm—the most extensive level, or macro level;
2. the geopolitical region—a subdivision of the realm that represents the middle level, or meso level;
3. national states, highly autonomous regions, quasi states, and territorial subdivisions within and across states at the lowest level, or micro level.

Outside of this ordering of structures are regions or clusters of states that are not located within the realm or regional frameworks. These include regions such as shatterbelts, whose internal fragmentation is intensified by pressures of major powers from competing realms; compression zones, which are even more severely torn apart by internal divisions and the interference of neighboring states within the region; and gateways, which serve as bridges between realms, regions, or states. Convergence zones are regions caught between realms and whose ultimate status is yet to be determined.

The maturity of a geopolitical structure is reflected in the extent to which its patterns and features support the unit’s political cohesiveness. The developmental approach posits that structures evolve through successive stages—from atomization/undifferentiation to differentiation, specialization, and, finally, specialized integration. Revolutionary or cataclysmic breaks in the process may result in de-development and the beginning of the cycle anew. Another result of such breaks could be rapid movement to a higher stage.

## Structure

### GEOGRAPHICAL SETTINGS

The earth's two major physical/human geographical settings are the maritime and the continental. These settings provide the arenas for the development of distinctive geopolitical structures. The civilizations, cultures, and political institutions that have evolved within these two settings are fundamentally different in their economies, human cultures and traditions, spirit, and geopolitical outlooks.

Maritime settings are exposed to the open sea, either from coastal reaches or from inland areas with access to the seas. The vast majority of peoples who live there have benefited from climates with moderate temperatures and adequate rainfall and ease of contact with other parts of the world, often behind the protective screen of inland physical barriers. Sea trade and immigration have flourished in such settings, contributing to the diversity of their peoples in terms of race, culture, and language. They have also sped up the process of economic specialization. The trading and other systems of exchange that have emerged from this specialization have had open, politically liberalizing effects. Of the world's major and regional powers, only the United States has direct access to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean Sea. Much of its interior is linked to these waters by the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and Missouri inland waterway systems.

Continental settings are characterized by extreme climates and vast distances from the open seas. Such settings often suffer from lack of intensive interaction with other parts of the world because of the barrier effects of mountains, deserts, and high plateaus or because of sheer distance. Historically, their economies have been more self-sufficient than maritime ones, while their political systems, more isolated from new influences and ideas, tend to develop as closed and autocratic.

Urbanization and industrialization have come much later to the continental arena than to the maritime one. The lag continues in the present postindustrial age. While maritime areas have forged ahead by generating and diffusing high-technology innovations, many continental areas remain heavily rural or are characterized by aging industrial bases that drag down the economies of their urban areas.

Geopolitical structures are shaped by two forces—the centrifugal and the centripetal. At the national level, both are linked to the psychobiological sense of territoriality.<sup>1</sup> The centrifugal force is the drive for political separation that motivates a people to seek territorial separation from those whom they consider outsiders, who might impose different political systems, languages, cultures, or religions upon them. In this context, space with clear boundaries serves as a defining and a defensive mechanism. The centripetal force promotes the drive for political unity that is reinforced by a people's sense of being inextricably linked to a particular territory. Such territoriality is expressed through symbolic as well as physical ties of a people to a particular land.

At one geographical scale, forces of separation may dominate, while forces for unity may prevail at another scale. Thus, centrifugal forces may drive a people to secede from another state in order to protect their unique identity. Immigration into countries by groups which either resist or are excluded from cultural and national absorption are also likely to have a centrifugal effect. At the same time, centripetal forces may propel nations toward a unity of

regional action in such areas as commerce, military defense, or confederation with another state.

While drives for separation and unity are intertwined, they are not always in balance. The imperialist system that kept its form of world balance was destroyed by World War II. Global disequilibrium then followed. Balance was restored when a unifying Europe and a recovering Japan joined in strategic alliance with the United States to counter the Soviet-Chinese drive for Communist world hegemony.

The flow of ideas, migrations, trade, capital, communications, and arms takes place beyond, as well as within, the different structural levels of realm, region, and state. States may move from one level to another. Such change reflects the interplay of political power and ideological, economic, cultural, racial, religious, and national forces, as well as national security concerns and territorial ambitions. The geopolitical restructuring subsequent to the end of the Cold War is testimony to this dynamism. Demise of the former Soviet Union widened the opportunity for China to emerge as leader of an independent geostrategic realm, combining continental and maritime characteristics, thus enhancing Beijing's role in world affairs. The collapse of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has provided Nigeria with an opening to expand its role as a regional power, thereby extending its influence from West into Central Africa. However, Nigeria has not been able to exploit this opening because of the widening divisions and fighting between its Muslim north and Christian south. The rift has been exacerbated by the terrorist actions of Boko Haram, the Islamist jihadist movement of the north.

The Iraq War has strengthened Iran's position as a regional power, with the potential for becoming the leader of the Shiite eastern half of the Middle East. At the same time, the war in Afghanistan has played a major role in weakening the already vulnerable central government of Pakistan because it has led to the emergence of a Pashtun-based Pakistani Taliban.

## GEOPOLITICAL FEATURES

Despite variations in function and scale, all structures have certain geopolitical features in common:

*Historic or Nuclear Cores.* These are the areas in which states originate and out of which the state idea has developed. The relationship between the physical environment of the core and the political-cultural system that evolves may become embedded and persist as an important element of national or regional identity and ideology.

*Capitals or Political Centers.* Capitals serve as the political and symbolic focus of activities that govern the behavior of people in politically defined territories. While its functions may be essentially administrative, the built landscape of a national capital—its architectural forms, buildings, monuments, and layout—has considerable symbolic value in mobilizing support for the state. Capitals may be selected for a variety of reasons—for their geographic centrality to the rest of the national space, for the defensive qualities of their sites, or for their frontier locations, either as defensive points or springboards for territorial acquisition.

*Ecumenes.* These are the areas of greatest density of population and economic activity. Ecumenes have traditionally been created and expanded by dense transportation networks to reflect economic concentration. In today's postindustrial information age, the boundaries of ecumenes can be expanded to include areas that are linked by modern telecommunications, and therefore ecumenes are less tied to transportation clustering. Because the ecumene is the most advanced portion of the state economically as well as its most populous sector, it is usually the state's most important political area.

*Effective National Territory (ENT) and Effective Regional Territory (ERT).* These are moderately populated areas with favorable resource bases. As areas of high development potential, they provide outlets for population growth and dispersion and for economic expansion. Their extent is an indication of future strength, especially when they are contiguous to the ecumene.

*Empty Areas.* These are essentially devoid of population, with little prospect for mass human settlement. Depending on their location and extent, they may provide defensive depth and sites for weapons testing. Some are important as sources of minerals and for tourism.

*Boundaries.* These mark off political areas. While they are linear, they often occur within broader border zones. Their demarcation may become a source of conflict.

*Nonconforming Sectors.* These may include minority separatist areas within states and isolated or "rogue" states within regions. In many cases, these minority areas are concentrated at the periphery of the country, far removed from the economic advantages provided within the ecumene and parts of the ENT. Even where such areas possess riches of natural resources, their fruits tend to flow to the national center.

The degree to which geopolitical features are developed and the patterns formed by their interconnections are the bases for determining the stage of maturity of a geopolitical realm or region.

Structural changes produced by these features and patterns may be likened to geological changes that are brought about by the movement of underlying plates and subplates, which eventually regain a new state of balance or equilibrium known as "isostasy." These geopolitical structures are formed by historic civilization-building processes and reconfigured by both short- and long-term geopolitical forces. Geostrategic realms are, in effect, the major structural plates that cover most of the earth's surface. Their movement may result in the addition of some areas to one realm at the expense of another; new realms will be formed when the movements are revolutionary. Shatterbelts, which form zones of contact between realms, may be divided into separate subplates, such as compression zones, by such movement or totally subsumed within one realm. Regions, or medium-sized plates, may also change their shapes and boundaries as they shift within realms or from one realm to another, becoming convergence zones. Compression zones, or regional subplates, may be formed or disappear with shifting within regional plates.

