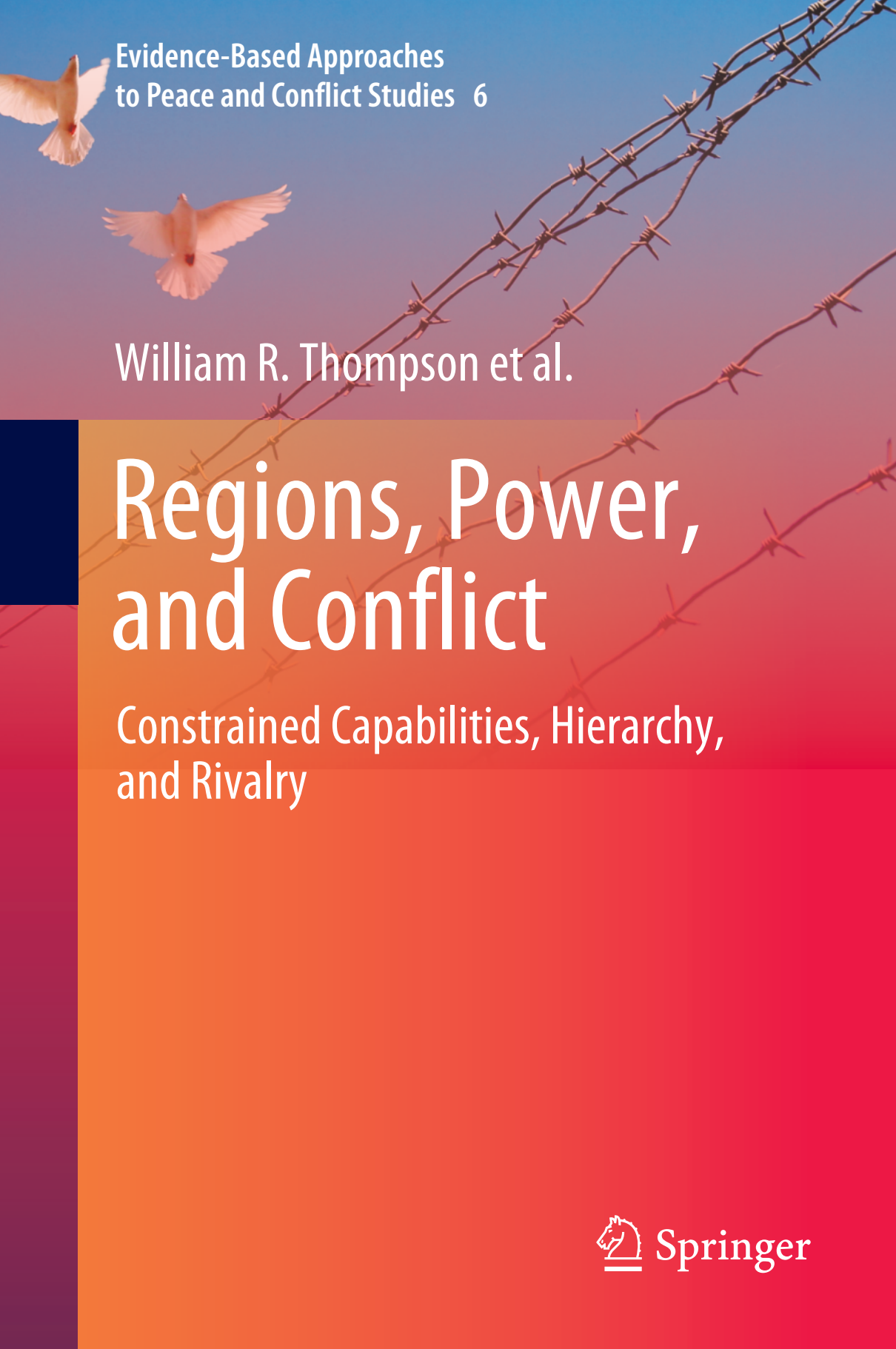
Evidence-Based Approaches
to Peace and Conflict Studies 6
William R. Thompson et al.
Regions, Power, and Conflict
Constrained Capabilities, Hierarchy, and Rivalry
Springer

Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies

Volume 6

This series aims to publish books on peace and conflict with evidence-based approaches, befitting an era best characterized by uncertainty and complexity. Even if occurrence of major wars among sovereign states has dramatically decreased, from 5 million soldiers killed between 1938 and 1945 per annum; through 100,000 soldiers killed between 1945 and 1989 per annum; to 10,000 soldiers killed between 1989 and 2019 per annum; many kinds of peace and conflict keep arising in the world, with extraordinary technological progress and unprecedented spatial coverage. All parts of the world now are so well connected and interdependent. At the same time, they easily and suddenly become sources of immense vulnerability and fragility, bringing one or another of them to the verge of collapse and destruction. The causes are diverse: climate change, migration, pandemic and epidemic disease, civil strife, religious dissonance, economic competition, arms races, terrorism, corruption—a virtual plethora of sources. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, calls these and many others "problems without passports."

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Regions, Power, and Conflict

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Contents

Chapter 1
The Significance of Regional Analyses

This volume focuses on the study of regional international relations. Most of the chapters look at multiple regions and in that sense are comparative. Some chapters focus on a single region but in a way that lends itself to future comparisons. Why should we study these regions? One reason is that international relations scholars have examined monadic (single state), dyadic (state pairs), and systemic (either all states or elite states) levels of analysis. There are gains to be had by each of these approaches. There are also limitations. Ultimately, though, it is difficult to claim that any of these approaches are the only way to go. Regional analysis is not designed to eliminate other approaches. Rather, the idea is to supplement them. With the exception of major powers, monadic states and dyadic pairs of states operate in regional contexts. Rarely, do they exceed regional boundaries in their interactions. Systemic interactions can be genuinely holistic but often they disguise what are regional interactions. Take for example, world wars. We call them world wars because participation is extensive and conflict is widespread. Yet even these world wars tend to selectively focus on regions. World War II might have been a war restricted to two zones: Europe and North Africa and East Asia—that is, three regions at best. It became more complicated when Germany declared war on the United States. The regional theaters fused into one very large war. Even so, the combat remained strongly regional. Similar observations can be made in regard to earlier world wars.

So, one reason is that a lot of activity in international relations takes place within regions. A second reason is that regional analyses can supplement and complement more narrow analyses. When two states in the Middle East clash, the regional context is never absent. Clashes in a region like the Middle East have antecedents and implications in and for the larger region in which they occur. Precisely the same statement can be made about cooperation or conflict in East Africa or Southeast Asia. Why not figure out how to bring the larger context into the analysis?

A third reason for regional analysis has two dimensions. Regions are highly heterogenous places. No two regions seem exactly alike. Part of the reason for this is that they have vastly different path dependencies. Western Europe has a long history of protracted warfare between multiple states that were whittled down to a much

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smaller number of states after hundred years of combat. East Asia is characterized by fluctuations in centralization and de-centralization, with the size of China and its rule fluctuating accordingly. Sub-Saharan African regions have a history of low population density and therefore less urbanization and a different view on the value of territory than the more crowded West European region. South America has a long history of dependency on exports to first Britain and later the United States. Presumably, these path dependencies can make some difference to the activities we attempt to model in the contemporary period. Rarely, though, do we control for them beyond adding a binary instrument that registers whether a country is or is not in a given region. When we do that, it does not specify what path dependencies we are attempting to control for—nor do we usually pay much attention to the regional variables when they emerge as significant in equations.

Thus, one additional reason is that we do a poor job of capturing path dependencies when we merely assign a binary regional control. If we call it by a proper name or geographical place, we are most likely lumping together multiple path dependencies. What do we mean when we say activity is Middle Eastern, West African, or Central American? At some point, moreover, we need to determine what the proper place names mean so that we can replace them with more precise social scientific variables.

A sixth reason that overlaps with the last two is that international relations is a lumpy topic. We can make generalizations that might fit one part of the world but not another part. How major powers interact may not resemble anything that goes on in half a dozen regions. What goes on in those half a dozen regions may be very dissimilar as well. Why that might be the case requires comparative regional analysis to properly evaluate it.

The seventh reason for doing regional analyses might be called the rest of the world problem or conundrum. When we perform quantitative analyses with nearly 200 states, the statistical outcomes are apt to be shaped by regional heterogeneity. If we look at peace and find that, say, boundary settlements or democratization seem important to more pacific interactions, we are basing this conclusion on Western European and North American states shaping a scatter plot in a manner that reflects the values observed in those two regions. What are we to make of the rest of the world? Are we saying that we must wait for a cessation of boundary disputes and genuine democratization in the rest of the world before they too become pacific? Maybe so – but not necessarily if the regions that have high values on our selected drivers are unlikely to be replicated elsewhere. That is something that we have to determine. We cannot stop with the observation that the rest of the world must become like Western Europe or North America if we are not really sure why those regions exhibit pacific tendencies in the first place. Yes, they may be highly democratic regions but they are so much more than that. Until we decode what regions mean, many of our empirical analyses are simply incomplete.

