

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

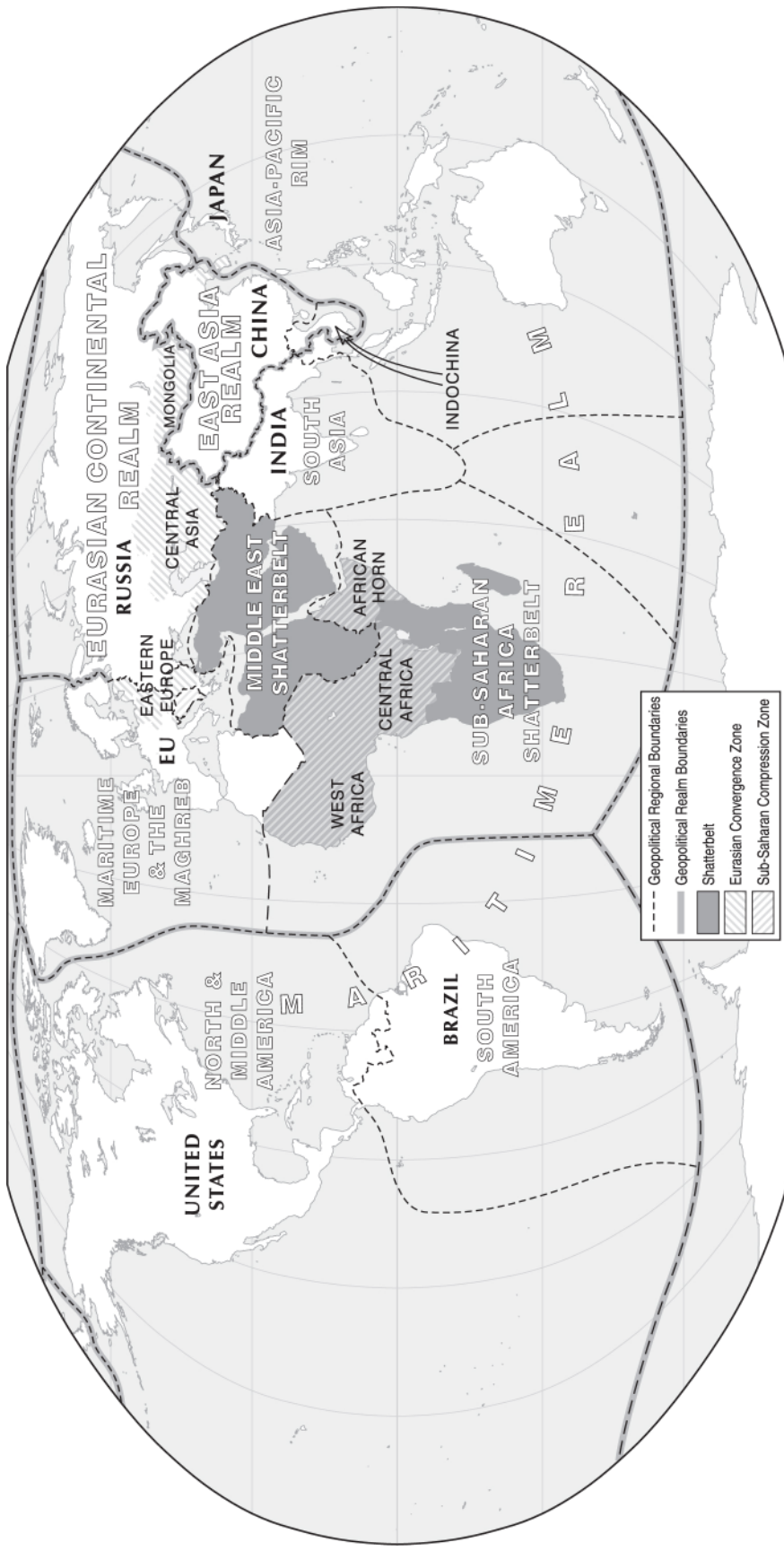


Figure 3.1. The Geopolitical World: Beginning of the Twenty-First Century

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.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ 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 heartland 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.⁷

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.⁸

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.⁹ Historian Paul Kennedy also holds the view that a nationalist-based, mercantile world order will persist.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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 figure 3.2). The third, fourth, and fifth levels are those states whose reach is generally limited to parts of their regions only. In assessing the strategic importance of states, policy makers need to recognize their appropriate levels of power, still keeping in mind that lower-order states are capable of upsetting the system by serving as terrorist bases.

The rank of a nation in this hierarchy can be assessed through a number of socioeconomic, political, and military measures, including possession of nuclear weapons. While power rankings suffer from being somewhat mechanistic, they are commonly used in international assessment. The ranking system used here includes value and political behavior characteristics that reach beyond the traditional emphasis on population, area, economic resources, and military expenditures and technology. Such a ranking method cannot account for idiosyncratic factors, like the length to which the dictator of an impoverished country such as North Korea, or fanatics like the Taliban, will go to influence regional and even global events through threats of war, support of rebellions, and offerings of a base for terrorism. For the most part, however, “rogue” state leaders must have either access to resources, such as oil, or patrons who will provide them with the needed backing to intervene in affairs outside their borders, for example, Cuba and North Korea’s dependence upon the USSR during the Cold War.

The increased importance of second-order, or regional, states has come at the moment in world history when major powers have begun to distance themselves from regions they no longer consider vital to their own national interests (see figure 3.1). Second-order powerdom is a reflection of the inherent military and economic strength of a state relative to that of its 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 extrare-