The most radical shifting of geopolitical plates in recent decades has taken place at the geostrategic level. Following World War II, the world divided into a bipolar and rigidly hierarchical structure. The end of the Cold War signaled a revolution of equal magnitude. With

the collapse of the Soviet Union and the crumbling of its empire, the maritime realm overrode the Eurasian continental realm, detaching most of Eastern Europe from the sway of Russia. The boundary between the two realms continues to be fluid, as Russia seeks to pull Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova into its Eurasian Economic Community/Eurasian Customs Union, while the EU attempts to attract them to its fold through trade partnerships. The Eurasian Customs Union was founded with Kazakhstan and Belarus in 2010. In addition, the continental “plate,” which had already been weakened by the Sino-Soviet schism, has now broken in two, with East Asia emerging as a separate realm. With the weakening of the Russian core, China has been able to pull away from the heartland and move partly toward the maritime realm through the force of international trade and technology. As a further result of this shifting, the strategic and economic interests of the West, Russia, India, and China now compete within the South Caucasus and Central Asian Eurasian convergence zone. This represents a challenge to Russia, which commands this zone militarily and continues to consider it as belonging to the continental plate.

Another way of looking at how structures divide and redivide at different levels is to consider the world not as a pane of glass but as a diamond. The force of blows shatters glass into fragments of unpredictable sizes and shapes. Diamonds, by contrast, break along existing lines of cleavage, forming new shapes. Geopolitical boundaries follow combinations of physical, cultural, religious, and political cleavages. These boundaries change with shifts in the power balance between political cores, and new boundaries then follow latent cleavages that now come to the surface.

## **STRUCTURAL LEVELS**

### **The Geostrategic Realm**

In the spatial hierarchy of the global structure, the highest level is the geostrategic realm. These realms are parts of the world large enough to possess characteristics and functions that are globally influencing and that serve the strategic needs of the major powers, states, and regions they comprise. Their frameworks are shaped by circulation patterns that link people, goods, and ideas and are held together by control of strategically located land and sea passageways.

The overriding factor that distinguishes a realm is the degree to which it is shaped by conditions of “maritimity” or “continentality.” In today’s world, three geostrategic realms have evolved: the Atlantic and Pacific economically advanced maritime realm; the Eurasian continental Russian heartland; and the mixed continental-maritime East Asia. India, an international high-technology powerhouse, has a huge impoverished farm populace and remains essentially continental in terms of trade and outlook. Its progress has been stymied by cultural, linguistic, and religious divisions as well as its long-standing conflict with Pakistan. This has limited the ability of India to extend its reach throughout the Indian Ocean and the fringes of Africa and Southeast Asia that border it.

Realms have been a factor of international life from the time that empires first emerged. In modern times, geostrategic realms have been carved out by British maritime and czarist

Russian land-power realms. The United States created a mixed realm consisting of both transcontinental power and maritime sway over part of the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and much of the Pacific. Today's trade-dependent maritime realm, which embraces the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean basins and their interior seas, has been shaped by international exchange. Mercantilism, capitalism, and industrialization gave rise to the maritime-oriented national state and to economic and political colonialism. Access to the sea facilitated circulation, and moderate coastal climates with habitable interiors offered living conditions that aided economic development. The open systems that ultimately developed within the leading states of this realm have facilitated the struggle for democracy, and movements across the seas have spawned the creation of pluralistic societies.

Expanding international trade and investment, reinforced by mass-migration movements, has defined the maritime realm for the past century and a half. From the mid-1890s to World War I, European (and then US) imperialism created a global trading system that was imposed by military force and enhanced by revolutionary advances in transportation and communications. This system was shattered by World War I and the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The global economy was rebuilt under US leadership following World War II. By the 1970s, the share of world goods that entered the arena of international trade had climbed back to its pre-1914 levels. This proportion surged in the 1990s, due in large part to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor organization, the World Trade Organization (WTO). It has continued to climb.

The world's leading exporters and importers, the members of the Group of Seven (G-7), are all maritime realm nations—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Canada. China has joined these ranks, owing to the unprecedented economic strength of its maritime south and central coastal regions.

Since the lifting of Mao's restrictive policies in the late 1970s by his Communist successors, maritime China has once again become the main engine for China's economic growth and entrance into the world of labor-intensive manufacturing of consumer items, high technology, and financial services. The coastal regions, collectively known as the "Golden Coast," have reinforced the maritime component of the Chinese setting, allowing Beijing to break the economic grip of Eurasian continentality and assume separate geostrategic status. Guangdong/Hong Kong, Fujian, and Shanghai have been the historic foci of China for trade and cultural exchange with the outside world. The coastal regions have drawn millions of migrants from the interior of the country. They have been the source of large-scale emigration, many of whose participants have maintained strong familial and village links with the home country.

In recent years, industrialization has been extended northward into the Beijing-Tianjin area and to Xian, deep in the interior. Trade is the most important measure of China's economic rise. While China's share of world trade is 11 percent, its share of the maritime realm totals 18 percent. The United States and China are equal in percentage of total trade only because US service exports are three times those of China. Such data do not measure China's much lower productivity per person in terms of output and its far lower per capita incomes than enjoyed in

the large maritime powers as well as in South Korea and Taiwan. Nevertheless, through its favorable balance of trade, China has been able to accumulate huge capital reserves, which provides great economic and political leverage in world affairs. The frenzy for development has resulted in a high level of pollution, especially in the large coastal cities—a consequence that will be difficult and expensive to cope with.

Of significant geopolitical importance is the fact that China has both maritime and continental orientation. China lay within the continental Eurasian orbit for much of the Cold War, even after the Sino-Soviet schism in the 1960s. With the introduction of capitalism by Deng Xiaoping after Mao's death in 1976, foreign contacts and international trade were grafted onto China's closed, continental character. Continentality has been associated historically with political authoritarianism. Despite economic liberalization, which has fostered a private capital sector, state capitalism and authoritarian government persists in China as it does in Russia and its former republics.

The people of China's continental, inland-oriented north and interior, which are essentially rural with urban pockets of now-antiquated heavy industry, have until recently been more supportive of autocratic Communist governmental state policies than are the peoples of the south, the east, and the central coastal regions, which have long been opened to the influences of the outside world.

China has not become part of the maritime world (as predicted by Mackinder and Spykman in their times and Richard Nixon in his) despite its dramatic rise as a trading nation during the past quarter of a century. Nearly half of China's populace remains mainly engaged in small-scale agriculture, and most reside in the continental regions. The remarkable economic growth and prosperity enjoyed by coastal China has widened the economic gap with the rural interior, bringing on unrest and strikes. Beijing has adopted new policies aimed at closing this gap through developing the interior, with the help of high-speed rail and air systems. Urbanization and industrialization of this region, which is now taking place, remains a formidable challenge.

For the continentally oriented Chinese, the mountains and grasslands, not the sea, hold spiritual, mystical attractions. And it is the common border with Russia that serves as both lure and threat. The Sino-Soviet clash over the present-day boundary had historic roots that go back to Chinese claims on lands annexed by czarist Russia between 1858 and 1881—1.5 million square kilometers in the regions east of Lake Baikal and the far eastern provinces. When the rift took place between the two continental Eurasian realm powers, beginning with Stalin's death in 1953 and culminating in the breaking of diplomatic relations in 1960, the issue was more than ideology and strategy. It was also China's resentment at being treated as a subordinate power. Reinstitution of diplomatic ties between Moscow and Beijing in 1989 reflected the reality that they had become equals. Most recently, the two powers have grown closer to one another as Russian pipelines have begun to deliver oil and gas to China, and the two countries have forged common policies toward Syria.

Withdrawal of American and Soviet power from Indochina has enabled China to extend the new continental-maritime East Asian geostrategic realm southward to include the Indochinese states of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and eastern Myanmar. These constitute a separate

geopolitical region within the East Asian realm. The boundaries of the East Asian realm are forged by China's reach to other parts of Asia. Tibet and Xinjiang afford contact with South and Central Asia. In the northeast Pacific, where the maritime, Eurasian, and East Asian realms meet, North Korea is part of East Asia. A reunified Korean Peninsula, however, could become either a gateway among the three realms or a compression zone.

The Eurasian continental realm, which is anchored today by heartlandic Russia, is inner oriented and less influenced by outside economic forces or cultural contacts. Until the mid-twentieth century, the major modes of transportation there were land and inland river. The self-sufficient nature of the economy, belated entrance into the industrial age, and lack of sea access to world resources all contributed to politically closed systems and societies. Highly centralized and generally despotic forms of government through the ages became the breeding grounds for the emergence of Communism and other forms of authoritarianism in the cores of the realm.