Progress in the literature on comparative regional analysis has been slow and occurring in sporadically. Numerous problems have retarded its development. One issue has been the absence of any consensus over the basic concept of what a region is, and for those engaged in quantitative analysis, virtually no agreement over the empirical delineation of region boundaries and state membership within regions. A

second issue has been the absence of a comprehensive theoretical framework that would allow for a comparison of regions across time and space. In this vein, Chap. 2 reviews a large portion (roughly 230 articles) of the more recent quantitative literature on conflict and cooperation dynamics in international politics that involve some effort to include "region" as part of the analysis. While there is little consensus regarding the definition and operationalization of "region", most studies identifying regions report substantial and significant region effects on the dependent variable of interest. In order to move towards a more comprehensive analysis of region effects, a new approach is proposed for conceptualizing and delineating regions on the basis of an opportunity and willingness framework for regional delineation. Applying the approach, the changing nature of regions and their membership in both Cold War and post-Cold War eras are first discussed. Both the strengths and limitations of the approach are then discussed. The chapter then proposes a theoretical framework for examining conflict, cooperation, and diffusion dynamics across regions. It suggests three types of regional effects, but places primary emphasis on a comparative regional analysis that discriminates between regions based on differences created by hierarchical relationships both inside regions and globally, integrating structural approaches into the theoretical framework. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a series of caveats regarding both the identification of regions and the utility of the proposed framework.

As we have noted above, much of our understanding of conflict and cooperation processes in international politics have come from monadic and dyadic levels of analysis. Foremost among such understandings has been the effects of regime type on conflict and cooperation. One crucial question we explore is the extent to which findings from those levels hold up when subjected to a broader regional context. Chapter 3 focuses on two major questions concerning regime type and conflict and cooperation between states. First, should peace between democracies be attributed to the nature of their political regimes or some other intervening variable that influences both democracy and conflict? Second, to what extent is democratization driven by external drivers of threat and if so, then does external conflict help to explain regime type?

The chapter conducts the inquiry with a longitudinal focus on one region (Europe) and with key variables examined at the region level of analysis. The empirical analysis indicates that rivalry and unstable boundaries are alternative manifestations of external threat and both have significant effects on stimulating interstate conflict. Contrary to the democratic peace argument, regime type does not appear to have an independent effect on interstate conflict when either of the other variables are taken into consideration. At the same time, external threat indicators negatively predict changes in democratization.

At least in the quantitative analysis of conflict (but also typically among area studies scholars as well) the limited attention to comparative regional analysis has also assumed that the boundaries of regions and membership within them are fixed. Scholars typically use a dummy variable to identify region, and both regional boundaries and state membership remain a constant in these analyses. Chapter 2 is an exception to this trend. The focus of the fourth chapter is explicitly on changes to

regional boundaries: how regional spaces change over time and how the evolution of regional space affects our understanding of both international politics of that space and as well the comparative regional research agenda. The question of changing regional space is explored through an examination of the possible rise of a "Super Asia" region. The analysis of this regional space is accomplished through a brief review of foreign policy history of the place over the last two centuries, and, using available data from 1950 through 2020, is illustrated using network analysis to identify politically relevant subgroups in the region. Consistent with Chap. 2, it draws into the analysis global and regional shifts in hierarchy, as important factors driving the cohesion of states in the Super Asian space. The chapter concludes that a Super Asia may be emerging once more, depending on the ongoing relationships between key regional powers (especially China, Japan, India, and Australia) and also depending on the relative porousness of the region to external power interference (especially the U.S.), interference which had previously served to create greater fragmentation especially during the 1960s and 1970s.

Regional delineation is not only about arguments regarding state membership (e.g., does Turkey belong in Europe or the Middle East) or about where one region concludes and another one starts (e.g., where is the dividing line between Central and Eastern Africa) but as well controversies about the existence of regions. Is there a Mediterranean region? Is there a Central American region? Is there a Central Asia? The purpose of Chap. 5 is to answer that last question by systematically delineating patterns of state interaction using an analysis of state visits between the states (from 1991 to 2021) that are thought to make up the region and assess the extent to which such state visits reflect increasing regional commonality within the geopolitical space. State visits serve as indicators of foreign policy interests; the selectivity of state visits helps to determine regional boundaries based on this type of state interaction.

The chapter focuses first on several theoretical approaches salient for determining the types of structures one might expect to find in Central Asia. Then, an analysis of state visits is created to show patterns of duration and intensity in interstate interactions, consistent with these theoretical formulations. Based on these patterns an assessment is made about the existence and viability of a Central Asian region. It concludes, based on the visits network that Central Asia rather than being an autonomous region is better characterized as a Russian-centered subsystem, and will likely continue as long as Moscow continues to actively interfere in the region's economic and political relations. Note that the chapter, compared to Chap. 2, provides for students of comparative regional analysis an alternative conceptualization and an alternative measurement strategy for identifying regions.

At the heart of international politics are studies revolving around the power of states and the extent to which relative power holds salient information regarding deterrence, winners and losers in in conflicts, and relative success in creating and maintaining global (and regional) order(s). Extant research on power (and strength) has focused on the concept at various levels of analysis, but seldom at the regional level. Chapter 6 offers a new approach to the conceptualization and measurement of state strength, and the approach developed here is used in the following chapter to

estimate the strength of regions. The chapter applies a conceptual framework that integrates a state's economic (GDP) and military (military spending) resources with two political phenomena: the extent to which the state extracts resources from its economy and the quality of governance in the use and application of those resources. Then it demonstrates that modifying basic capabilities with these two constraints creates significant differences in state strength that meet face validity criteria far better than extant measures of bulk state capabilities across a series of selected cases.

The chapter then assesses the extent to which the modified measures do better than base measures in predicting to variables associated with conflict processes and outcomes. The analysis shows that the qualified measures function better to predict the outcome of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), the frequency with which MIDs occur between dyads, and performs better even when rivalries and territorial disputes are integrated into a regression analysis. Finally, it finds that asymmetric strength is a consistently better predictor (of reduced conflict and conflict outcomes) when using the modified measures than in the extant literature when capabilities measures are not modified.

Chapter 7 extends the discussion of strength from the previous chapter. While Chap. 6 focused on strength at the monadic and dyadic levels, this chapter extends the analysis by focusing on the relative differences in strength across regions. A region's strength becomes salient for a variety of reasons: the ability to construct a regional order; its ability to resist negative world order effects; an ability to minimize external penetration by outside actors; the successful pursuit of collaborative arrangements with other regions; and strong regions as relative incubators of emerging major or regional powers.

Chapter 7 concludes that in terms of economic strength three (North America, Western Europe and East Asia) of the 18 regions share over 55% of the cumulative strength of all regions, while at the other end of the spectrum six regions barely register any levels of economic strength. In terms of military strength, the imbalance across regions is similar to the economic dimension, albeit even more skewed towards North America and Western Europe. Consequences for regional order creation, resistance to external penetration, and the emergence of regional or major powers are addressed in the context of the two dimensions of regional strength.

One of the key puzzles raised by comparative regional analysis concerns the notion that some regions stand out as particularly conflictual in the relations between their members (think of the Middle East, or Central Africa), some are consistently pacific (North America over the last century), while other regions have moved from conducting highly conflictual intra-regional relationships to highly pacific ones (e.g., Western Europe, South East Asia, and South America). A comparative regional analysis suggests that such a framework should be able to account for such variation across regions. This is the primary objective for Chaps. 8, 9, and 10. Chapter 8 proceeds by creating a theoretical framework designed for a comparative analysis of regions for explaining variation in intra-regional conflicts between states. It does so through (a) integrating extant findings from other levels of analysis intending to stipulate conditions under which some regions are likely to be more conflict-prone than others; and (b) places those considerations for explaining regional conflict

patterns into the context of the presence or absence of regional hierarchies that may manage conflicts, either through deterrence or regional order building.

The chapter focuses on two version of intra-regional conflict: the frequency of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) and the extent of members' involvement in those MIDs as the two salient dependent variables, covering an empirical time frame between the 1950s and the 2000s. Using an OLS regression model, the analysis finds that regions with a dominant power, compared to regions without one, are associated with a 59% reduction in the frequency of severe MIDs and a 60% reduction in the number of states in a region involved with severe MIDs. Thus, the extent to which hierarchies exist in regions may be crucial in identifying intra-regional conflict patterns.

Reviewing the extensive literature on international conflict and peace, Chap. 9 also focuses on monadic, dyadic and regional approaches for the argument that international conflict and peace differ from one region to the next. It argues that while dyadic approaches to conflict and peace have been dominant in the literature, additional approaches that aggregate states and dyads in a common geopolitical space and also focus on dependencies and interdependencies between states within regions may provide more fruitful avenues for understanding the differences across regions. Additionally, an argument is made that studies using network analysis methodologies may be particularly useful in addressing such (inter)dependencies.

The chapter begins by briefly illustrating important empirical trends that depict such regional variations, including ways in which dyadic relationships can be aggregated to the regional level. Studies that adopt different perspectives on extra-dyadic conditions are presented in the next section. Some of these studies associate regional conflict and peace with the spatial dispersion of underlying conditions while others focus on the mechanisms underlying spatial dependence and diffusion. Finally, recommendations are made for future research, particularly from a regional standpoint.

While Chap. 8's primary contribution to predicting conflict focused on hierarchies within regions, Chap. 10 argues that bad neighborhoods (those with high levels of conflict) differ from "good" neighborhoods due to a combination of domestic and international factors centered around ethnic political interactions both within and across states and are in turn aggravated by inadequate state capacities. First, the chapter builds a theoretical foundation to explain why the interactions between ethnopolitics and weak states generate international conflict. Then the chapter applies the argument empirically to account for territorial disputes. The chapter finds that the presence of transnational ethnic kin and rivalry constitute potent neighborhood effects on boundary dispute behavior, with external and domestic factors interacting to make boundary disagreements more probable, albeit external factors appear to be the most potent drivers of the existence and persistence of territorial disputes. Perhaps surprisingly, excluded transborder ethnic kin have a much greater effect on disputes than do included transborder ethnic kin. The chapter concludes by noting the geopolitical regions most susceptible to these dynamics.

