



فرماندهی کل قوا  
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## CHAPTER 1

# Overview

On September 11, 2001, nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked two airliners, crashing them into the New York City World Trade Center and claiming 2,977 victims. A third hijacked plane crashed into the Pentagon building a few minutes later, killing 125 people. Washington's immediate reaction to the bombings was to declare war against the Afghan-based terrorists who were sheltered by the Taliban regime. This war began on October 7, 2001, with air bombing and special strike-force actions.

These attacks exposed the vulnerability of the country that had become the world's sole superpower following the breakup of the Soviet empire in 1989. The bombings triggered a series of developments that have led to geopolitical shifts that have affected the relationships among states and the balance of power in the world.

## Geopolitical Analysis

Geopolitical analysis does not predict the timing of events, crises, and flash points that force radical changes in the geopolitical map. Such events have been the sudden invasion of South Korea by North Korea and the popular uprisings that overthrew the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia, initiating the Arab Spring. What such analysis can do is focus the attention of policy makers on conditions that are likely to bring about geopolitical change. For example, the attempted rebellion in Bahrain, quashed by Saudi Arabia, was energized by the Arab Spring. The underlying condition was repression of the Shia majority by the Sunni monarchy, aggravated by the large immigrant worker underclass. This set of circumstances is common to the Gulf states. Saudi Arabia's reaction was predictable because its easternmost province is largely Shiite, and Shiite Iran has historic claims to Bahrain. This kind of geopolitical analysis should alert the United States to the fragility of its naval base in Manama, Bahrain, and the advisability of relocating it to the eastern Mediterranean.

Changes in the balance within the international system can also be anticipated by geopolitical analysis. The United States, along with its NATO allies, had early military successes in ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan and two years later launched a war against Iraq, toppling the Saddam Hussein regime. However, the United States soon became bogged down in costly guerrilla warfare that extended into the next decade. Meanwhile, China experienced a meteoric rise as an economic giant.

## Four Pillars of Power

A nation's claim to power rests on four pillars: (1) overwhelming military strength and the willingness to use it; (2) surplus economic energy to enable it to provide aid and invest in other states; (3) ideological leadership that serves as a model for other nations; and (4) a cohesive system of governance.

The first pillar is the military. This period of transition from a world dominated by superpowers to a polycentric power system is marked by significant changes in the nature of warfare. The United States, by far the world's strongest traditional military power, has overwhelming strength in tanks, aircraft, naval fleets, and superbly equipped armed forces. Nevertheless, it failed to attain its political goals in Iraq and Afghanistan as guerrilla warfare and terrorism has torn those two countries apart. In Iraq, the American occupation has been unable to impose a peace upon this regionally and ethnically fragmented land. In Afghanistan, US and NATO troops and weaponry, which so easily dislodged the Taliban, were unable to overcome the guerrilla forces in this tribally and ethnically torn country. The Afghan Taliban are poised to regain a powerful foothold within Afghanistan with the withdrawal of US and NATO combat troops from the country in 2014.

US success in killing key al-Qaeda leadership, including Osama bin Laden, who was killed in 2011 by US special strike forces in Abbottabad, western Pakistan, neutralized the centralized al-Qaeda organization in Afghanistan and western Pakistan. Nevertheless, the movement lives on. It has morphed into a decentralized network extending throughout the Middle East, the Maghreb, East Africa, and the African Sahel and has now been superseded by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

The lessons learned from America's military experience in Afghanistan and Iraq are two-fold. First, soft power may yield greater success than warfare, and second, weapons of warfare are radically changing. In wars against guerrillas and terrorists, drones—unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with surveillance and missile capacities and robots—and unmanned ground vehicle (UGVs), combined with special strike forces and cyberwarfare, have proven more effective than traditional weapons and massed armed forces.

The second pillar, economic capacity, is even more important than the military. The United States, Europe, and Japan have yet to recover fully from the deep recession of 2008. This is reflected in the caution which Washington has recently displayed in responding to political and military crises throughout the world. Its foreign policy has been strongly influenced by high domestic unemployment and huge indebtedness that have preoccupied the country while turmoil rages in the Middle East. The fear that countries like China and Japan will withdraw their bond holdings also tempers Washington's geopolitical actions.