The continentality that pervades the Eurasian heartlandic realm is both a physical and a psychological condition. Russia/the former Soviet Union has historically been hemmed in. Even when technology alters the previous reality (e.g., Soviet conquests in outer space, nuclear and conventional weapons achievements, and energy wealth), the earlier mentality persists. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the threat of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion reinforce the Russian perception of being boxed in by the outside world. Russia's international trade is only 3 percent of the world total. Its GDP is based heavily on the export of oil and gas, which reflects inflated energy prices that are likely to fluctuate.

The boundaries of the heartlandic Russian realm have changed substantially. To its west, with the exception of Belarus and Transnistria, the Eastern European states are no longer within the political grip of Moscow, while the boundary between the heartland and the maritime realm has become a zone rather than a line. The accession to NATO of the Baltic states, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania, intensified Moscow's suspicions of Western actions that penetrate its traditional sphere of interest. US plans to place an antiballistic missile shield in the Czech Republic and Poland have increased tensions, as has the prospect of admission of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO. While a new Cold War is not in the offing, Moscow has already used and will continue to use its vast energy resources as political leverage to block expansion of NATO further into Russia's Black Sea borderlands, particularly Ukraine and Georgia.

Elsewhere along the boundaries of the realm, the former Soviet republics of the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia are not free of Russia's strategic oversight, although they have gained their independence. The efforts of the West to penetrate these regions in pursuit of oil and gas wealth, as well as the need for military bases for the war in Afghanistan, required Russian cooperation in order to succeed. In the Middle East, such cooperation is also needed, as has been demonstrated by Moscow's initiative in persuading Syria to dismantle its chemical weapons. Moscow also has considerable influence in Iran and is a major arms supplier to several Middle Eastern countries. The West cannot discount Russia's strategic assets in the



convergence zone and the Middle East should competition between Washington and Moscow be rekindled.

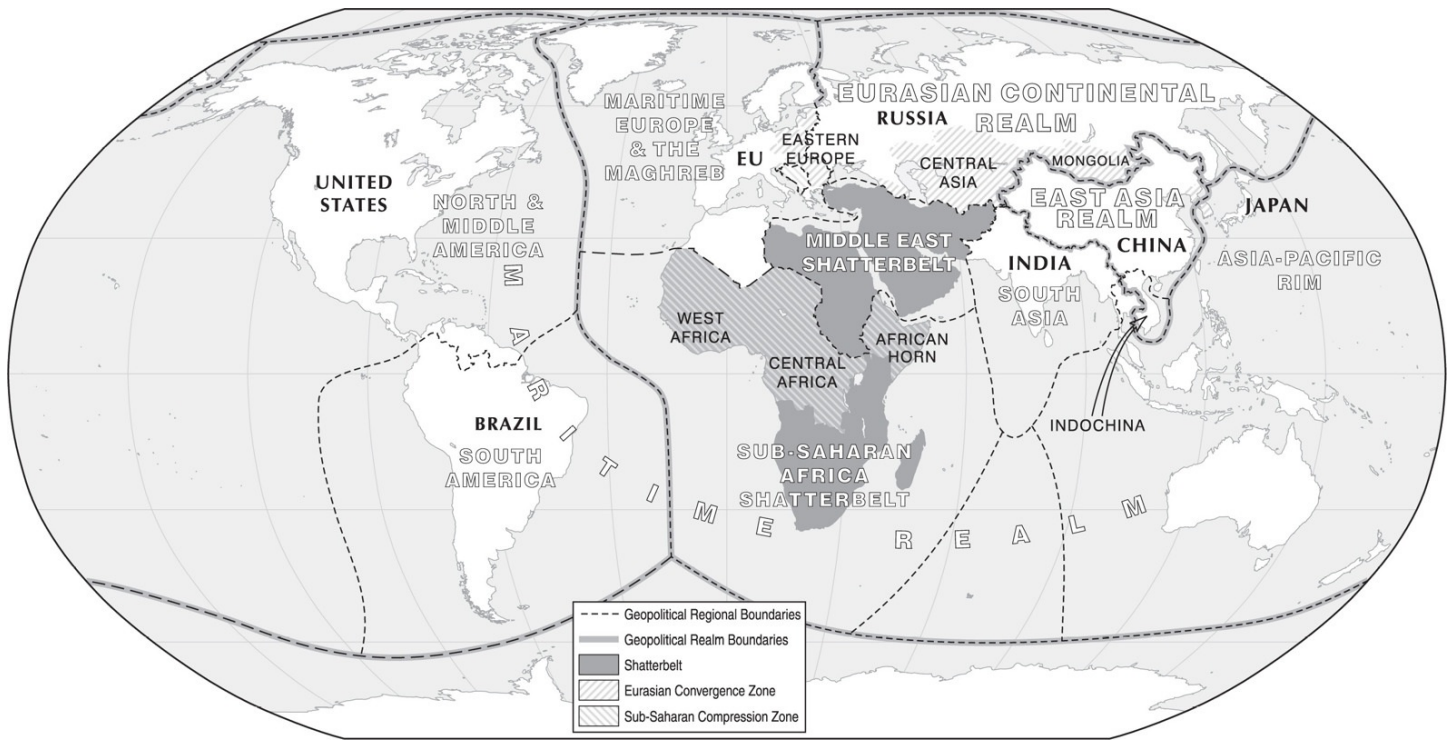
## The Geopolitical Region

The second level of geopolitical structure is the geopolitical region. Most regions are subdivisions of realms, although some may be caught between or independent of them. Regions are connected by geographical contiguity and political, cultural, and military interactions and in many cases by the historical migration and intermixture of peoples and shared histories of national emergence.

The regions of the maritime realm are North and Middle America, South America, maritime Europe and the Maghreb, and the Asia-Pacific Rim. Geographically they are framed by the world's two great oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific. The Eurasian continental realm now consists of the heartlandic Russian region, which extends into Belarus and eastern Ukraine, and the breakaway Transnistrian province of Moldova, which has declared independence with Russia's support. Two more regions lie within the realm—Central Asia and the Trans-Caucasus. The East Asian realm is divided into two regions—mainland China and Indochina (the latter consisting of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and extending into eastern Myanmar).

South Asia stands apart from the three geostrategic realms as an independent geopolitical region. It includes India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and western Myanmar. The long-term prospect for this region is to evolve into a realm led by India that embraces the African and Southeast Asian coastlands of the Indian Ocean basin. As previously noted, India must first address its internal fragmentation.

The Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa are shatterbelts. The future of the Eurasian convergence zone is yet to be determined—it may become a shatterbelt or a gateway geopolitical region (figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1. The Geopolitical World: Beginning of the Twenty-First Century**

Regions range in their stages of development from those that are cohesive to those that are atomized. The prime example of a tightly knit region is maritime Europe and the Maghreb. Its core, the twenty-eight-member European Union (EU), has begun to create a “European” culture and identity through regional laws, currency, and regulations. It is unlikely that the union will evolve into a highly centralized body with a constitution that would override some of the cherished national and political values held by its member states. On the other hand, the EU has already demonstrated that it is far more than a loose federation by the establishment of the eighteen-member eurozone and the euro currency. Euro skeptics have been strengthened by the crisis over the deep recessions in Greece, Cyprus, Spain, and Portugal. This has been reinforced by the clamor of many in Britain to opt out. These challenges to the future of the EU are likely to slow the pace of centralization, but Europeans are highly unlikely to abandon the goal of a loosely unified Europe with a strong central bank to help stabilize the region’s economy.

In contrast, a part of the world such as Sub-Saharan Africa has no geopolitical cohesion. The end of European colonialism, followed by Cold War–stimulated conflicts and the wars and revolutions that have since raged, have produced a process of de-development and atomization. Efforts during the early years of independence to create subregional federations failed, and current ones, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), have little prospect of developing into meaningful economic units, let alone geopolitical ones.

Certainly, regional trade and other economic agreements can help foster regional unity. Just as the Common Market ultimately led to the creation of the European Union and the eurozone,

so has the North and Middle American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) strengthened the geopolitical sinews of the North American geopolitical region. Canada and Mexico account for nearly 30 percent of all US trade in goods. Washington's proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, which would embrace South America, has failed because of the wide differences in cultural, political, and social traditions as well as the distances between the northern and southern continents. Instead, some bilateral free-trade agreements have been forged.