One persistent concern raised by policy makers and scholars alike revolves around the extent to which the liberal world order can continue in post-Cold War international

politics. This is the motivation for Chap. 11 which focuses on the extent to which the regions that are embedded in international politics support or oppose the extant, dominant world order. This question is explored by engaging in an extensive inductive exercise designed to probe the degree to which regions differ in terms of their dissatisfaction with the status quo, and the extent to which one or more regions, consistent with the analysis of relative regional strength discussed in Chap. 7, emerge as strong advocates of an alternative order, including the likelihood that their challenge would be successful.

Relative satisfaction with the global order through an analysis of UN General Assembly voting behavior for members of regions is assessed and levels of regional dissatisfaction with regional economic and military strength are compared. The comparisons suggest that regions in substantial support of the liberal world order (LWO) continue to have substantially greater economic and military strength than regions opposed to the status quo; to the extent that the LWO is threatened, such threats would require substantial, increased opposition to the order among those still most favorable (North America, Western Europe, parts of East Asia).

This volume is not a beginning to regional analyses. There are many fine studies already available. We need more though. We have not attained a critical mass by any means. One unobtrusive indicator is that we have no standard approach to delineating regions. Everybody does it a little (or a lot) differently—just as the chapters in this volume do. For cumulation to occur, we need to standardize that feature of regional analysis better. We are not in the position to argue that the "regions of opportunity and willingness" (ROW) approach in Chap. 2 should become the gold standard. It is clear that while this approach is useful for certain purposes, its use is less clear when researchers wish to investigate long processes of continuity and change in regions. The general point here is not that there should be one uniform standard for regional delineation; scholarship in IR seldom achieves such uniformity and perhaps it should not. What will aid the advancement of knowledge in comparative regional analysis is to sketch out for which research questions an approach such as ROW is preferable and for types of research questions when it is not but other approaches are more useful.

Nor is this the only issue we have been unable to address in this volume. Many others persist and need scholarly attention. A second one is raised by Chap. 5: under what conditions do regions undergo fragmentation or amalgamation, and what are the consequences of these changes for both neighboring regions and for the international political system?

Chapter 6 raises a third issue: it is clear that under certain conditions there are clear diffusion processes undergoing in several regions, diffusing a range of phenomena from civil wars to increasing (or decreasing) democratization. Yet such diffusion occurs unevenly across regions and across phenomena. Can that be attributable to certain properties of regions that make the creation of diffusion firewalls (Solingen, 2012) more or less likely? Little scholarship has explored this issue in a comparative, regional perspective.

The literature in international politics has consistently pointed to the very different interests and capabilities created by major powers that are continental versus maritime

powers (e.g. Thompson 2022). As a fourth issue, does a similar distinction apply to the politics of landlocked regions versus regions with maritime connections? We would expect that regions that have maritime segments are more likely to be connected to the outside world, consistent with the way the world economy developed. States with coasts are better connected than those without and are more susceptible to both change and as targets of major power concern, given trade routes and investment patterns, possibly making these regions more susceptible to both external penetration and more susceptible to democratization pressures.

Fifth, several of the chapters that follow, either directly or indirectly, theorize about the differences in intra-regional patterns of conflict and cooperation, given the existence of a hierarchy or a dominant power in the region. For instance, Chap. 6 finds that where dominant powers exist conflict is dampened substantially compared to regions lacking such dominant powers.[1] Certainly the most conflictual of regions (Middle East, Central Africa) lack a dominant major or regional power. Yet, we know all too little about the causal driver(s) that may link such a hierarchy to diminished conflict. Nor do we know the extent to which such hierarchical arrangements can be swamped by other factors that stimulate additional intra-regional conflict. Note the hierarchy constraining exception in South Asia, with a dominant power (India), but one caught in a long-term rivalry, with the consequence that South Asia is riddled with intra-regional strife.

Sixth, there appears to be an assumption in this literature that one of the reasons why dominant powers may depress conflict and enhance cooperation in their own regions is through the creation of institutions that facilitate cooperation between the region's members and perhaps create regional orders that differ from extant global orders. Yet, the creation and maintenance of effective regional institutions is costly and relatively rare. Most regional institutions are not highly effective. We need to know more about the conditions that will incentivize dominant states to invest in such institutions, and/or conditions that will allow such institutions to develop without such dominant power investment.

We could list dozens of other questions that require future research. But to get to the larger point, we need more regional analyses which would mean that more analysts recognize the value of regional analysis. We also need more theories of regional behavior to justify analysis within this level of analysis. If this volume encourages more regional analysis and theory building, it will have fulfilled one of our goals. Ideally, it will also provide some explanatory value-added in the interim as well.

[1] A recent study (Duursma and Tamm 2021) focusing on mutual military interventions by states in intrastate conflicts also finds that in Africa the overwhelming numbers of such interventions occur in the two regions lacking a dominant power (Central and East Africa) and few such interventions in the two regions with an extant dominant power (West and Southern Africa).

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Chapter 2
The Case for Comparative Regional Analysis in International Politics

Regions are prominent in much of international relations research. Area specialists devote their professional lives to the study of one or, perhaps, two regions. Quantitative international relations scholars use regional controls in empirical models of conflictual or cooperative relations and typically find that regions matter, at least statistically. Most states conduct their political relationships within regions rather than globally (Acharya 2007; Hurrell 2007). At a minimum, the geopolitical context constitutes a strong conditioning effect on how states conduct their external (and often internal) affairs.

Yet rarely are explanations of interstate relations embedded in a comparative regional perspective,[1] using region as either the primary level or unit of analysis. This state of affairs is due to various definitional, conceptual, theoretical, and empirical issues that have inhibited development of systematic, comparative, and rigorous inquiry at the regional level. Our intention is not to address those problems fully nor to resolve them. Instead, we wish to offer a view of more recent quantitative literature and a theoretical framework that may be useful to the development of more comparative regional analysis.

We take on these tasks in the context of three puzzles of interest concerning international relations. First, what accounts for variation in intra-regional cooperative relationships between states? Some regions contain far more extensive cooperative relationships and institutionalization than others; regions also go through cycles of greater or lesser cooperation. Are these differences already explained by state-level and dyadic findings or may regional dynamics provide additional insights?

For an earlier version of this work, see Volgy, Thomas J., Paul Bezerra, Jacob Cramer, and J. Patrick Rhamey. 2017. "The Case for Comparative Regional Analysis in International Politics," *International Studies Review*, 19, 3: 452–480.

[1] Most studies focus on a single region and the dynamics driving states within one region. Of these the European Union experience dominates but has been increasingly challenged by single studies of other regions. There are substantially fewer cases of scholarship that focus on two (e.g., Katzenstein 2005, Solingen 1998) or more regions (Buzan and Waever 2003, Gleditsch 2002, Lemke 2002, Prys 2010, Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier 2012).

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Second, regions vary in the extent of conflict between their members. Can regional dynamics help explain variation in conflicts across regions and across time within regions? Third, we are interested in the literature on diffusion processes, including both conditions that may accelerate diffusion or firewalls that may retard the diffusion of phenomena, including conflict and cooperation (Solingen 2012).

2.1 A Brief Look at the Literature

The literature on regions is vast, addressed by scholars from political science, international politics, geography, sociology, area studies, and economics. Methodological approaches are equally diverse, ranging from case studies of single regions to large-N empirical models. It would be virtually impossible to review this expanse of literature here; fortunately, that is not our purpose. Instead, we focus on recent, large-N, quantitative research relevant to issues involving conflict and cooperation between states to assess the extent to which there is substantial "cumulation" in conceptual development, empirical measurement, and substantive findings regarding the significance of regions in their models.[2] We assess this literature specifically since it has systemically identified "region" as significant in empirical models and thus holds hope for the progressive identification of dynamics that could underscore regional significance.

Our review focuses on quantitative studies of international politics, analyzing articles where scholars included "region" as part of the analysis. We sampled literature that is most likely to be read by quantitative scholars, focusing on conflict and cooperation dynamics. The sample is not meant to reflect the larger volume of scholarship on the development, integration, and institutionalization of *regions*, although we draw on some of that literature in our theoretical section. We sampled eleven journals from 2010 to 2020, involving a total of over 445 issues.[3] We focused on high visibility journals most likely to contain large-N studies.[4]

The articles chosen for analysis included quantitative studies where either the key dependent variable or one or more of the key independent variables used in the analysis involved phenomena typically studied by international relations scholars. We further narrowed our focus to studies where the models included "region" in the empirical analysis and utilized a research domain that included more than a single region. Roughly 230 articles (15%) met our criteria. Among the articles that include region in empirical models, it appears primarily for methodological

[2] Thus, this literature review is not focused on the state of the art regarding regions but the extent to which regional considerations are integrated into quantitative research focused on conflict and cooperation processes.

[3] These included *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *Journal of Politics, Journal of Peace Research, Journal of Conflict Resolution, Foreign Policy Analysis, International Interactions, International Studies Quarterly,* and *International Organization.*

[4] Based on the TRIPS survey of international relations journals and the Thomson citation index.