The third pillar is ideological leadership. Americans have taken pride in their ideals, which are a blend of the principles of freedom of expression and religion, concern for human rights, the rewards of free enterprise, and the practice of democracy in governance. Since the founding of the republic, these principles have been widely embraced throughout the world. However, much of US foreign policy has often not been true to them. While preaching democracy, Washington has long supported dictatorships and overthrown governments not to its liking. It has tolerated widespread corruption in supporting allies. The Arab Spring was only the last of the upheavals that laid bare the contradiction between the myth of American exceptionalism and its practice of *realpolitik*.

The fourth pillar is political cohesiveness. In the United States the recent stalemate between the two major parties has been a factor in undermining America's ability to provide

international leadership. A government that can suddenly be shut down, budgets that cannot be agreed upon, and a proposed health system that has divided the nation are poor models for international friends and foes alike.

With respect to these pillars, China, for its part, lacks the capacity to apply military power beyond its contiguous Asian borders. Instead, it relies on economic trade and investment to extend its influence. In doing so, the Chinese have used their sovereign funds to purchase or invest in natural resources throughout the world. While such economic initiatives have been welcomed, the political fallout from these actions has often been rising suspicion and opposition on nationalistic and environmental grounds. Moreover, the need for China to focus on building its own national infrastructure and realign its populace from rural agricultural to urban industrial and service pursuits sets a limit on China's foreign aid capacities. Although the mixture of state and private capitalism as practiced in China has been adopted in many other countries, the repressive nature of the Chinese Communist regime has been widely rejected as an ideological model by people who yearn for individual freedom as well as economic advancement.

## Hierarchical Order of Power

Pundits have debated whether the new century is destined to become the Chinese era or whether the United States will retain its global dominance. Recently, this debate faded from the public agenda as it became plain that both countries have exhibited substantial weaknesses along with their inherent strength. The United States is beset by war weariness, economic problems, and political dysfunction. China has failed to match its economic power with commensurate military strength, and its economic growth, overly dependent upon exports, has slowed down. Its repressive Communist regime also has failed to be embraced as a model by other nations of the world.

Instead of a world ordered by superpowers, an international geopolitical system that is emerging is polycentric and polyarchic. It is built on a hierarchical combination of great and regional powers. The major powers are first-order states with the capacities and ambitions to expand their influence beyond the regions within which they are located. Competing with major powers are the regional powers, or second-order states. Their geopolitical reach is regionally confined. The United States, China, the European Union, Russia, and Japan are major powers. Iran, Turkey, Australia, and South Africa are representative examples of regional powers. India and Brazil are at an intermediate stage. While their reach currently is regional, they have the potential to become major powers. In time, they gain enough strength and ambition to try to influence affairs throughout their regions by the application of military and/or economic muscle. Examples are Iran's actions within Iraq and Ethiopia's in Somalia.

A third order of states has also arisen—those with unique ideological or cultural capacities to influence their neighbors. Examples include Cuba and North Korea, whose military power is maintained by ideological rigor. Ukraine derives its third-order status from playing off its two adjoining major powers, Russia and the EU. Fourth-order states are generally incapable of applying pressure upon their neighbors, and those of the fifth order depend upon outside sustenance for survival.

This hierarchical system is dynamic, not static. States such as Nigeria and Venezuela, once regional powers, have lost these positions. Nigeria is torn apart by the conflict between its Christian south and Muslim north so that it possesses little geopolitical energy to influence its neighbors. The government of Venezuela, having lost much of its popular appeal with the

death of its charismatic leader, Hugo Chávez, is mired in debt and plagued by shortages of basic commodities and by inflation.

Without the dominant American superpower to play the role of global peacemaker, prepared to intervene militarily in conflict situations and to invest financial and diplomatic energies aimed at stabilizing the international system, the world is now like a ship without a rudder. Such disequilibrium is inevitable in this period of geopolitical transition. Great and regional powers are focused on redefining their own national security interests, economic strategies, and ideological goals.

## Impact of Geography

Geography is the study of the features and patterns formed by the interaction of the natural and human-made environments. An example of a simple feature/pattern relationship is a gorge straddled by a bridge which forms of a transit way. At a more complex level, the features of a coastal embayment located at the edge of a broad basin which is rimmed by the escarpment of a plateau provides the setting for an urban metropolis. Its features, consisting of a port, a dense central city, and suburbs within the basin, extend onto the plateau as exurbia. Collectively these features form a pattern.

The importance of geographic proximity in waging war and conducting trade is reflected in many ways. US launching pads for drones are placed in Djibouti to strike al-Qaeda in Yemen, and France has developed a similar cite in Niger for its operations against terrorists in northern Mali. Empty desert landscapes serve as the locale for space exploration bases, as is the case for Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in northern Kazakhstan. The US southwest desert is a prime site for military pilot exercises.