Within South America, the strongest prospects for regional unity rest with Mercosur, the trade bloc formed by Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. Under the lead of Brazil, this group could develop sufficient political as well as economic cohesion to emerge as a separate geopolitical region. Venezuela and Cuba have attempted to create a socialist bloc that straddles the Caribbean and Andean regions of South America, but the prospects are problematic. This is especially the case since the death of Hugo Chávez has weakened the Bolivarian revolution and Communist Cuba without Fidel Castro is slowly opening itself to privatization.

Distinctions between realm and region are distinctions between the strategic and the tactical. States operate at both regional and realm levels, and sometimes they can maintain ties with two regions and/or two realms. For example, Australia is part of the Asia-Pacific Rim. However, because it belongs also to the maritime realm, it is able to benefit from its ties to the two other regions of that realm. Strategically, it serves as a crucial link within the maritime world's global network. Culturally, politically, and ethnically it retains its historic British roots as well as its bonds with the United States forged in World War II.

With their continuing development, geopolitical regions have become more important forces within the international system. The larger European states, Japan, and China have gathered sufficient strength and independence of action to focus their attentions on their regional surrounds and to organize them more effectively as well as to become more assertive on global issues. The emergence of geopolitical regions as power frameworks enhances global stability by strengthening the balance-of-power system. Soviet hegemonic control over the Eurasian realm was broken when China asserted its strategic independence. The result was that the two former allies began to restrain one another's actions in South and Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Taiwan. They have, however, acted in concert, joining the United States, Japan, and South Korea in negotiations which led to an agreement over the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear facility that North Korea subsequently renounced. They have also sought to protect the Syrian and Iranian regimes from Western pressures.

The European Union has been of similar importance in limiting US hegemonic control over the maritime realm. In reaction to its loss of global power and its economic and military dependence on the United States, postwar Europe began to build a series of economic and political institutions with an eye to regaining its strength through regional unity.<sup>2</sup> As a renewed center of geopolitical power, Western Europe has been able to reestablish its influence in strategically important areas, such as the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and especially Eastern Europe.

The Asia-Pacific Rim has developed its geopolitical unity out of a complementarity of needs among the countries of the region and its common dependence on the US military shield. The

role of Japan in the economic development of the region has been pivotal in this process, overriding the long-standing political antagonism between Tokyo and Seoul. This antagonism is based on the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 and its exploitation of Korean slave labor and “comfort women” during World War II. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Australia have become heavily engaged economically with China through capital investments, outsourcing production and technology, and exporting raw materials, despite political and strategic tensions with China. The ten-member ASEAN bloc includes member states from both the rim and the Indochinese states, and ASEAN and China are negotiating to create a broader free-trade area.

Of all the world’s geopolitical regions, South Asia is the only one that is independent of the three major realms. It is the unit that consciously sought to become a world balancer, with mixed results. India’s attempt to project itself as an independent force dedicated to achieving a peaceful, balanced world fell far short of its goal. Rejecting pressures by both the United States and the USSR to join their respective blocs, India adopted a policy of neutrality and became a leader of the Afro-Asian bloc of nations that sought a “third way” in world affairs.

What undermined India’s hopes of becoming a balancer was not only that the superpowers rejected the proffered role. India also found itself in a struggle to exercise its control over the entire continent that had once been British India but had become politically fragmented when the British Raj left. India has been embroiled in wars with Pakistan over Kashmir and East Bengal, and the two nuclear powers continue to share an uneasy relationship. It has had unsuccessful interventions in Sri Lanka, engaged in two border conflicts with China, and is torn internally by ethnic and religious violence. Despite these setbacks in its efforts to play a balancing role on the world scene, India did partly succeed in the sense that it never fully joined either superpower’s camp during the Cold War. While its dependence upon the Soviet Union for military, economic, and diplomatic support often tilted it toward the latter, it more recently forged a strategic partnership with the United States, enabling it to secure nuclear materials and know-how for its civilian nuclear power industry. Washington policy makers should be cognizant of the fact that such an agreement is unlikely to wean India away from its culture of political neutrality.

A legitimate question is whether the enhanced role of geopolitical regions may become a factor that will divide, not help to unite, the world system. For example, fears have been expressed that a united Europe, especially with its common currency, growing opposition to immigration from outside the region, farm bloc pressures, and commitment to an independent military force, might raise its barriers toward the rest of the world. While there is some basis for such concern, there are powerful offsetting forces. Forces mitigating against a “Fortress Europa” include the special relationships that individual Western European powers have historically enjoyed with such areas as the Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. So do the historical, cultural, and political-military bonds that link Europe to the North Atlantic world. Indeed, the direction of EU policies is to expand world trade in order to cope with the unemployment that accompanies the downsizing of inefficient industries as well as to expand its membership into Central and Eastern Europe with the aim of

improving the economies and opening the political systems of those countries and attracting new pools of labor.

While Europe is hardly typical of the world's geopolitical regions, it should be noted that most of the other regions would be far less capable of attaining higher standards of living and security were they to become more isolated. As regions evolve and become more specialized, their external outreach becomes more, rather than less, of a necessity.

## Shatterbelts

While most geopolitical regions have varying degrees of cohesiveness depending on their stages of maturity, this is not the case for shatterbelts. Such deeply fragmented regions are global destabilizers.

The concept of the shatterbelt has long held the attention of geographers, who have also used the terms “crush zone” or “shatter zone.” Alfred Mahan, James Fairgrieve, and Richard Hartshorne contributed pioneering studies of such regions. As early as 1900, Mahan referred to the instability of the zone between the thirty- and forty-degree parallels in Asia as being caught between Britain and Russia.<sup>3</sup> Fifteen years later, Fairgrieve used “crush zone” to describe small buffer states between the sea powers and the Eurasian heartland, from Northern and Eastern Europe to the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Siam, and Korea.<sup>4</sup> During World War II, Hartshorne analyzed the “shatter zone” of Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic, advocating a post-World War II federation for this region.<sup>5</sup>

The operational definition for shatterbelts used here is *strategically oriented regions that are both deeply divided internally and caught up in the competition between great powers of the geostrategic realms*. This competition increases the intensity of the fragmentation by supplying weapons, economic rewards, and political backing to their respective clients. In shatterbelts, conflicts between countries are more likely to spread to neighboring ones because of the heterogeneous nature of most of these states.

By the end of the 1940s, two such highly fragmented regions had emerged—the Middle East and Southeast Asia. They were not geographically coincident with previous shatterbelts because the global locus of strategic competition had shifted. The East and Central European shatterbelt had fallen within the Soviet orbit, as the maritime and continental worlds became divided by a sharp boundary in the part of Europe that lay along the Elbe River. Soviet influence in Indochina was exercised through its ally, Communist China.

In discussions of the typology of the shatterbelt, it has been pointed out by Philip Kelly that other parts of the world are also characterized by high degrees of conflict and atomization.<sup>6</sup> It is true that wars, revolts, and coups are chronic in the Caribbean, South America, and South Asia. The distinguishing feature of the shatterbelt, however, is that it presents an equal playing field to two or more competing global powers operating from different geostrategic realms.

Not all areas in turmoil are shatterbelts. Despite the conflicts in South Asia, it is not a shatterbelt because India's dominance within the region is not seriously threatened by the United States, Russia, or China, let alone by Pakistan. Similarly, the Caribbean did not become a shatterbelt despite Communist regimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada, socialist rule in

Venezuela, and leftist uprisings elsewhere because the Soviet Union could not threaten US dominance there.

Shatterbelts and their boundaries are fluid. During the 1970s and 1980s, Sub-Saharan Africa became a shatterbelt as the Soviet Union, Cuba, and China penetrated deeply into the region to compete with European and US influences. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, war-torn Sub-Saharan Africa briefly lost its role as a shatterbelt because it had become strategically marginal to the major Western powers. While China has strongly penetrated the region economically and Western interests in oil and nonferrous minerals have increased, the outside powers have little strategic stake in the region. They no longer compete for influence through supporting military allies. Indeed, it has become strategically marginal to the major Western powers. Southeast Asia, too, has lost its Cold War shatterbelt status and is now divided between the East Asian and maritime realms. Indochina has emerged as a separate geopolitical region within East Asia, while western and southern peninsular Southeast Asia and Indonesia are aligned with the Asia-Pacific Rim.