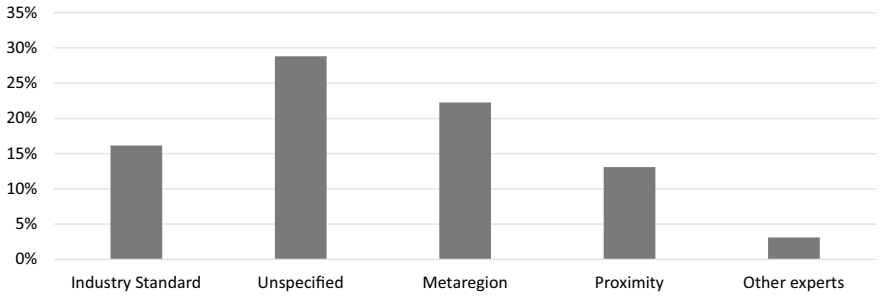


Fig. 2.1 Percent of articles categorizing regions in their analysis, 2010–2020, N = 229

reasons (including fixed effects) and only secondarily for substantive reasons (potentially generating independent effects). In many cases, there are no reasons given for utilizing regional controls. Unsurprisingly, in most cases when "region" appears to be significant, the theoretical consequences are not discussed.

Overall, there is little consensus about either conceptual meaning or operationalization of region as a concept. Thompson's (1973) seminal review of the regions literature—now nearly five decades ago—continues to ring true: classifications range from large, geographical entities (meta-regions such as Africa, Asia, or Europe) to half-hearted attempts to inject political significance into geopolitical spaces ("Europe East and post-Soviet Union" or "Asia/Tigers"). Appendix 1 demonstrates no fewer than 70 different regional labels included in these studies, reflecting the lack of any emerging consensus. States in the Western Hemisphere are sometimes lumped together ("Americas"), sometimes disaggregated ("Central and South", "Central, South and Caribbean", "Central", "Latin", "North and South"), and sometimes parts are lumped in with other groupings ("North America and West Europe", "North America, West Europe and Japan", "North America, West Europe and Oceania"). There are twenty-two different designations for Asian states.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the dominant classifications in the surveyed literature. "Industry Standard" are World Bank, United Nations, or Correlates of War (COW) classifications; "Unspecified" indicates insufficient information in the article to make a judgment about how regions were classified; "Meta-Regions" are large, continent-wide geographical areas[5];"Proximity" reflects the carving out of regions defined primarily by contiguity criteria; while "Other experts" refers to classifications replicating earlier studies with unique classifications.[6]

As Fig. 2.1 illustrates, the dominant approach to regional classification is "unspecified." Trailing close behind (at around 23%) are meta-regional classifications, with or without modifications. Roughly fifteen percent utilize standardized codes (mostly

[5] These include either meta-regions or modifications of meta-regions, such as splitting the Americas into North and Latin America, Asia into Eastern and Western Asia, separating "Asian tigers" from the rest of Asia, or separating communist states from non-communist states.

[6] An initial inter-coder reliability test yielded aggregate agreement with the classifications at .89. After a reconciliation for minor errors, the second round yielded agreement at .95.

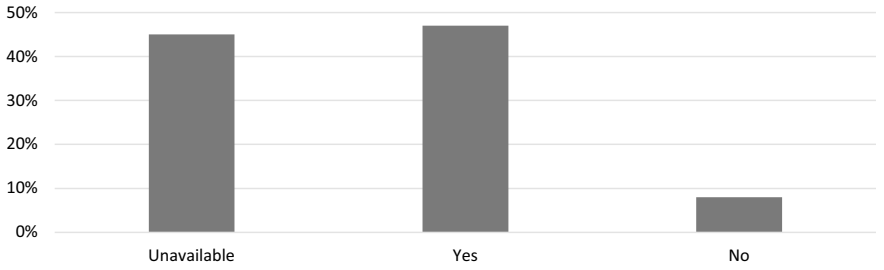


Fig. 2.2 Percent of articles finding significance in regional classification

COW codes). Less than five percent utilize classifications pioneered in previous studies.[7]

For whatever reason(s) there does not appear to be much original work on identifying and measuring regions across these works, nor much agreement about an existing "gold standard" for classification. Furthermore, discussion about the concept of "region" is generally minimal to non-existent, as are issues about the validity of the empirical classification for regional membership.[8] The regional delineations used are seldom justified in terms of the options available. Virtually none of this scholarship engages the specific literature on regions that raises substantial conceptual and empirical issues regarding inter-regional comparisons (e.g., Ahram 2011; De Lombaerde et al. 2010).

As harsh as this judgment sounds, it is understandable. Almost all the literature we reviewed was otherwise rigorous, both theoretically and methodologically. However, the region variable was typically utilized as one of a subset of "controls" in models, secondary to the primary research question and primarily as a method for introducing fixed effects. Thus, in many cases, the authors did not even report the impact of region on the dependent variable.

Yet, region appears to matter substantively for the dependent variable of interest in most of these studies.[9] To assess how often this is the case, we reclassified articles according to whether they report the effects of regions on the dependent variable and whether regional classifications are significant. As Fig. 2.2 illustrates, the appropriate information is unavailable in nearly half of these articles.[10] Among those that present regional effects, region appears to matter overwhelmingly (over 86% of articles) and across a wide range of dependent variables (Fig. 6.3). Unfortunately, given the lack of agreement on regional classifications, it is extremely difficult to integrate substantive

[7] Examples include a previous effort's focus on democracies (Hadenius and Teorell 2005); one replicates a categorization used for analyzing diffusion in democracies (Brinks and Coppedge 2006); one utilizes a classification used to study shatterbelts (Hensel and Diehl 1994); while one borrows a classification for analyzing civil wars (Hegre and Sambanis 2006).

[8] For an exception, see Dafoe (2011).

[9] We are not the first to note this (Hegre and Sambanis 2006).

[10] Typically, authors indicate that regional distinctions were used for "fixed effects" or robustness checks without disclosing the impact of regional controls on the dependent variable.

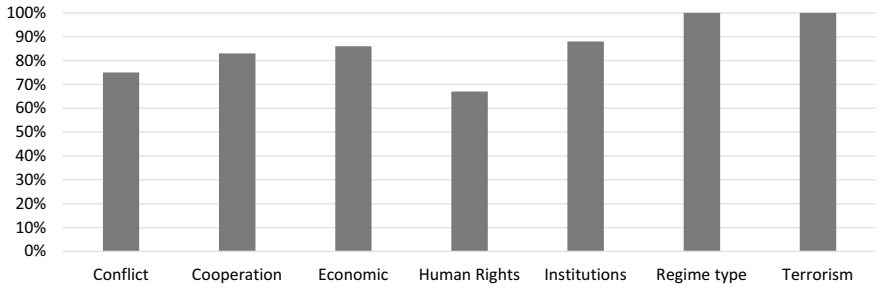


Fig. 2.3 Percent of articles reporting significance of region, by dependent variable of interest

findings. We cannot systematically gauge the independent effect of regions on conflict processes when articles differ by regional classification and method (varying in terms of which region functions as the baseline comparison).[11] For example, the two most consistent outliers in conflict studies are "Europe" and the "Middle East", consistent with face validity, but *membership* in these two "regions" varies substantially across studies (Fig. 2.3).

To what extent does this literature utilize region as the primary level or unit of analysis? Virtually none within the scope of our review: roughly one percent of the articles reviewed focused on region as either the appropriate level or unit of analysis in international politics (e.g., Acharya 2007, 2014; Solingen 2007, 2008, 2012, McCallister 2016.)

There are numerous journals outside of those sampled that are not quantitative in focus and have region as the primary level of analysis. These highlight comparative regions, "regionalism", "new regionalism", "regionalization" and "regionness" (e.g. De Lombaerde et al. 2010, Hettne and Soderbaum 2000, Fawcett and Gandois 2010, Fawn 2009, Hurrell 2007, Sbragia 2008). We refer to some of these works below. However, very few if any of these works are cited in these journals of high visibility to quantitative IR scholars, giving some pause about the advancement of regional considerations in large-N quantitative work.

2.1.1 Where to From Here?

Our literature review indicates that while large-N quantitative works frequently account for regional influence in modeling strategies, there is not much ongoing conceptual development regarding regions in the sampled literature and little agreement on how to delineate regions. Yet, when region as a variable is explicitly included

[11] Much of the literature fails to address as well some of the key issues raised by the spatial economics literature focused on diffusion and interdependence, and the salient methodological implications that arise in gauging the effects of spatial, temporal, and unit considerations simultaneously. For these critiques, see Franzese and Hays (2007, 2008) and Beck et al. (2006).

in the research, its effects persist over a broad range of research questions.[12] Such persistence in findings suggests that regions are salient considerations in the analysis of international relations, and it is worthwhile to seek further discussion and debate over conditions needed to better understand how they relate to phenomena of scholarly interest. Toward that view, we offer two proposals: first, an approach to conceptualizing and measuring regions; and second, a framework for conducting comparative regional analysis in international relations relevant to issues of interstate conflict and cooperation. Neither proposal will resolve long-standing difficulties; we offer them to stimulate further discussion and research that hopefully can generate more "cumulation" over regional effects and the salience of regions for theories of international politics.

2.2 Delineating Regions

While the salience of regional spaces in international relations has a long tradition (e.g., Mackinder 1904; Passi 2020), consensus over identifying the contours of relevant regional subsystems has thus far remained elusive (Buzan 1998, Fawn 2009, Fawcett and Gandois 2010, Albert 2020). Some have sought to avoid arbitrarily determined regions by defining composition through the existence of regional institutions (Powers 2004) or security complexes (Buzan and Waever 2003). These attempts, however, make comparisons of regions impossible for certain questions (e.g., why do some regions develop institutions while others fail to do so?) due to selection effects for delineation.[13]

As an alternative approach, we define regions[14] as those spaces where *a group of geographically contiguous states possess both the opportunity and willingness to interact with one another as a function of their capabilities and foreign policy activities* (consistent with Rhamey 2012; Teixeira 2012; Volgy and Rhamey 2014; Volgy et al. 2018). Underpinning our analytical approach is Most and Starr's (1989) opportunity and willingness framework, providing a means of selecting a cluster of states that have the potential to engage in regional activity.

