

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, Fujiang, 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 heartland 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).

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