Sub-Saharan Africa has reemerged as an atomized shatterbelt region. Its energy and mineral resources are the objects of keen competition between the West and China. This competition is economic, not ideological or military, as it was during the Cold War. Much of the region consists of highly fragmented compression zones that form an uninterrupted belt from the African Horn through Central Africa to West Africa. Many of the countries within this zone are failed states, whose unstable, corrupt, and dictatorial regimes magnify the poverty, disease, and famines which plague them. The Middle East remains a shatterbelt, its fragmentation reinforced by the Arab-Israeli conflict, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Horn of Africa, and the rise of Iran as a major intrusive force. In recent years, the “Arab Spring” swept away dictatorships, but those have been replaced by chaotic political conditions wherein the military continues to jockey for power, as well as by the emergence of ISIS as a serious threat to regional stability.

The future may bring additional shatterbelts onto the world scene. A possible candidate is the new/old zone from the Baltic through Eastern Europe and the Balkans. A second possibility is the region from the Trans-Caucasus through Central Asia that borders the Russian-dominated heartlandic realm but is so tempting to Western, Chinese, and Russian energy interests. The emergence of such shatterbelts within the Eurasian convergence zone depends upon whether the West tries to overreach by penetrating these regions geostrategically. Such regions are pivotal in world politics and warrant advance-planning strategies rather than ad hoc reactions to crises. Should Afghanistan and Pakistan implode, the Pashtun homeland of western Pakistan is likely to be drawn into the Middle East shatterbelt. Other imploding areas might be Indonesia and Caribbean-northern Andean South America.

## NATIONAL STATES

In modern times, the linchpin of the world geopolitical system has been the national state. However, some see the state’s demise as a consequence of the rising strength of world and regional governmental bodies, the increased influence of nongovernmental organizations, and

the globalization of information and economic forces. Predictions of this demise are hardly novel. Karl Marx held that with the victory of the workers over the bourgeoisie and the emergence of a classless society, the state would wither away as an instrument of centralized control. More contemporaneously, Peter Drucker says that the new “knowledge society,” which transcends national borders, will relegate the state to a mere administrative instrument.<sup>7</sup>

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri advance the thesis that supranational, not national, powers rule today’s global system. They hold that a new political structure and power ranking is emerging that constitutes a fluid, infinitely expanding, and highly organized system, embracing the entire population of the world. They reason that because power is so widely dispersed, it is possible for anyone to affect the system’s course and that the potential for both revolution and democracy is therefore far greater than it was during the era of nation-states and imperialism.<sup>8</sup>

In reality, globalization is not an independent force. It is the handmaiden of the nation-state system, which influences state policies but not to the point that it undermines nationalism. On the contrary, backlash to globalization has reinforced nationalism in countries such as France, Mexico, and the United States and led to the strengthening of regional structures. The global corporations that outsource capital and manufacturing are subject to antitrust laws in their home countries and in many of the countries in which they operate. While the WTO does place restrictions on the application of national quotas, tariffs, and subsidy systems, national restraints continue to affect world trade patterns. Where the national state has agreed to limit its independence of action, this has taken place at the regional, not the global, scale. A prime example is the European Union, whose regional structure is federated, not centralized.

The other major regional framework, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is even more subject to national directions and controls and even calls for its termination by particular interest groups. To dismiss the power of the national state is to ignore the political and economic weight as well as the decision-making capacities of the major states and regional bodies in the economic, political, military, and cultural arenas.

Theories of globalization present the picture of an emerging world system based upon a seemingly unlimited number of nodes and lines of economic interaction and communication that have the capacity for reshaping global culture and politics. This construct is based, in essence, upon a notion of a structureless world network, devoid of hierarchy, directedness, and spatial differentiation. Globalization may better be described as anomie, or the collapse of structures that govern the world system, rather than as the portent of a new, evolving system.

The geopolitical viewpoint of this volume differs markedly from the notion of an emerging world system of globalization. It views the world as organized around core areas that are hierarchically arranged in space and whose functions vary in accordance with the power and reach of these cores. The patterns of interconnection among the nodes are strongly affected by regional settings as well as by historic and contemporary flows that extend beyond these regions to realms. The major cores of the globalized trading system are the United States, the European Union, Japan, and China, while secondary cores include such countries as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Turkey, Iran, and South Africa.

Awash with petrodollars, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, especially Dubai, are seeking to become specialized secondary cores as centers for tourism, air traffic, and finance. The economies of the Pacific Rim secondary cores first developed as foci for outsourcing but then expanded to the point where they became independent sources of capital accumulation and have themselves become outsourcers. While neither realms nor regions are self-contained, they nevertheless set the overall geopolitical spatial configurations within which the great majority of political, military, economic, and cultural connections take place.

The role of the national state continues to command vigorous defenders. Peter Taylor argues that the territorial state is vital to the capitalist system and, therefore, to the operation of the world economy.<sup>9</sup> Historian Paul Kennedy also holds the view that a nationalist-based, mercantile world order will persist.<sup>10</sup>

However, economics is not the only, or even the major, reason for the national state—the sense of belonging to something socially and territorially is even more important. The state fulfills the cultural and psychological yearnings of particular people, strengthened by their historic memory. While economic and political interdependence does pose a threat to national cultures, it also provides people with the resources to hold on more tightly to what they most value. For countries that have recently emerged from colonialism or whose economies were dominated by the West, this issue is especially acute. Edward Said cogently observed that, for such countries, there is need for a reconquest of space through a new, decolonized identity.<sup>11</sup> Today, political control of their own territories permits the nations of the former colonial world to be selective in what they accept or reject of Western culture.

There is no question that what transpires within a national state is increasingly influenced by global and regional forces—by international ideological movements, such as environmental and human rights; by global economic institutions and multinational corporations; by the internationalization of politics through foreign monies and other forms of pressure by the world financial markets; and by the media. These forces can also be turned to advantage by the state in advancing its own goals. In the last analysis, the national state remains the glue of the international system, the major mechanism that enables a people to achieve a self-realization inextricably bound with its sense of territoriality. Even the breakup of existing national states, while upsetting the status quo temporarily, is testimony to the power of nationalism, not its decline.

## **ORDERS OF NATIONAL POWER**

The state system consists of five orders or levels. The first consists of major powers—the United States, the collectivity of states embraced by the European Union, Japan, Russia, and China. These all have global reach, serving as the cores of the three geostrategic realms. India, the core of an independent geopolitical region, is en route to forging a South Asian realm. Brazil has the potential of becoming the core of a South American realm, although currently its control is limited to the eastern part of the continent.

The second order of states consists of regional powers whose reach extends over much of their respective geopolitical regions and, in specialized ways, to other parts of the world (see





neighbors. It is also a function of its centrality or nodal role in regional transportation, communication, and trade. As important as any of these factors, however, is the ambition and perseverance of the state not only to impose its influence on others but also to persuade them of their stakes in regional goals and values. Egypt's leadership in the Middle East has derived in great measure from its espousal of the pan-Arabism to which the other Arab states also subscribed. This leadership has been eroded by the chaotic conditions that have beset the country since the overthrow of the Mubarak and Morsi regimes. Saudi Arabia's influence comes from its use of petrodollars to support rigid Islamic law, while Venezuela's has been based on its willingness to spread its oil wealth within the Caribbean and the Andes.

Another criterion for measuring the strength of a regional power is its ability to gain sustenance from one or more major powers without becoming a satellite or through extraregional political-military alliances, trade links, or ideological links. When India took the lead in fostering the concept of Third World neutrality, its inherent power was increased, just as South Africa's attempts to be a leader of peace movements is part of its inherent strength.

Not all regional powers are equal. Table 3.1 is an attempt to rank them in three categories. Members of the European Union are omitted, as the EU is treated collectively as a major power. Were they to be included, Germany would rank as a great power, while France, Britain, and Poland would be regional ones.

**Table 3.1. Second-Order Power Rankings**

<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
Brazil	Indonesia	Algeria
Canada	South Korea	Thailand
Turkey	Vietnam	Argentina
Australia	Israel	Taiwan
Iran	Mexico	
South Africa	Pakistan	
Nigeria	Egypt	
	Venezuela	
	Saudi Arabia	

*Note:* States are also ranked within categories.

Certain regions contain more than one regional power, and some states in such regions have developed highly complementary relations with the first-order powers located within the region. This is the case for the US relationship with Canada and Mexico; both of the latter states have gained in strength as a result of their close ties to the North American superpower. Others vie with major powers located within the same realm, for example, Vietnam with China. Still others are heavily influenced by support received from distant first-order states—for example, Israel and Egypt by the United States, Nigeria by the EU. Proximity is important

in the capacity of first-order states to influence second-order states militarily and politically psychologically, but it is less of a factor in extending economic influence because trade more easily spans distance.

