

**Table 3.3. Potential Confederations**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Potential Confederations</i>
North and Middle America	"Westindia"
Maritime Europe and the Maghreb Heartland	N. and S. Cyprus <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	• China, Taiwan <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continental China, the "Golden Coast," Taiwan</li> </ul>
Middle East	• Afghanistan, Pashtun E. and S., Tajikistan and Uzbekistan N. and W. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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	• Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former Yugoslav states (Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Kosovo)</li> </ul>

mer hosts, especially to fulfill mutual economic self-interest. Table 3.3 suggests possible future confederations.

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 heartland 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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