Population density is another important geographic consideration in international relations. High densities inhibit drone strikes for fear of causing many civilian casualties. Consequently, such densities provide safe havens for Afghan Taliban leadership in Pakistan's Karachi, with a population of twenty million. Narrow seas, such as the Gulf of Aden, offer targets for pirates based in Somalian fishing ports. The vast deposits of North Sea oil and gas that adjoin the east coast of Scotland encourage Scottish separatists to seek independence from Britain.

Seoul's location so close to the North Korean border influences the cautious diplomatic policies of South Korea toward its erratic northern neighbor. There are countless examples of how geography affects international relations, but none more striking than the geographical fact that the United States is the only great power in the world with access to the two world oceans.

Changes in the natural environment have profound geopolitical implications. Global warming has made possible navigation of Russia's Arctic Northern Sea Route during the summer. With continued global warming, this is likely to evolve into a full-year transit way, strengthening the economic ties between Europe and China. The physiographic features and patterns of ethnic and religious distribution in both Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated the impact of geography upon war and politics. The Afghan war continued to rage because the Taliban and al-Qaeda were able to regroup in the sheltering and welcoming mountainous areas of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of fellow Pashtuns when the focus of US attention shifted to Iraq.

Driven by dreams spun by neoconservative theorists of a US twenty-first century and propelled by the shock of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration embraced with evangelical fervor policies of unilateralism and preemptive war. The action in Afghanistan, undertaken under the umbrella of NATO and with the support of China, Russia, and neighboring Muslim states, conformed to geopolitical reality. This was not the case with Iraq, where the hastily planned and poorly executed war launched in 2003 did not have widespread external support or internal logic. Saudi Arabian opposition forced the United States to abandon all of its strategically important bases early in the action. Turkey refused to join the coalition. It did allow overflights and transshipments of supplies but did not permit land forces to traverse its territory. With the exception of Britain, the input of other coalition forces was trivial. The speedy defeat of Saddam Hussein's army, rather than ending the conflict, unleashed fierce sectarian warfare and widespread hostility toward US occupation. Rationalized as a war against terrorism, the invasion provided a breeding ground for terrorism in a geographic area more accessible than Afghanistan. The Sunni western desert of Iraq hosts "al-Qaeda of Iraq" and other militant Islamic groups which, along with the Shia-Sunni sectarian violence, dragged the United States into a military and political quagmire. By removing the Iraqi Sunni from power, the United States eliminated the region's major bulwark against the spread of Iranian influence in the Arab Middle East.

Whereas the United States may see little strategic value in some parts of the world, it must be sensitive to the concerns of other powers. Australia is an important strategic ally. Yet Washington paid little attention to its vital interest in the conflict in East Timor. The United States sought to appease Indonesia rather than help stop the massacres that took place after the East Timorese voted for independence. This ignored Australia's strategic stake in East Timor because of its proximity to the Australian north and prospective joint development of oil and gas resources within the Timor Sea. While the United States stood back, it was Canberra that pressed for UN intervention and has since assumed the military burden of peacekeeping. Even though Washington may not be moved to act out of humanitarian considerations it considers to be strategically unimportant, it may have to involve itself in deference to the interests of allied regional states that are important to global geopolitical equilibrium.

The geopolitical perspective is dynamic. It evolves as the international system and its operational environment changes. The dynamic nature of geographical settings accounts, to a considerable extent, for changes in geopolitical patterns and features. These settings change in response to such phenomena as the discovery or depletion of natural resources, the movement of people and capital flows, and long-term alterations in climate. Thus, the shift from rural to urban landscapes or from manufacturing to service economies represents geographical change that becomes reflected in changing national ideals and objectives. So does the impact of large-scale immigration. The decline of manufacturing in the United States, its greater reliance on imported goods, its enormous national debt—all have increased the dependency on international trade to the point where "going it alone" as a superpower is not a practical, or even possible, foreign policy. This is a reality that the US administration has confronted in Iraq, Afghanistan, and counterterrorist actions throughout the world as well as in its efforts to contain the spread of nuclear weapons. With respect to the negotiations over Iran's nuclear threats, the participation of the European Union in the imposition of sanctions has been critical.