Although second-order states may have regional hegemonical aspirations, their goals are constrained by geopolitical realities. With the exception of Brazil and India, which have the capacity to become first-order powers, second-order powers are unlikely to achieve dominance over an entire geopolitical region. Rather, they can hope to exercise broad regional influence, with hegemony having practical significance only in relation to proximate states.

Third-order states influence regional events in special ways. They may compete with neighboring regional powers on ideological and political grounds or by having a specialized resource base, but they lack the population, military, and general economic capacities of second-order rivals and depend on more powerful patrons for support. Examples of third-order states are Ethiopia, Cuba, Ukraine, Angola, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, North Korea, and Malaysia. Oil-rich Qatar also belongs in this category because it derives influence from supplying military weapons to Sunni groups throughout the Middle East, especially Syria.

Fourth-order states such as Sudan, Ecuador, Zambia, Morocco, and Tunisia have impact only on their nearest neighbors. Fifth-order states, such as Nepal, have only marginal external involvement.

Membership in the various orders is fluid. China is now a first-order power. It has gained economic strength through the opening of its system to world market forces, and its military strength has grown through expansion of its air power and its drive to create a “blue ocean” navy. India is moving from second-order status to that of a major power, especially since Pakistan is rapidly losing its stability and cohesiveness due to the clash between its Islamic fundamentalists and its military regimes. Some Western foreign policy makers downgraded Russia as a great power because of the economic chaos that prevailed after the fall of Communism. However, its rapid economic recovery, political stability, nuclear arsenal, armaments industry, energy resources, and strategic centrality within Eurasia have enabled it to maintain its first-order status.

Morocco, the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), and Cuba have fallen from the ranking or never attained it. The German Democratic Republic and a greater Yugoslavia have disappeared altogether from the map. At the same time, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Thailand have now achieved regional power status. Among the most prominent regional states that are extending their influence to neighboring areas are South Africa, Turkey, and Nigeria. However, Turkey has failed in its efforts to become peacemaker in the Arab world, and Nigeria has not been able to sustain its regional influence because of its domestic instability.

Third-order status is also ephemeral. Tunisia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Costa Rica have enjoyed and then lost such ranking with the waning of their ideological influence.

The impacts of major powers and second- and third-order states give regionalism increasingly important geopolitical substance. States that are ideologically at odds with the other states in the region play a special role. They promote turbulence by challenging the norms

and injecting unwelcome energy into the system. Examples are pre-1990 revolutionary Cuba, Titoist Yugoslavia, and the market-oriented Côte d'Ivoire of the 1970s.

## **GATEWAY STATES AND REGIONS**

Gateway states play a novel role in linking different parts of the world by facilitating the exchange of peoples, goods, and ideas (see table 3.2). Should Russia and the EU come to a compromise over Ukraine, the latter would become a gateway. This applies also to an independent Palestinian state, which could be a bridge between Israel and the Arab world.

The characteristics of gateway states vary in detail but not in the overall context of their strategic economic locations or in the adaptability of their inhabitants to economic opportunities. They are distinct politically and culturally and may often have separate languages or religions as well as relatively high degrees of education and favorable access to external areas by land or sea.

Small in area and population and frequently lying athwart key access routes, gateways usually possess highly specialized natural or human resources upon which export economies can be built. Lacking self-sufficiency, they depend upon trade with other countries for many of their raw materials, finished goods, and markets, as well as on specialized manufacturing, tourism, and financial services. Especially when they are sources of out-migration because of their overpopulation, they acquire links to groups overseas that can provide capital flows and technological know-how. The models for such states have existed in such ancient centers as Sheba, Tyre, Nabataea, and Palmyra; in the medieval Hanseatic League and Lombard city-states; in Venice (twelfth to fifteenth centuries); in Manila (seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries); and in Zanzibar (nineteenth century). In the twentieth century, Lebanon was an important gateway until torn apart by civil strife and war.

Among today's most prominent gateways are Singapore, Hong Kong, Monaco, Finland, Bahrain, Dubai, Qatar, Djibouti, Trinidad, and the Bahamas. The latter two, because of their focal location within the Caribbean, proximity to the United States, ease of access to Western Europe and South America, and favorable climates, have become centers for tourism, offshore financial services and banking, and international corporate headquarters as well as, unfortunately, the drug trade. The Cayman Islands also serves as an offshore financial address.

Hong Kong, although now part of China, continues to play its powerful gateway role, owing to its special political status. As economic relations between Taiwan and China have greatly expanded and Taipei has become the major source for capital investment on the mainland, Taiwan's role as a gateway linking the maritime and East Asian realms has taken on added significance.

The emergence of gateways helps to convert former barrier boundaries to borders of accommodation. Estonia is beginning to serve such a role as a link along the geostrategic boundary between the European portion of the maritime realm and heartlandic Russia, and Slovenia plays such a role between Central and Southeast Europe.

The concept of gateway regions is a logical extension of the gateway state concept. Such regions do not yet exist. But Eastern Europe, for example, could develop into a gateway region

between heartlandic Russia and maritime Europe rather than into the shatterbelt that it once was if it is treated by the major powers as an area of cooperation and not of competition. The countries of such a gateway, especially the Baltic states and Poland, have successfully made their transitions to market economies. Ukraine is already a gateway for Gazprom pipelines to the EU. A forward-looking Russia would build on Ukraine, the Baltic states, and Poland as a trade bridge to the West, including the development of joint enterprises with Western companies.

Gateways, for the most part, play positive economic or social roles. Some, however, may be more problematic. For example, Spain's Canary Islands are jumping-off places for West African illegal immigrants seeking to enter maritime Europe through Spain. The perilous journey taken by these "boat people" all too often ends in drowning at sea or being sent back upon reaching the islands. Similarly, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan serve as the gateways through which much of Afghanistan's heroin is exported through various routes to Europe. Jamaica and the Cape Verde Islands are gateways for the transfer of Andean cocaine for the European market. Honduras, Mexico, and Puerto Rico are gateways for South American cocaine destined for the US market as well as sources of immigration to the United States.

## **Proliferation of National States**

The number of national states in the world has trebled in the past half-century. In 1945, there were sixty-eight states and the United Nations had fifty-one members, including three memberships allotted to the USSR. In 1991, there were 165 states, and currently there are close to 200, including a few claimants which have not been internationally recognized. As of 2013, the United Nations' formal membership numbered 192. The increase in the number of national states is likely to continue to slow down as central governments offer separatist areas high degrees of autonomy rather than risk the loss of important territories. Paradoxically, the continuing devolution of existing states will also provide long-range opportunities for new kinds of loose confederations as smaller units feel driven to come together in cooperative frameworks.

State proliferation is the consequence of two forces—the drive of dependent territories for independence and the division of existing sovereign states. Often, although not always, this devolution comes about only after conflict. More than one hundred former colonies and territories have achieved self-determination either as sovereign states or through association with other states. There are approximately sixty remaining dependencies, many of which have very small populations or provide their administering powers with strategic military bases so that the latter are reluctant to give up control. Others are so highly dependent economically that they cannot afford the luxury of national independence. Those non-self-governing territories most likely to opt for independence are ones that are sufficiently resource rich, have favorable tourist bases, or are financial havens. As the world becomes a more open system, the advantages that such territories currently enjoy from retaining colonial ties decreases.

## POTENTIAL NEW STATES AND QUASI STATES

Table 3.2 identifies states that are possibilities for independence or quasi statehood. For many separatist movements, the high degree of autonomy that may be offered to them through quasi statehood is likely to be accepted.