Restricting states to those that are contiguous and mutually capable of interacting, we parallel the literature on politically relevant dyads (e.g., Lemke and Reed 2001, Quackenbush 2006). By including a minimal willingness constraint, we set a baseline of mutual recognition between region members, capturing regions that come into existence as a function of interactive, overlapping interests, and offer a quantitative version of "socially constructed" regions. The result is an operationalization of regions comprised of contiguous states interacting to a degree uniquely apart from the broader international system. Furthermore, the approach has the advantage of

[12] Even if authors often forgo discussion of regions' effects.

[13] For a similar argument, see Solingen (2014).

[14] Region designations are available at patrickrhamey.com/row including maps and a detailed codebook.

flexibility as regional composition—both the number and scope of regions—may evolve with changes in geopolitical context (Fawcett 2004, 434). This broad operationalization satisfies the conceptual criteria upon which most regional analysis is conducted in international relations and is suitable for analyses that treat region as a fixed effect *and* those that treat regions as substantively important.

To measure the opportunity constraint for joint regional membership, we calculate each state's ability to reach others in the international system using Bueno de Mesquita's (1981) loss of strength gradient that degrades the capabilities of states across distance. The projected capabilities from state *i* to state *j* is:

$$P_{ij} = \text{Power}^{\log[(\text{Miles})/(\text{Miles Per Day})+(10-e)]}$$

where Power is the state's GDP in proportion to global GDP (Heston et al. 2012),[15] and miles per day in the post-World War II era is set at 500 (Bueno de Mesquita 1981). Conceptually, this calculation results in a series of capability "bubbles" radiating outward from each state's capital. According to the formula, each state's power degrades across distance until the point at which it is no longer significantly relevant to the target state's foreign policy. Following Lemke (2002), we designate the threshold at which states lose the opportunity to significantly interact at fifty percent capability loss from the capital of the projecting state to the capital of the target.[16] Directed dyads above the fifty percent threshold are coded as "1" with all others coded "0."

Second, we determine whether states with opportunity also possess observable willingness to interact through consistent foreign policy engagement. To estimate the extent of willingness, we first aggregate the total number of weighted events from the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) for 1950–1978 (Azar 1980) and from the Integrated Data for Event Analysis (IDEA) for 1990–2013 (Bond et al. 2003; Goldstein 1992 for scaling) for each state. We then calculate for each dyad, annually, each state's directed weighted foreign policy activity to each other state as a proportion of their total foreign policy activity. Those states that engage in an above-average proportion[17] of their total foreign policy activity with another state, regardless of whether that interaction is cooperative or conflictual, surpass our willingness threshold. If dyads surpass this threshold, they are coded as showing that both states had the willingness to engage one another.

Finally, we identify cliques in network analysis (Hanneman and Riddle 2005) to determine unique clusters of interaction among three or more states where dyads

[15] Others who use the loss of strength gradient typically include the Correlates of War Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) as the measure of "power," but have produced peculiar outcomes such as China holding the position of most powerful state. GDP provides a more plausible hierarchy of states, and in the post-Cold War era, is still strongly correlated with CINC scores (Rhamey 2012, 69).

[16] See Lemke (2002, 79–81) for further justification.

[17] An "above average" amount is a proportion of a state's foreign policy directed to another state that is greater than the average proportion of all states' foreign policy to each other state, annually, which is about four percent each year.

are coded as receiving a link if there were both opportunity and willingness were present, annually. A link, or "tie," in the network is then a relationship between two states capable of reaching one another, given their share of global GDP and the loss of strength gradient, and engage in relatively greater amounts of foreign policy engagement as a proportion of their total foreign policy activity, each year. From this matrix of dyadic relationships, the clique algorithm determines patterns of connections between states of greater relative similarity compared to the international system.[18] The resulting dendogram output using UCINET social network analysis software depicts groups of states organized according to the extent of correlation in their patterns of ties within the network (Borgatti et al. 2002).

We employ no specific threshold for correlation between states to qualify as potential region members, only that they are relatively more correlated with one group than with others. The rationale for this flexibility is due to the variable nature of similarity within different regions: in Europe, most region members have very similar ties, whereas in West Africa, those similarities are less extensive, albeit region members possess more in common with one another than they do with any other nearby cluster of states.[19]

The cliques identified by this method are contiguous over land or less than 500 miles of water,[20] resulting in regions consisting of geographically contiguous states whose patterns of opportunity and willingness are uniquely similar to one another relative to the broader international system. Finally, to maintain stability in regional composition and to prevent anomalous events limited to a single year from driving regional membership, states are placed in the region for each year within which they most frequently identify across each decade.

By focusing on proximity with opportunity and willingness, this approach allows state location, behavior, and capability to drive classification rather than pre-selected, unchanging structural categories. The flexible nature of both regions and states within them produces additional utility.[21] Some states belong to no region (e.g., Mongolia in Fig. 2.4); others (e.g., Turkey) may move from one region to another over time (and perhaps return). Some regions may come into existence or dissolve, as is the case of post-Cold War Central Asia, while others may merge to become super-regions (e.g., Europe or East Asia). These shifting dynamics reflect the observable "power and purpose of states" (Katzenstein 2005, 2), mirroring aspects of the conception of regions often employed in comparative regionalism.[22]

Using these procedures, we identify nine regions for the 2000–2009 timeframe (Fig. 2.4 and Appendix 2). States fall into three classifications: core region members,

[18] For discussion of the clique method, see Hanneman and Riddle (2005, Chap. 11) and Everett and Borgatti (1998).

[19] See, for example, the network diagrams in Rhamey (2012, 129) or Rhamey et al. (2014, 5–7).

[20] So as not to eliminate any country from the possibility of regional membership, those few countries not within 500 miles of any others (e.g. Iceland), we count the closest proximate state over water as satisfying the contiguity constraint.

[21] Consistent with the literature arguing for the fluidity of regions (e.g., Fawcett 2004, Passi 2020).

[22] See also the similar conceptual definition by Paul (2012, 4) or the inventory of criteria for regional composition by Thompson (1973).

Fig. 2.4 Mapping regions, 2001–2010[23]

peripheral region members, and border states. *Core region members* are states that meet our criteria on both opportunity and willingness. Some states lack ties to others due to an absence of unique policy activity or capabilities (e.g., Vanuatu), while others have ties but do not cluster with any contiguous states (e.g., Australia). These states are divided into two groups: peripheral region members and border states. Those that, while lacking ties, are surrounded by a single region (e.g., Paraguay)[24] are classified as *peripheral region members*. If a state does not cluster and is geographically between two or more regions, it is a *border state* that could be placed in multiple regions. These states (e.g., Kazakhstan) are pulled in multiple directions, resulting in no clear pattern of engagement with any one group.

This pattern is frequently the case with geographic spaces such as Central Asia and the Caribbean. Nested between cohesive regions, these groups often constitute membership in our pool of border states that do not fit neatly within one region or another and fail to form their own cluster. This observation mirrors the expectations of some area experts: for instance, Zakhirova (2012; and see Chap. 5 in this volume) finds the Central Asian space to be too fluid to constitute what is typically considered a coherent regional space. As Appendix 2 illustrates, 141 states (73%) fall into one of the nine regions, while 53 (27%) are classified as border states belonging to no specific region. Nearly half of the border states are small, and most are relatively inactive in international and regional affairs.

To illustrate changes over time to regions and their composition, we note in Appendix 3 the movement of states and regional classifications in the European

[23] Map taken from patrickrhamey.com/row. Annual maps and those for other decades available at the same url. Map made using historicalmapchart.net, governed by an attribution-sharealike 4.0 license (CC BY-SA 4.0).

[24] While Paraguay does interact with its immediate neighbors, its limited capabilities to reach other states in the region is paralleled by its inconsistent interactions with its region's members. Its troubled relationship with both Mercosur and UNISUR is consistent with being a peripheral regional member.

meta-region during the Cold War. As the merging of Eastern and Western European states in the 1970s suggests, the boundaries of the region are drawn by the ability of contiguous states to reach one another and by greater levels of interaction, rather than by the development of a single security structure or formal economic cooperative arrangements. Indeed, competing security and economic architecture characterizes the European region in the 1970s. However, our approach nevertheless identifies one European region of states focused on each other.

There are a variety of costs and limitations to this approach to regional delineation. One is that the definition and its operationalization minimize cultural and ideational components of regions. However, we assume (and recognize it is a considerable assumption) that the extent to which such considerations create regions, they should be reflected in at least the threshold of interactions (both cooperative and adversarial) we require for states within contiguous spaces.

Additionally, and especially for researchers engaged in large-N longitudinal analyses, there are substantial costs to accommodating changes over time, both for regions and the states populating them, rather than treating regions and their membership as invariant phenomena. Yet, these costs should be offset by a substantively more satisfying classification. Furthermore, a process of non-arbitrary regional determination may be created for any period if a single regional allocation is necessary.

Still, another cost may be that the scheme we propose will yield more numerous regions than expected, and the regions will not be comparable in terms of the numbers of states within or a variety of other salient characteristics. For instance, applying this delineation to the twenty-first century, Figs. 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 indicate a rich diversity of regions and both regional differences and similarities, creating substantial theoretical complexity for comparative regional analysis. Yet, an even richer diversity at the state level of analyses has not inhibited work at that level.