Geographical dynamism has also influenced changing national and regional outlooks in Maritime Europe as well as in South Korea and Taiwan. In the latter case, the massive outsourcing of manufacturing to mainland China's southern and central coasts has pressed Taipei

and Seoul, as well as Tokyo and Washington, to be cautious in their diplomatic relationship with China. China, in turn, has been forced by changes in the geographical setting of its high-tech “Golden Coast” to open itself to the outside world. It has also been forced to focus on the development of its rural interior and to grant greater rights to temporary workers who have been drawn to job opportunities in the cities. At the same time, the United States has had to play a delicate diplomatic role in seeking to curb China’s aggressive actions over control of the East and South China Seas.

## Geopolitical Map of the Future

The geopolitical structure of the twenty-first century will not be under the aegis of an American empire, in which order is maintained by the benign, omnipotent superpower. What world geopolitical patterns and features may then be anticipated? What mechanisms for maintaining global equilibrium can be established as alternatives to the top-down world order that is implicit in the structure of empires? While no single discipline can claim to have the answers to these questions, they can surely be informed by the political-geographical perspective.

Washington’s announcement of its “Asian pivot” is an example of a premature declaration of strategic geopolitical shift. It foreshadowed the downgrading of America’s role in the Middle East and the reduction of its military forces in Europe. The struggle between Russia and the EU for influence over Ukraine, and the emergence of ISIS, has stymied this downgrading. The US commitment to maintain freedom of shipping in the waters between China and the island countries of the Asia-Pacific Rim requires a delicate balancing act, maintaining peaceful relations with Beijing while fulfilling America’s security guarantees to such Asia-Pacific Rim countries as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia.

Washington’s greater focus on diplomatic soft power rather than military power reflects recognition of its new international strategy. The promotion by the Obama administration of transatlantic and transpacific free-trade pacts reflects a strategic focus on those regions which are parts of the maritime realm.

The path to a new global equilibrium is tortuous. Progress is being made as the most important equilibrating force is no longer military, but economic and cultural. These forces operate at both the global and regional levels. Socioculturally, such communications networks as Facebook and Twitter leap national boundaries. They influence the behavior of people on a global scale, stimulating challenges to repressive national systems and influencing consumer tastes and demands. Publication of Edward Snowden’s revelations on the US National Security Agency’s sweeping cyberspying activities spread resentment among America’s most important friends and allies.

Large-scale transborder immigration flows also affect the equilibrium equation. These movements are spurred by those escaping war, famine, and floods or searching for greater economic opportunities. Although some of this movement is on a global scale, most of it is regionally confined. Refugees from Syria threaten the shaky political balance within Lebanon and Jordan and are a heavy financial burden on Turkey. Refugees from Eritrea and Somalia into Italy have become a disruptive political issue there. A handful of young Somalian refugees who found their way to Minneapolis only to become disaffected returned to southern Somalia and joined al-Shabab there.

On a positive note, Mexican migrants, legal and illegal, play an important role as farm and day laborers within the United States. Similarly, workers from Central Asia, although

they face discrimination, are important to the Russian economy. So are migrants from Eastern Europe who have filled job needs in Western European states and those from the Maghreb to France. Of equal importance, cash remittances from immigrants to the developed world help to keep the economies of underdeveloped countries afloat and enable families in home countries to improve their living standards. Besides benefiting from unskilled labor, the United States has attracted highly skilled professionals from many parts of the world who contribute to advancing American technological innovation in Silicon Valley and other parts of the United States.

As their power cores wax and wane, states may be added to the region or shifted to other regions. This chain may be likened to tides that flow in and out, but unlike the tidal phenomenon, their timing is unpredictable. With the passing of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, the regional compression zone that extended from Cuba through Venezuela to Ecuador is likely to disappear, leaving South America as an integrated geographical region under the leadership of Brazil.

Despite the global reach of trade and investment, media, and advanced weaponry, the present hierarchical system is based upon a dynamic geopolitical structure of geopolitical realms and regions, not globalism. The boundaries of this system expand and contract in response to changes within their core states, and its patterns and features are geographically framed. It is in this context that geography plays such a key role in international affairs.

## Geopolitics and Geographical Change

The changes in the world geopolitical map have been more rapid and sweeping during the past century than during the previous two and one-half centuries, when the modern, sovereign national state emerged and the European colonial system was imposed on much of the world. In the twentieth century, the seeds of destruction of the colonial system were planted in the savage conflict of World War I, from which the European powers emerged drained economically and in manpower. The Bolshevik Revolution, world economic depression, and the rise of Nazi Germany led to World War II and the complete collapse of the European-imposed world order. The end of that war saw the emergence of the two great superpowers—the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Unlike their European colonial-imperial predecessors, these Cold War powers dominated their spheres of influence through regional clusters of formally independent allies and vassal states. After half a century, the Soviet Union imploded, laying the groundwork for a new world order, the outlines of which are still being drawn.