**Table 3.2. Gateways and Separatist Areas**

<i>Present Region</i>	<i>Present Gateway</i>	<i>Potential Gateway</i>	<i>Independent/Quasi States</i>
North and Middle America	Bahamas Trinidad Jamaica Guyana Cayman Islands Honduras	Bermuda	Puerto Rico* Quebec*
South America			S. Brazil*
Maritime Europe and the Maghreb	Malta Lampedusa Monaco Finland Canary Islands Azores	Gibraltar**	Crete* Catalonia* Greenland N. Ireland‡ Euskadi* Scotland* Galicia* Brittany* Corsica* Faero Islands* Madeira Islands* Flemishland* Trentino-Alto Adige Adige* Wales* Wallonia* Kabylia (Algeria)*
Asia-Pacific Rim	Taiwan Singapore	Guam S.W. Australia* Unified Korea	S. and W. Mindanao* Aceh* Irian Jaya S. Moluccas
Heartland		Russian Far East*	Chechnya* Tuva* Sakhalin*
Caucasus/Central Asia	Turkmenistan Uzbekistan		
China	Hong Kong	China "Golden Coast"*	Tibet* Xinjiang*
Indochina			
South Asia		Pakhtoonistan	Kashmir‡ Nagaland* Kalistan* N. Afghanistan* E. and S. Afghanistan*
Middle East	Bahrain Cyprus Dubai Qatar		Arab Palestine Kurdistan (Iraq)* W. Iraq*
Central and Eastern Europe	Austria Estonia Finland Slovenia	Ukraine	Transnistria* Abkhazia**
Sub-Saharan Africa	Djibouti	Zanzibar	Puntland*

	Cape Verde		Somaliland† Shaba N.E. Nigeria*
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\*Quasi state (statelet)

\*\*Condominium

†Two stages: quasi state to independence

‡Two stages: condominium to independence

Those territories whose prospects for independence are greatest contain peoples who have operated from historic core areas in which they have maintained their cultural, linguistic, religious, or tribal distinctiveness. Many of the prospective states and quasi states listed in table 3.2 are economically viable because of the strength of their resource bases—for example, in Indonesia, Aceh’s oil and natural gas; in West New Guinea, Irian Jaya’s copper and gold; Democratic Republic of Congo’s eastern province of Shaba’s copper, tin, uranium, diamonds, and fertile grasslands; South Nigeria’s oil and gas; Scotland’s offshore North Sea oil; and the grain of Punjab, known as the “granary of India,” where the Sikh majority aspires to create a separate country known as Khalistan. The trade, tourism, and revenue from smuggling enjoyed by some Caribbean islands are also bases for national status.

Those states that achieve only qualified forms of sovereignty thus become quasi states both because they lack the military capacities to gain their full objectives and because they are too important to the home country to be allowed full independence. Spain’s approval of greater autonomy for Catalonia in 2005 offered promise as a useful model for resolving other separatist conflicts. The revised autonomy law recognizes the Catalan nation, increases to 50 percent its share of income and VAT that are collected within the province, and guarantees that national investments in Catalonia will be equal in proportion to the region’s contribution to the national GDP. In addition, the region is given jurisdiction over culture, education, health, local government, and police. However, this law has not been fully implemented. As a consequence, increased Catalan pressures for an independence referendum poses a major challenge to the unity of Spain.

Political latitude might offer special diplomatic status, including UN membership to quasi states, as was the case for Belarus and Ukraine when they were within the Soviet Union. Such status might be especially appropriate for Taiwan, although it would surely be opposed by Beijing.

Another form of organization for some quasi states could be the “condominium,” whereby two larger powers share oversight for such functions as defense and foreign relations. The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan might be resolved by such an arrangement.

In maritime Europe, the proliferation of quasi states in such countries as Spain, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom could reinforce the developmental process of regional specialization and integration. These semi-independent entities would be free of some of the restraints that

currently limit their specialized potential, thus strengthening the EU rather than being impediments to integration.

One unfortunate consequence of the proliferation process has been the creation of “failed” nation-states. These are deeply divided, war-torn states, lacking in national cohesiveness, whose governance institutions have collapsed to the point of anarchy or near anarchy. Some divisions are so entrenched and long-standing that they defy international and regional efforts at amelioration. Somalia, which was patched together from three colonial territories and then unified as an independent state, has once again fallen apart.

One index for measuring such states is the Failed State Index of 2013.<sup>12</sup> It includes such indicators as demographic pressures, refugees, uneven economic development, deterioration of services, violation of human rights, and political factionalism. In this index, ten of the top fifteen states are located within Africa, all but one (Zimbabwe) within the region’s compression zones. Four are located within the Middle East and one (Haiti) in the Americas. Somalia leads the list, followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Models for addressing the “failed state” syndrome include full-scale nation building, as attempted by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the NATO peacekeeping effort in Bosnia. It remains to be seen how successful these remedies can be. For the most part, the international community lacks the capacity and geopolitical motivation to mount such operations in most of the world’s failed states. It is more likely that massive intervention will continue to be pinpointed for lands that are global geopolitical flash points and that elsewhere the burden will be left to regional powers to try to mediate conflicts and restore domestic stability.

A strategy of early identification of emerging states would permit advance action by international and regional bodies to mount comprehensive infrastructure development programs within prospective states. This could help ward off potential political instability and prepare them to become viable members of the world community when they gain independence. Timely and effective international action could include commitment to technological and capital support for building and maintaining water, sanitation, health, transportation, communications, and education infrastructures. Such comprehensive development efforts would require that when new states emerge, their fledgling governments demonstrate a “best effort” to share responsibility for these programs, with agreed-upon international monitoring and auditing. This is especially critical for countries with valuable resources that might be siphoned off by ruling cliques.

This continuing struggle for independence has profound implications for US foreign policy making. Concomitant with the objective of eradicating global terrorism, it will be necessary for Washington to promote new approaches that will encourage separatist movements to negotiate their goals peacefully. In many cases, American pressures, sanctions, and rewards by themselves will not be able to dictate peaceful resolutions of irredentist conflicts. Neither is the United Nations equipped to shoulder such a burden. However, a hands-off policy by Washington that simply awaits the implosion of many countries is a recipe for global instability.



The challenge is to find new mechanisms for mediating these separatist disputes, based upon a partnership of effort among the United States in alliance with the EU and Japan, other major and regional powers, and regional organizations. Afghanistan and Iraq are evidence that outside military force alone cannot resolve disputes. A confederation of highly autonomous Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish areas appears to be the only alternative to a Shiite-dominated Iraq. A similarly loose confederation may be the optimal solution to the struggle in tribalized Afghanistan, with its Pashtun population in the east and south and Tajiks and Uzbeks in the north. Alternatively, an independent Pakhtoonistan, linking the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and western Pakistan, could emerge, leaving the rest of Iraq to a new Tajik-Uzbek state.

State proliferation is a stage in the evolution of the global system toward specialized integration. States now trying to break away might one day seek confederal ties with their former hosts, especially to fulfill mutual economic self-interest. Table 3.3 suggests possible future confederations.

**Table 3.3. Potential Confederations**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Potential Confederations</i>
North and Middle America	"Westindia"
Maritime Europe and the Maghreb	N. and S. Cyprus
Heartland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan</li> <li>• "Greater Turkestan" (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan)</li> <li>• GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova)</li> </ul>
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China, Taiwan</li> </ul> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continental China, the "Golden Coast," Taiwan</li> </ul>
Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghanistan, Pashtun E. and S., Tajikistan and Uzbekistan N. and W.</li> <li>• Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Syria, Lebanon, W. Iraq</li> <li>• W., Central, and N. Iraq</li> <li>• Israel and Independent Palestine</li> </ul>
Central and Eastern Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)</li> <li>• Former Yugoslav states (Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Kosovo)</li> </ul>

The creation of up to fifty additional fully independent or quasi states over the coming few decades will change the territorial outlines and functions of many major and regional powers. With the exceptions of Nigeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan, these changes are likely to have only limited impact on the power rankings of these states or on world equilibrium.

## Geopolitics and General Systems

Treating the geopolitical world as a general system provides a model for analyzing the relationships between political structures and their geographical environments. These interactions produce the geopolitical forces that shape the geopolitical system, upset it, and

then lead it toward new levels of equilibrium. To understand the system's evolution, it is useful to apply a developmental approach derived from theories advanced in sociology, biology, and psychology.

The developmental principle holds that systems evolve in predictably structured ways, that they are open to outside forces, that hierarchy, regulation, and entropy are important characteristics, and that they are self-correcting.

In 1860, Herbert Spencer was among the first to set forth a development hypothesis that drew an analogy between the physical organism and social organization. His evolutionary ideas came from physiology and the proposition that organisms change from homogeneity to heterogeneity. Using the organic growth analogy, Spencer argued that social organizations evolve from indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity. In this hypothesis, state and land meant the combination of social organization and physical organisms.<sup>13</sup>

Combining organismic concepts from Herbert Spencer, sociologist, with those of Heinz Werner, psychologist, and Ludwig von Bertalanffy, psychobiologist, provides the foundations for a spatially structured geopolitical theory.<sup>14</sup> It is a theory that is holistic, is concerned with the order and process of interconnecting parts, and applies at all levels of the political territorial hierarchy, from the subnational, to the national, to the supranational. Adapting this developmental principle to geopolitical structures, the system progresses through the following.