We recognize that our suggested conceptual and measurement strategy may be less suitable for those with different theoretical lenses or substantially different research questions. For instance, an ideational approach may minimize physical location in favor of identity-based associations and carve regions from geopolitical units that violate our contiguity/proximity assumptions. Alternatively, for certain types of

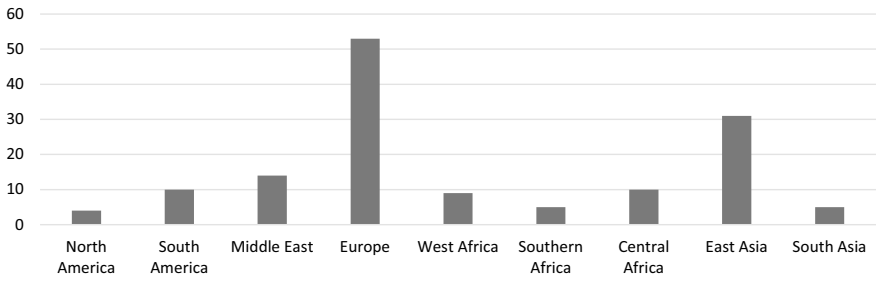


Fig. 2.5 Number of states in each region, 2000–2009. *Source* Appendix 2

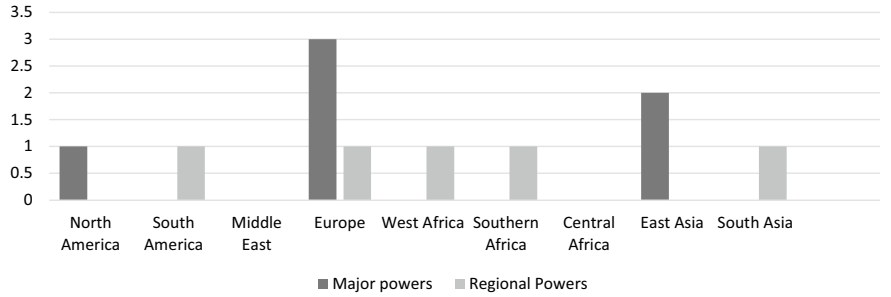


Fig. 2.6 Numbers of regional and global powers inhabiting regions, 2000–2009. *Source* Appendix 2

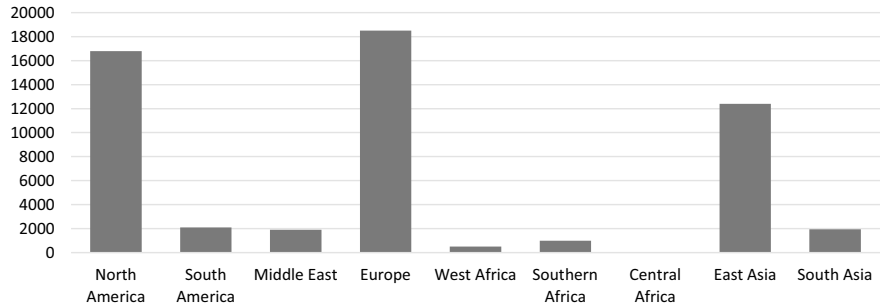


Fig. 2.7 Size of region GDP in constant (2005) US$s, averaged for 2011–2013. *Source* World Bank

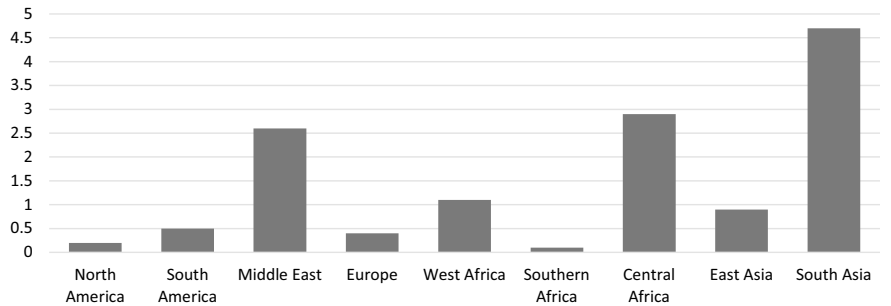


Fig. 2.8 Frequency of severe MIDs in regions, controlling for the number of states, 2001–2010. *Source* COW MIDs

research questions (e.g., under what conditions does regional cooperative architecture endure?), some may define regions in terms of formal structures of cooperation

and create regional membership driven by the extent to which regional structures capture the states in the region.[25]

We also note that our approach may be less suitable for those utilizing different methodologies for addressing regional clustering, state behavior, and diffusion. While we have developed our argument in the prevalent context of large-N quantitative international relations (IR) scholars utilizing regional fixed effects to mitigate correlated error terms, other approaches exist as well. These include the use of spatial error or spatial lag models (e.g., Beck et al. 2006), and neighborhood-based approaches common in the diffusion literature (e.g., Saleyhan and Gleditsch 2006). These are valuable strategies for IR scholars attempting to explain international phenomena and account for the effect of proximity. The virtue of our approach vis-à-vis these others, however, is two-fold. First, we empirically derive relevant, behavior-conditioning geographic space for each actor based upon its physical location and its decisions to pursue interaction (either cooperative or conflictual) with others. In doing so, we account for both the opportunity (capabilities to reach across a physical area) and willingness (engagement) by states to interact. This approach moves beyond treatments of geographic location based on distance and proximity alone (including beyond spatial metrics of proximity and geography), consistent with the notion that "space is more than geography" (Beck et al. 2006) by also accounting for repeated patterns of state interactions and organizing behaviors.[26]

Second, by identifying substantively relevant geographic spaces, we can consider questions directly relating to the *region* as the level of analysis rather than having regional location inform or condition state-level analyses. Ultimately, however, we recognize that the choice of modeling regions based purely upon spatial components or by also accounting for state behavior must depend on the nature of the research question.

2.3 A Theoretical Framework

Figure 2.9 illustrates some of the plausible linkages for a comparative analysis of regions, integrating state, region, and system-level considerations. The framework suggests several trajectories through which a focus on regions may impact interstate

[25] Likewise, for scholars interested in political economy issues, geographically contiguous states could be reclassified in terms of their relative trade vis-à-vis each other, and/or the extent to which they generate structural agreements such as regional trade agreements. However, by selecting conflict and cooperation events as the measure of interaction, we believe our approach offers broader applicability to understanding the variability of cooperation and conflict across regional spaces.

[26] For example, without information on patterns of behavior, Estonia would be, given distance, of far greater "regional" relevance to Russia than France. But, by incorporating patterns of behavior, Estonia has perhaps become more regionally relevant to France than neighboring Russia. Thus, not all distance is created equal, and therein lies the utility of our approach to identifying regional spaces by including behavior alongside distance.

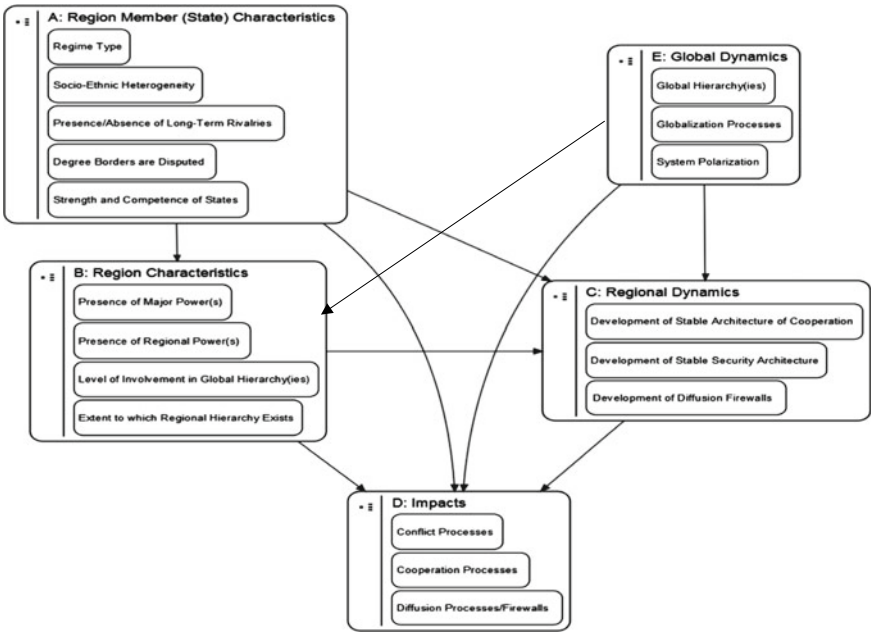


Fig. 2.9 A theoretical framework for assessing regional comparative effects on conflict, cooperation, and diffusion processes

relationships. We focus specifically on three salient phenomena: conflict, cooperation, and diffusion. Note that there are three ways through which regional effects can be observed. First, and least interesting, are what we call Type I effects: regions may simply reflect an aggregate of considerations at the state level (An ➔ D in Fig. 2.9).[27] If, for instance, democracies do not fight each other, regions rich in democracies are less likely to engage in wars and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). Such an outcome will tell us little more than what we already know about democracy and conflict, except for the geopolitical places where these states are clustered.

Second, a comparative analysis of regions may identify Type II effects: processes at the region level that result from aggregate state characteristics or through dyadic interactions (A➔C➔D or A➔B➔ D in Fig. 2.9).[28] For instance, certain state attributes or state-to-state interactions may create conditions in regions enabling the diffusion of international phenomena, such as policies or regulatory agencies (Simmons and Elkins 2004, Jordana, Levi-Faur, and Fernandez i Marin 2011), democratization (Wejnert 2005), or domestic political demonstrations (Lohmann 1994). Other attributes and interactions may lead to firewalls meant to constrain

[27] In these types of cases, approaches focusing on politically relevant dyads or spatial diffusion of proximate states may be more appropriate than analyzing discrete regional spaces as levels of analysis.