The clues to the geopolitical map of the future lie in the patterns of restructuring that have taken shape during the past half century. The bipolarity that characterized the world system in the years that immediately followed World War II gave way to multipolarity as new or revived power centers arose within the geopolitical networks established by the two superpowers. China broke off from its Soviet masters, and Maritime Europe and Japan became economic powers linked to, but also in competition with, the United States. Small satellites also struck independent courses from their former overlords, Yugoslavia and Albania from the USSR and Cuba, and then Venezuela from the United States. Yugoslavia, in turn, imploded into six independent units. In recent years, South Africa and Nigeria have taken more assertive roles in Sub-Saharan African affairs, Brazil has become the “powerhouse” of South America, and Iran is asserting its power in the Middle East. It has extended its influence in a chain that



extends from Iraq through Syria to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. India is slowly moving toward becoming a world power.

Especially within the developing world, regional powers have achieved dominance over neighboring states, carving out independent spheres of influence in political and economic affairs. While they possess the capacity to wage wars, most have been loath to do so and tend to assume the roles of conflict mediators rather than imposing peace upon their neighbors.

Regional geopolitical unity is far more advanced in Maritime Europe than in any other part of the world. Such unity was advocated by Europe's leadership as a prerequisite to the economic recovery that was attained through massive American aid. While loss of colonial empires stimulated the process, what propelled the movement toward unity was the devastation of World War II, followed by the US Marshall Plan aid. The Europeans recognized the complementary nature of the region's national economies and the benefits to be derived from economies of scale and larger markets. An additional motivation was the recognition that regional political and military institutions would bind West Germany tightly to its neighbors, especially France. This would minimize the threat that a revived Germany might someday plunge Western Europe once again into conflict with the USSR over the issue of German reunification or that German national resurgence might resurrect dreams of dominance over Western Europe. The policy has succeeded.

Far from being a military threat, the unified Germany that has emerged as the unchallenged political and economic leader of the European Union. With only 7 percent of the world's population, it accounts for one quarter of the world's manufacturing output and maintains a surplus trade balance that was even greater than that of China in 2013. Berlin has used its fiscal strength to prop up eurozone countries, such as Greece, Cyprus, Spain, and Portugal, that have plunged into recession. While many Germans resent this burden, the fact that the Merkel government received overwhelming endorsement in the 2013 election reflects Germany's commitment to the evolving united Europe.

The world map was also changed significantly by the proliferation of national states that occurred in the wake of the collapse of colonial empires. These states vary from sovereign entities as large as India and as small as Nauru or Singapore and include highly successful as well as "failed" states. This multiplicity of national nodes and their external links has led to greater system complexity.

The ancient weapon of terrorism was used by many colonial peoples in their drives for independence. It continues to be an important force in the struggles of separatist movements to wrest sovereignty from the national states within which they are located and is often transferred to the international arena. Terrorism is also used to quell rebellious groups as well as to overthrow existing regimes in order to impose political-ideological or religious systems. What is new is that terrorism is no longer confined to local or regional arenas. Ease of global communication and movement leaves no place in the world immune from international terrorist attack. It has also become an expression of internal discontent within countries.

Also contributing to system complexity have been developments at the subnational level, where metropolitan entities emerged with the revolution in highway and air transportation. Such urban agglomerations often compete with state and federal governments, sometimes conducting independent economic activities that have historically been within the province of higher government levels. Prominent among these activities are the promotion of capital investment, overseas markets, and tourism. Examples in the United States are the northeastern coastal megalopolis from southern New Hampshire and southern Maine to northern Virginia and its central and southern California urban complexes.

A related phenomenon is the transnational megalopolis, large conurbations whose interests often compete with those of their national governments. Examples in Maritime Europe include the London, Paris, and Ruhr basins, the urban-industrial triangle from Benelux through the Rhine to Luxembourg and Strasbourg, and the Rhine-North Italy axis.

Another feature of the contemporary world geopolitical map is the “shatterbelt”—a region torn by internal conflicts whose fragmentation is increased by the intervention of external major powers. The interveners seek to extend their influence over the region by offering military, political, and economic support to their clients. At a lesser geographical scale are “compression zones”—smaller atomized areas that lie within or between geopolitical regions. Such zones are torn apart by the combination of civil wars and the interventionist actions of neighboring countries.