The earliest is *undifferentiated* or atomized. Here, as in feudalism, none of the territorial parts are interconnected, and their functions are identical. The next stage is *differentiation*, when parts have distinguishable characteristics but are still isolated. The post-Westphalian states in Europe or the postcolonial states of the 1950s through the 1970s all sought to be self-sufficient and to mirror one another. The next stage is *specialization*, which is followed by *specialized integration*. In this last stage, exchange of the complementary outputs of the different territorial parts leads to an integration of the system. The parts of the system are hierarchically ordered, increasing its efficiency, as one level fulfills certain functions but leaves other functions to units belonging to different levels. What helps to bring balance to the system is the drive of less mature parts to rise to higher levels.

Currently, the world geopolitical regions operate at the following stages:

1. specialized integration—maritime Europe and the Maghreb;
2. specialization—North and Middle America, Asia-Pacific Rim;
3. differentiation—heartlandic Russia, East Asia, the Middle East, South America, South Asia;
4. undifferentiation—Trans-Caucasus-Central Asia, Indochina; and
5. atomization—Sub-Saharan Africa

Geopolitical systems behave like physical systems in that they may exhaust the material and human resources that are the bases of their power unless they are able to recharge their systems with outside energies. In the past, empires did so by exploiting colonies and conquests. In

today's world, such energies are best secured through exchange. The Soviet Union collapsed because, in trying to penetrate the far reaches of the globe, it expended its resources and manpower far beyond the benefits it could reap from such penetration. In contrast, a state like Singapore recharges itself through the import of goods and ideas in exchange for the products and services that it exports. The advantage of most states within the maritime world is that they can maintain their energy through international exchange. Continental countries, however, especially those that develop closed political systems, have found themselves with less and less energy not only to influence the world outside but also to maintain their domestic systems.

## Equilibrium, Turbulence, and World Order

The collapse of Soviet Communism, the end of the Cold War, and the successful entry of China into the global economy have inspired the hopes that a new order is dawning and fired the debate about the form that such an order will take. The rhetoric is not novel—peace and security, reduction of military weapons, sharing the wealth, justice for national groups. It is the mechanism that is at question. Can there be a truly global system in which the world acts in concert through the United Nations? Is it now feasible to save the world through a Pax Americana, or can we count on the world's major power centers—the United States, the European Union, Japan, a reconstituted heartlandic Russia, China, and emergent India and Brazil—to take collective action to stabilize and enhance the international system?

The greater promise for a stable world system lies in the collaborative efforts of these power centers, with Washington and the EU taking the initiative. In this effort to gain consensus, the UN Security Council, while it may not have a clear collective interest, nevertheless has proved its importance by serving as a forum that requires agreement among its permanent members and thus has an important role to play in stabilizing the global system.

How we treat the new era's prospects for global stability is very much a matter of conceptualization and perspective. Instead of discussing "world order," we should be speaking of "global equilibrium" because global stability is a function of equilibrium processes, not order. Order is static. It speaks to a fixed arrangement, a formal disposition or array by ranks and clusters that requires strong regulation and implies a sharply defined set of niches separated by clear-cut boundaries. The niches fit together in an elaborate structure that follows a blueprint designed by some body that operates either hegemonically or consensually. Essentially, order implies outside regulation.

Equilibrium, by contrast, is dynamic. The term, as applied here, is not being used in the physical or psychophysical sense that the natural state of an organism is rest or homeostasis. Such equilibrium characterizes closed systems but does not fit human organizations or most natural systems. In these, equilibrium is the quality of dynamic balance between opposing influences and forces in an open system. Balance is regained after disturbance by the introduction of new weights and stimuli. Under ideal conditions, such balance is regained through self-correction—through what Adam Smith referred to as the "invisible hand," or the rational self-interest of peoples.

Because of inertia of the self-interest of governing elites, self-correction may not always take place. War, terrorism, economic greed, energy crisis, illegal immigration, and environmental devastation may bring people to the breaking point in the absence of reason. So may human interference with the regenerative powers of the natural environment. When things have gone too far, there is reaction, correction, and new regulation. Whether equilibrium is maintained through self-correction or a new level is produced by cataclysmic forces, the balance is accompanied by change, and change by turmoil.

A great deal of turmoil and conflict has taken place in the world since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union was not so cataclysmic as to bring on global conflagration, as hypothesized by such economic determinists as Immanuel Wallerstein and George Modelski.<sup>15</sup> Communist rule disappeared from the Soviet sphere with a whimper, not a “big bang.” Even where Communist regimes still prevail, their economies are being liberalized and their systems opened. When these regimes come to an end, the attendant disturbances are likely to be minor tremors.

The difference in the turmoil that plagues the post–Cold War world from that during the Cold War is not that wars, civil disturbances, and terrorist activities are less numerous or less lethal, but that their geographical locations have shifted.<sup>16</sup> During the Cold War, the major conflicts raged in the Korean Peninsula and in the Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern shatterbelts. With the end of the Cold War, the locus of conflict moved to the Balkans and the periphery of the former Soviet Union (FSU) and intensified in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

At the same time, as global terrorism has become more sophisticated and more lethal, it has reached into the farthest corners of the earth, affecting major powers and small, weak states alike. It was naive to assume that the end of the Cold War would usher in an era of global peace and harmony. Change and turmoil are intertwined, an unfortunate characteristic of the process of dynamic equilibrium. Because of overlapping spheres of influence and global trade and communications, hierarchy becomes more flexible and national and regional systems become more open. At the same time, the diffusion and decentralization of power make the system increasingly complex.

In addition to war, terrorism, and cyberwarfare, massive illegal migration flows have become world system destabilizers. The number of international migrants is estimated at two hundred million, or 3 percent of the world population. More than half these immigrants have settled in developed countries, mainly Europe and the United States. Cultural absorption has become a serious problem within many of these countries. On the other hand, nearly three quarters of the cash remittances generated by these immigrants goes to the poorer countries of the world, helping to stabilize their political and economic systems. Concern that immigration flows, legal or illegal, facilitate the spread of terrorism is legitimate. However, on the whole, international migrations to the developed world perform a positive role in providing needed labor.

War refugees, however, have a destabilizing effect. Refugees from the Iraq War had an impact on the economic and political stability of Jordan and Syria, as do the Afghan refugees

upon Pakistan now. This applies also to those who have gone from Darfur to Chad, from Somalia to Kenya, or from Rwanda and Burundi to Congo, and most recently from Syria to Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. These human tragedies have their impact on local and regional stability but not on global equilibrium.

Another threat to the stability of the world is climate change due to global warming. It is estimated that flooding of coastal areas and inundation of low-level islands could displace as many as one billion people from their homes and farmlands. Record low ice cover in the Arctic is partially caused by global warming. If by 2100 the sea level rises by two meters—the high end of prediction—Manhattan could be inundated, and much of the island state of Kiribati submerged. Some of its villages have already been swept away by rising tides, and the government has purchased land in Fiji where its citizens can grow food and eventually settle. In other parts of the world, climatic shift due to natural variability increases drought, water shortages, and famine. Where this has occurred in the United States, this can also be explained by greenhouse gas emissions. Unless serious steps are taken to slow or arrest this greenhouse effect, the geopolitical system would be greatly destabilized.

The immediate challenge is to develop a global consensus on how to deal with global warming, but the will to do so is very uneven. Europe has already imposed emission quotas; US attention seems finally to be engaged, but effective government action has yet to be taken; China, India, and Russia continue to place their highest priority on economic growth, despite the impact of pollution on the health, safety, and living conditions of their people. Real progress depends on a commitment by all of the world's highly developed nations to take strict measures within their own countries but also to assist the developing world technologically and, where needed, financially to enable them to balance their needs for economic growth with rigorous antipollution standards.

With all of the looming threats, what is the possibility of maintaining global equilibrium? There is no threat of war among the major powers of the world. Despite economic and political competition, the interdependence of their economies has become the bulwark against large-scale conflict. In addition, they face similar and sometimes mutual threats of terrorism, a need to stabilize the energy resources of the world, and the danger of instability in neighboring countries. Thus, even with the continued turbulence of world events and problems, including governmental upheavals and rebellions, it is possible for the great powers to cooperate in maintaining global dynamic equilibrium.

## Notes

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