[28] Although as Lake (2009, 44) notes, separating Type I from Type II effects in large-N based empirical models can become quite difficult.

diffusion effects emanating locally or globally (Solingen 2012). In these instances, research would focus on the mix of domestic coalitions (Solingen 2007) across states in a region that are likely to act together in ways that either minimize regional firewalls against globalization processes and accelerate diffusion (outward-looking regimes) or collaborate to maximize regional firewalls (inward-looking regimes) against the diffusion of phenomena (Ambrosio 2014). Similarly, research could focus on conditions in regions that would magnify or minimize diffusion effects stemming from ongoing rivalries (Thompson 2015). The theoretical drivers here are not simply the characteristics of states that lead to variation among regions, but how certain state attributes (or interactions) create other conditions that have region-wide consequences.[29] This type of inquiry moves beyond the aggregate characteristics of states by linking those characteristics to region-wide dynamics as significant explanatory variables.

Our primary interest—and theoretical bet—however, is based on Type III effects: a comparative regional analysis that discriminates between regions based on differences created by hierarchical relationships (Lake 2009; Fawn 2009; Goh 2007/2008) both inside regions and globally, integrating structural approaches into the theoretical framework (B➔D, E➔B➔D, and B➔C➔D effects). Presumably, major powers that are able to create global hierarchies will not have uniform interests (and unlimited resources to deploy) across all regions, preferring the establishment and maintenance of such hierarchies in some but not all geopolitical spaces. States (and indirectly, regions) will also vary from negotiating and accepting such hierarchical arrangements to resisting them (Acharya 2007, 2014; Goh 2013). Under what conditions major powers press for hierarchical arrangements, and conditions under which such arrangements are resisted or negotiated, become salient phenomena to explore, with substantial consequences for intra-regional relationships (e.g., Hensel and Diehl 1994). Realists, liberal institutionalist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives provide contending hypotheses regarding these questions. Similarly, the literature on comparative regions and regionalism provides contending perspectives on the salience of major powers and regional powers in linking together states into stable regions and advancing political projects involving regionalization (e.g. Hurrell 2007; Prys 2010).

Global hierarchies may also co-exist with regional hierarchical arrangements (Lemke 2002; Nolte 2010), as noted in Fig. 6.10. Regional powers seeking to create order in their regions are of interest to us.[30] A comparative regional analysis can differentiate regions by (a) whether one or more regional powers exist in a region;

[29] Another illustration concerns the robust finding in the literature regarding the salience of unresolved territorial/border issues for interstate conflicts. In regions where such issues are at a minimum, there should be substantially fewer conflicts (Type I, A➔D effects). However, regions with broadly accepted borders may also contain favorable conditions for the creation of stable institutions (e.g. Gibler and Braithwaite 2013) that further facilitate cooperation between states (Type II, A➔C➔D effects). Likely, the combination of minimal territorial disputes, the prevalence of democracies, the end to ongoing rivalries, and especially security incentives provided by a major global power (United States) help account for the emergence of the Western European peace after centuries of intra-regional conflict.

[30] Seeking order is not the same as minimizing conflict and maximizing cooperation between states in a region, but they should be related. The creation of certain security arrangements dampens

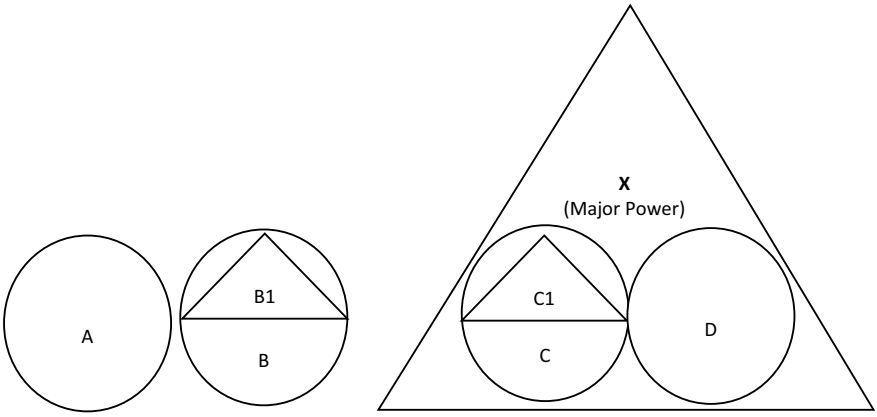


Fig. 2.10 Global and Regional Hierarchical Relationships

(b) if in existence, whether or not regional powers have the capability and willingness to seek to order affairs in the region; and if they seek to create such orders[31] (c) are such attempts supplemental to or independent of global hierarchical arrangements. Figure 2.10 illustrates the variety of plausible hierarchical arrangements across regions; regions are presented as circles, and the presence of hierarchy(ies) by major and regional powers is illustrated with triangles. Regions range from those without regional or global hierarchies (Region A) to regions where regional and global hierarchies co-exist (Region C). Despite recognizing the salience of global and regional powers in ordering political relationships, the extant literature is far from clear about how these hierarchies interact and the consequences for conflicts within regions, on cooperative relationships, or on diffusion firewalls erected by either major or regional powers.

The extent to which major and/or regional powers can create stable structures of cooperation depends on a wide range of factors including those that stem from Type I propositions: the characteristics of states in the region (e.g. ongoing rivalries, border issues, predictability and affinity brought about by similar political regimes, and ethnic conflicts spreading across political systems).[32] In addition, regional or major powers cannot fashion such architecture unless they have the capacity to create them; a capacity that in part depends on the relative competence of their political

conflicts (e.g., as Goh 2013 notes in East Asia). A complex architecture designed to promote economic and social exchanges between a region's members should facilitate other forms of cooperation. The extent to which order-seeking actually translates to greater cooperation and less conflict depends however on a number of factors that we refer to below.

[31] For a nuanced differentiation of types of regional powers and their approach to order, see Prys (2010).

[32] For an example of the role of trans-ethnic kin and its potential effects, see Rasler and Thompson (2014).

institutions[33] and the willingness of other states in the region to accept or negotiate such architecture.

Regions may provide a rich diversity of settings for diffusion processes (Elkins and Simmons 2005, Simmons 2009, Solingen 2012). There is a substantial and growing literature in international relations focused on the diffusion of a vast array of phenomena (e.g., democracies, terrorism, civil wars, human rights, etc.), along with a significant amount of work acknowledging intra-regional and inter-regional diffusion processes.[34] Of particular interest to us is how regions may vary in creating firewalls that minimize or fail to dampen diffusion processes both within the region and from outside. For instance, the diffusion of democratic regimes appears to involve both regional and global diffusion processes (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Yet, the diffusion of democracies in some regions but not in others may be linked to some critical mass of intra-regional political arrangements (Type II effects) or the creation of firewalls restricting such effects by regional powers (Type III effects). Similar firewalls may exist to minimize global diffusion effects with variable utility across regions.

We propose that a good start towards understanding the impact of regions on these phenomena would be to focus on the combination of internal characteristics helping to create firewalls, or to accelerate diffusion processes and the relationship of these dynamics to the existence in the region of powerful regional or global actors seeking order and stability. Buhaug and Gleditsch (2008) demonstrate that the neighborhood effects of civil conflicts are not about simple exposure to such conflicts but the more complex interplay of separatist conflicts involving transnational ethnic linkages. To what extent can strong regional powers erect workable firewalls to prevent such diffusion when it threatens the regional order favoring them? These questions have not been adequately addressed in the literature particularly using a comparative regional perspective.

2.4 A Theoretical Bet

The framework we suggest is far from providing a parsimonious approach to regional analysis. However, our theoretical bet is that of these linkages, the links between major powers, regional powers, and the emergence of order impacting both conflict and cooperation processes are most salient. We base this suggestion on three central assumptions. The first is that much of international politics unfolds in the context of hierarchical relationships (Goh 2013, Lake 2011, Lemke 2002, Katzenstein 2005,

[33] How much capability is needed by a regional power for such a successful enterprise is unclear. India in South Asia, South Africa in Southern Africa, and Nigeria in West Africa have all been relatively unsuccessful in generating stable cooperative institutions. Brazil in Southern America has been more successful (MERCUSOR, UNASUR), but even that limited success has faded with challenges from more radical Southern American states and a weakening of Brazilian political institutions.

[34] For an excellent summary of works and the issues they raise, including about firewalls, see Solingen (2012).

Kugler, Tammen, and Thomas 2011, Modelski and Thompson 1996) when major powers have the capacity and the will to exercise such relationships. When such hierarchies are not sustainable (e.g., Fawcett and Gandois 2010) or fail to become applicable to certain regions, states in regions will experience—all else being equal—substantial uncertainties toward other regional members, leading to sporadic but unsustainable patterns of cooperation or substantial conflicts.

Second, irrespective of the existence of global orders, and especially when they may not structure regional relationships sufficiently, regional powers—when they have the capacity and the will to do so—will seek to create economic and security orders in their region for a variety of domestic political or foreign policy reasons. Such regional orders may emerge when a region is irrelevant to global orders or when regional powers seek to complement or contest (Goh 2007/2008) global orders.[35]

Third, we assume that major or regional powers' impact on regions is heavily conditioned by different types of regional and global circumstances that may facilitate or hinder attempts by these powers to impose order and stability consistent with their interests. The usual list of suspects for within-region conditions is well known in the literature on interstate conflict and cooperation, including territorial disputes (e.g., Gibler 2007; Huth 2009), regime types (e.g., Dafoe 2011; Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002), rivalries (e.g. Colaresi and Thompson 2002; Goertz and Diehl 2001), and dissatisfaction with the status quo (e.g., Kugler and Lemke 1996; Schweller 1994). We consider these as "conflict fault lines" within regions, and the larger the fault lines, the more difficult it will be for regional powers (and perhaps major powers) to create order within their regions.