In historic terms, the age of balanced superpower competition was relatively brief—only four and one-half decades. But it was an age of sweeping scientific, technological, economic, and ideological change. Nuclear weapons and space-age capacities, dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, created a strategic standoff between the two. For a brief period, the equilibrium that was struck was static. This remained so until the Soviet Union leapfrogged the areas surrounding the continental Eurasian center to penetrate southward into the Middle East and, together with Communist China, eastward into Korea and southward into Southeast Asia. This was later followed by the spread of Soviet influence into Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

The global system became more complex and its structure more flexible, as the new balance struck between the superpowers depended upon a nested system of geopolitical levels whose units were tied to the superpowers as well as to emerging regional powers. This bipolar system was precariously balanced by “mutually assured destruction” (MAD), or nuclear deterrence, whereby they avoided direct conflict while engaging in a weapons race and arming their allies. The system ended with the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact in 1989 and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This end of the Cold War briefly left the United States as the world’s sole military and economic superpower.

## Developmental Stages

With the emergence of new geopolitical structures and equilibrating forces, the developmental principles that guided the evolution of the global system during the Cold War retain their validity and provide the basis for anticipating the contours of the geopolitical map of the twenty-first century. Essentially, the principles hold that systems—both human and biological—evolve in stages, from atomization and undifferentiation to differentiation, specialization, and specialization-integration.

Applying these principles to the geopolitical map is complex, for various parts of the world are at different developmental stages. The differences in developmental pace are compounded by different spatial orders, along which geopolitical relations are forged. Broadly speaking, such orders occur at the macro, meso, and micro, or local, levels. The macro order embraces geostrategic realms, the meso order covers geotactical regions, and the micro order includes states and subnational unit areas. As a result of such complexity, change occurs in fits and starts, not in a smooth, orderly fashion.

The capacity of different parts of the system to evolve relates, in great measure, to their distinctive operational environments. Today, three geostrategic realms embrace much, but not

all, of the world. The United States is a great power whose geopolitical arena is the maritime world of the Atlantic and Pacific basins. It both derives strength from its allies within its realm and provides them with strength. Maritime Europe, organized around the European Union (EU), has achieved economic parity with the United States, although it has yet to match it in military might, so Washington continues to treat Brussels as its geopolitical satellite.

For much of the Cold War, and even at times of ideological and military rivalry, the USSR and China were joined together in a continental Asian geostrategic realm. While they still have common strategic interests in the Northwest Pacific, their paths have diverged. Russia is the core of the continentally rooted realm of the Eurasian heartland that embraces Central Asia. China, the core of East Asia, has developed a powerful, maritime-oriented economic base that is combined with its continental qualities. This has enabled it to carve out a separate continental-maritime geostrategic realm, extending its influence into Southeast Asia. Japan, another great power owing to its economic strength, does not hold sway over a geopolitical region because of the historic mistrust that underlies its relations with neighbors that it previously occupied, especially South Korea and Indonesia, and because it is constitutionally blocked from building a strong military. The boundaries of these three geostrategic realms include the areas that the major powers consider to be vital to their national interests. Such interests represent a mix of security, economic, cultural-ethnic-religious, and ideological imperatives. Regional, national, and subnational entities have their own identified self-interests within the framework of the realm. If these are highly incompatible with those of the realm's major power(s), structural geopolitical changes may result. For example, new shatterbelts could emerge where competing realms converge, or former ones may reemerge. At the same time, where converging realms find mutual self-interest in fostering cooperative relationships, such intermediate regions could become bridges or "gateways."

Within the geostrategic realms, economic gaps may be closed by surplus energies from core powers that can be directed toward areas of need. Less energy is generally directed to parts of the world that lie outside the realm, especially if they do not adjoin it. The losers in this situation have been the southern continents of South America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Their teeming populations are mired in poverty and illiteracy, ravaged by disease, and torn by rebellion. In countries torn apart by warring armies and terrorist bands, such as Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Colombia, governments have lost effective control of large parts of their national territories, and their states scarcely function as organized geopolitical entities.

Following World War II, the southern continents emerged from colonial and pseudo-colonial status to become Cold War battlegrounds. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist movements in most countries on the southern continents, the days in which American, European, and Soviet powers waged surrogate wars, propping up satellite regimes or rebellious groups and extending vast amounts of military and economic assistance, are now history.

Because the countries were perceived to have little military importance, the major nations of the world have had less incentive to become deeply involved in directly addressing the poverty, illiteracy, and disease that ravage most of these lands, delegating the amelioration of such problems to international agencies. These agencies, however, lack the massive funding commitments that are needed and that only the major industrialized states can provide.

The strategic significance of Africa and South America has been rediscovered with the rising world demand for their natural resources, such as oil, gas, minerals, and timber. Africa has once again become a shatterbelt—an economic battleground between China and the West. South America is a focus of US attention for both the dangers of its drug traffic and

the challenge posed by Venezuela, joined by Cuba, in the use of its energy wealth to promote its socialist revolution within the region. In addition, China's growing trade and investment in the region and Brazil's rise as a regional power poised to become a great power challenge the historic claim of the United States to Pan-American dominance.

The independent geopolitical region of South Asia has risen to geopolitical prominence because of the emergence of India as a major power and US dependence on a fragmented Pakistan while the war in Afghanistan raged. The United States has made an effort to create a strategic alliance with India, including the sharing of civilian nuclear technology. Nevertheless, it is likely that New Delhi will maintain its traditional posture of neutrality and seek to extend its own influence among the Indian Ocean lands.

In time, a fourth geostrategic realm dominated by India is anticipated. South Asia's importance as a region is ensured by the size of its population and the historical-cultural uniqueness of its civilizations and peoples. While beset by major economic and social problems, the region, led by India, already a high-tech global power, has the capacity for modernization and economic growth.

## Globalization

The rapidly evolving globalization of the world's economy and the transformation of communications networks into globe-spanning information systems will not erase national or regional boundaries and identities. Globalization does not spell the end of geography and geopolitics, as some have argued.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it makes for a much more complex geopolitical system. Within it, national states have to deal with extensive external and internal pressures and forces, including domestic and international terrorism.

Globalization does not override geography. Rather, it adjusts to geographical settings and changes them. Its effects are selectively felt within national states and regions rather than having across-the-board impacts. Capital flows and outsourcing of manufacturing do not touch all parts of the world equally. The movement is largely toward coastal sections of states and regions that possess mass markets, ease of access, and large pools of cheap but trainable labor. Some of these areas have been the homelands of immigrants who have become successful entrepreneurs in the United States, Maritime Europe, and the Asia-Pacific Rim.

The diffusion of modern industry also takes place in response to political as well as economic considerations. South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan were the objects of US outsourcing when it suited Washington to build up these key portions of the Asia-Pacific Rim to stave off Soviet-Chinese pressures. This, too, was the case for the American initiatives in aiding the reconstruction of Western Europe immediately after World War II. Later, US economic attention shifted to other parts of Asia-Pacific, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It then turned toward its southern borderland—to Mexico and Central America. Washington is once again beginning to shift its attention—this time to transatlantic and transpacific free-trade partnerships.

Maritime Europe first focused its interests on its Maghreb borderland and on Southeast Asia, the former because of geographical proximity and colonial ties, the latter as a continuation of economic links forged during the age of imperialism. With the eastward expansion of the EU, Western Europe turned its attention to strengthening the economies of most of Central and Eastern European countries as well as serving as outlets for their surplus labor. Nevertheless, Europe's security and economic interests in the Maghreb remain important.

The rapid military response of France in expelling Islamic extremist rebels from Mali is an example of these strategic concerns. They are linked to the large presence within France of Muslim migrants who are vulnerable to jihadist influences. In recent years, the United States, the European Union, and Japan/Taiwan/South Korea have extended the global economy to China's "Golden Coast" and India's centers of information technology. However, vast parts of the world remain untouched by economic globalization and are unlikely to be drawn into the world economy for the foreseeable future.

Even in those parts of the developing world that have been strongly affected by globalization, there have been some adverse consequences. Progress is manifested in the creation of large middle and working classes and pockets of new wealth, despite charges by critics that globalization is another form of capitalist exploitation. However, the gap between the benefiting classes and the low-paid urban and farm workers in these countries has widened, creating new social strains—an inequality gap being felt in wealthier countries. In addition, the dependence of developing economies on the consumer markets of the world's wealthy countries as well as on foreign capital and loans has become dangerously high. When foreign markets shrink due to recession and decreased demand or to debt overload, there is little to cushion the impact. The economies and finances of Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia suffered severe declines in the late 1990s as a result of this vulnerability. They recovered, only to be affected once again by the 2008 recession in Europe and the United States. Entry into the world market economy has had an adverse effect on agriculture in many of the countries that have benefited from globalization, which is linked to freer trade and involves the opening of domestic markets to low-cost farm products from overseas. The output from highly efficient, modernized agricultural sectors, such as those of the United States, Canada, and Australia, has undermined more backward domestic farm economies. The result is growing opposition to free-trade agreements by such modernizing countries as Brazil that are reluctant to abandon protective farm tariffs.

While farm protection and preservation of the rural landscape are major concerns in some advanced industrial countries, such as Spain, Italy, France, Japan, and the United States, their economies can absorb displaced farm workers. This is not the case within the developing world. There, industrial job creation cannot keep pace with the demand for jobs. Displaced farmers flock to cities that cannot absorb them or seek relief through emigration, much of which is illegal.

The use of information technology, another aspect of globalization, is also not as far reaching as some assume. Thanks to the Internet, individuals in the most repressive of states can learn about developments in other parts of the world. However, the wider access to the hardware and software is lacking for much of the world's populace and tightly controlled if not absent. In settings such as China, many along the coastal region are tuned into the global information network and so act as pressure points against the restrictive aspects of the regime. This applies to a lesser degree to the poorer populations of the north and the interior, who remain rooted to their Communist traditions. Ultimately, the geographically framed gap between the economic and information "haves" and "have-nots" could lead to deep political fissures within China.

Another side of the information revolution is that, while it exposes parts of the developing world to the fruits of economic freedom and consumerism, it also reinforces the realization of the vast gaps in living standards and opportunities between the two worlds. In a country such as Russia, where the introduction of the free market economy led to such great abuse, including the looting of former state companies by corrupt entrepreneurs, the regime of Vladimir Putin used information technology to highlight these excesses and

tighten its grip on the government. At the same time, the technology makes it harder for the government to hide its own abuses.

Still another example of the differential impact of the forces of globalization has to do with global warming. The “greenhouse effect,” which causes rising surface and water temperatures, is an accepted scientific fact, but its impact will vary geographically. Bangladesh could be inundated by rising oceans as ice caps melt. At the same time, the warming might enable agriculture to be extended over more northerly areas and for longer periods in the Great Plains of the United States, Canada’s Prairie Provinces, and Russia’s west and central Siberia. While the United States is now reducing its overseas military bases for strategic and economic reasons, it may have to make common cause with Canada in expanding its Arctic military presence as the latter becomes a major ocean highway. Thus, while globalization is a most important force and will become increasingly so, its impact will vary with specific national states and regions. In subsequent chapters on the world’s geopolitical regions, these variations will be amplified in the discussions on geopolitical patterns and features.

While the United States surely holds considerable responsibility for stabilizing the world system, it cannot be its sole manager. Proponents of the thesis that there is no credible alternative to the American role as linchpin and guarantor of the global system grossly overestimate the current US capacity. The United States was overstretched militarily in Iraq and Afghanistan, with limited capacity to use military force in trouble zones such as Darfur, Libya, and Syria, let alone be drawn into war with Iran. It is deeply in debt, has an unfavorable trade imbalance, and is overly dependent on its service economy. In efforts to maintain global equilibrium, the United States must join with other geopolitical actors, each with their own goals and immediate spheres of interest. United States partnerships with Maritime Europe and the Asia-Pacific Rim will be strengthened by the proposed free-trade pacts. This will enable it to give leadership to this multipolar world, but it cannot unilaterally impose order on the system. Indeed, in cases in which a single stronger power may not be able or willing to apply military force to gain particular objectives or to use it as a means of halting conflict, international and regional bodies may often be more effective in stabilizing the system. Alan Henrikson has made a cogent case for the increasingly vital role of diplomacy, as distinct from military deterrence, in achieving international equilibrium through the framework of the United Nations and other bodies.<sup>2</sup> It was China and South Korea which took the lead in the negotiations with North Korea. Negotiations with Iran involve six states. If international and regional diplomacy cannot stave off military intervention, it surely has proven a necessary adjunct in separating warring parties and leading them toward peace.

This volume seeks to identify the nature of the world’s complex geopolitical structure and the roles and capacities of its various components. It is the hope of its author that a better understanding of the geopolitical forces that shape the international system can lead to shared national strategies that promote the maintenance of global equilibrium.

## Notes

1. R. O’Brien, *Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992), 1–35, 101–15.

2. Alan K. Henrikson, “Diplomacy for the 21st Century: ‘Re-crafting the Old Guild’” (paper presented at the 503rd Wilton Park Conference, “Diplomacy: Profession in Peril?”); published in *Current Issues in International Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, Wilton Park Papers, Vol. 1 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1998).