Outside of the region a variety of global conditions are likely to create additional fault lines, or conversely, dynamics that may stimulate regional cooperative arrangements. These may include conditions such as exposure to globalization processes (e.g., Gartzke, Li, and Boehmer 2001, Mansfield and Solingen 2010, Russett and Oneal 2001, Hurrell 2007) or political polarization at the system level. A meaningful theory of regions would require as a starting point the clear demarcation of the types of regional and global conditions that would contain the most powerful effects conditioning major and regional power attempts at imposing order and stability in regions.

While not the only useful approach to a comparative analysis of regions, the Type III explanation we suggest may carry considerable payoff, especially when integrated with the concept of regional fault lines. Consider the following relationship: the presence of a major or regional power domiciled in a region appears to be inversely associated with patterns of regional conflict. Figure 2.11 represents the total level of severe MID (levels four or five) involvement per state within regions differentiated by whether or not they are inhabited by major powers, only regional powers, or lacking either. Regions without either type of powers are most conflictual; regions inhabited

[35] We leave as an open question the substance of those orders being sought and the mechanisms used by regional powers to create them. Dissatisfied regional and global powers, when conditions allow, can work together to try to develop regional and inter-regional arrangements in opposition to the global order, as demonstrated by the collaboration between China and Russia in Central Asia, and China's Belt and Road initiative across several regions.

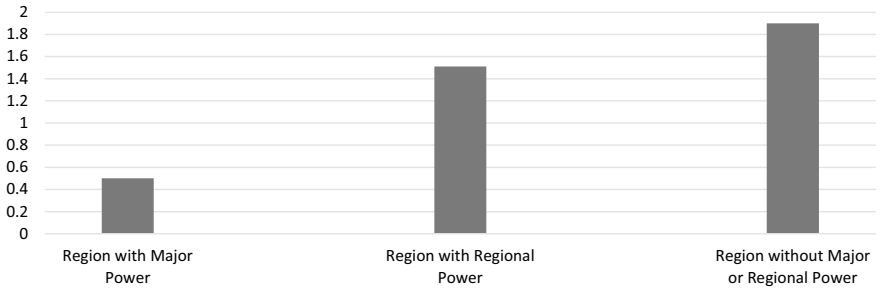


Fig. 2.11 Frequency of severe MID involvement per state, by region type, 2001–2010

by only regional powers are substantially more conflictual than regions inhabited by one or more major powers, while regions inhabited by one or more major powers appear to be least conflictual.

Yet, it is clear as well that other regional dynamics operate, as the range of MIDs across two categories is substantial, and the existence of a regional power alone in a region is no guarantee of limiting intra-regional conflict. For instance, while in the aggregate there is less conflict in these regions compared to regions lacking a regional power, in the one region where there is both a regional power and an ongoing rivalry involving the regional power (South Asia), the region far exceeds the norm in terms of regional conflicts. In regions populated by regional powers but absent such rivalry, the low frequency of regional conflict involvement begins to approximate those in regions populated by major powers (0.74 versus 0.55 MIDs per number of states in the region).

2.4.1 A Short Propositional Inventory

As a starting point, we suggest two central propositions: First, *all else being equal, the presence of a single major power in a region will have a substantially negative effect on intraregional conflicts and will facilitate intraregional cooperation.*[36] Second, *all else being equal, the presence of a single regional power in a region will diminish intraregional conflict and will facilitate intraregional cooperation.*

The first proposition is clearly suggested by not only our framework but also the extant knowledge regarding the salience of regional order for major powers. Minimizing regional conflict and creating regional stability appears to be a precondition for a state to emerge as a major power. With rare exceptions, major powers first developed as regional powers and did not migrate to the global stage until

[36] We are differentiating throughout this effort between major powers (Levy 1983, Volgy et al. 2011) that have uniquely extensive resources and operate across regions versus regional powers that have only uniquely extensive resources compared to others in their region and have been endowed by other members of their region with regional power *status* (Cline et al. 2011).

they had imposed sufficient order in their regional environment (Volgy et al. 2014). Major powers also possess unusually strong capabilities (Levy 1983) with which to order regional affairs, and a single major power in a region will have overwhelming capabilities with which to impose such order on its neighborhood.

The second proposition suggests that all else being equal, regional powers should have impacts similar to the presence of major powers on their regions. According to our delineation of regions and regional powers,[37] over the last decade, the following regions contained a single regional power: South America (Brazil), West Africa (Nigeria), Southern Africa (South Africa), and South Asia (India).

Of course, not "all else" is equal, and we suggest some conditions that qualify our primary propositions. We focus especially on three sets of conditions that may qualify the relationships suggested by our initial hypotheses. One is about the extent to which there is a competitive environment for the power-seeking to order regional relations. The second qualification regards the extent of conflict fault lines that need to be managed by such powers within their regions. The third condition focuses on whether or not the regional power[38] is capable and willing to act to impose regional order.

2.4.2 How Competitive is the Power Environment?

Two of our regions contain *more than one major power*. The extent to which such a condition creates competition, and thus minimizes the ability to create regional order, is likely to be a function of the relative dissatisfaction with the regional or global status quo by one or more of these powers. When such dissatisfaction is at a minimum, the potential competitive environment may not sufficiently deter the development of regional order; otherwise, the prospects of developing a stable regional order will be quite low if the major powers habiting the same region do not share a common perspective on the status quo. We guess that in no small part, the very slow evolution of regional order in East Asia is a function of two major powers in residence (China, Japan) and a third (United States) with active involvement and physical presence (military bases) in the region, with periodic conflicts fueled by divergent perspectives regarding both the global and the regional status quo (Goh 2013).

That potential conflicts between two or more major powers in the same region can be overcome is demonstrated clearly by the emergence of both security and economic integrationist arrangements among the states of the European Union, housing two major powers (United Kingdom and France), a regional power (Germany), with a

[37] We follow Cline et al. (2011) in identifying regional powers: those that hold unusual economic and military capabilities in their region, engage extensively with the states in the region, and are accorded the status of regional power by the member states constituting the region.

[38] We assume that major powers operating in their own neighborhood—by definition—have the capacity and the historical willingness to impose such orders in their neighborhood before pursuing more global policies.

third major power (United States) constituting an ongoing presence since World War II. Of course, much of that major power collusion occurred in the aftermath of a global war, a huge security threat to the region from yet another major power (Soviet Union), and substantial underwriting by the United States. Once the region expanded (Appendix 3) to cover all Europe, the region now contained two sub-regional orders and conflicts over the status quo as first the Soviet Union and then Russia sought to prevent the expansion of western European regional order to the entire region. The "troubles" over Ukraine are a testament to the fragility of a region in which major powers have substantial conflicts over acceptable regional orders.

Ongoing rivalries can represent long-term competition in power relationships between major powers, but in the regional context, such competition is just as likely to occur between a regional power and a challenger to regional leadership. We assume that the intensity of such regional rivalries will substantially curb the ability of a regional power to create order in the region as in the case of the Pakistani-Indian rivalry in South Asia.

A third type of power competition may stem from the ongoing *intrusion of major powers in a region inhabited by a regional power.* While such involvement could be reflective of a major power seeking to supplement a regional power's resources to establish order, it is likely that it will be a manifestation of different policy preferences and interests in the region, retarding the development of regional order.

2.4.3 How Extensive are the Fault Lines to be Managed?

As noted earlier, the difficulty of managing regional order depends on various phenomena that have been researched extensively at the monadic and dyadic levels of analysis. Four of these fault lines appear to be especially problematic for regional order. We anticipate that managing regions with substantial *regime dissimilarity* will be more difficult than in regions composed primarily of democratic or autocratic polities (McCallister 2016). The task of creating regional order should also vary with the *extent of territorial disputes* in the region; regions rife with territorial disputes may provide enormous challenges to a regional power and perhaps a major power as well (Gibler 2007). We anticipate that the persistence of broad *ethnic conflicts within and across states* in the region, and the potential spillover of ethnic conflicts and competition across state boundaries (Rasler and Thompson 2014), is likely to create substantial challenges to powers seeking to create stable regional order. Finally, we suggest that the persistence of *substantial economic inequalities* between states within a region, relatively unexplored in the literature but growing in significance (Ostby 2013), may become a substantial fault line as well for managing regional orders. While the list of fault lines is undoubtedly greater than these four, we project from the extant literature that these may serve as the strongest obstacles to developing regional order.

2.4.4 When are Regional Powers Capable and Willing to Create Regional Order?

This condition has been relatively unexplored in the quantitative literature, especially regarding regional powers. Our reading of the regions literature (e.g., Prys 2010, Fawcett and Gandois 2010) suggests three conditions that are likely to be pivotal: First, regional powers will require *substantial capabilities* to effectuate regional order. How much capability is needed may depend on the region's size and the number of fault lines it contains. Thus, we assume that the task of regional order construction requires different capabilities in West Africa (Nigeria), Southern Africa (South Africa), Southern America (Brazil), or South Asia (India).

Second, regional powers will vary in their *domestic political competence* to translate their capabilities into developing and implementing effective strategies for creating order. Some regional powers have substantial political/bureaucratic efficiency to extract societal resources and apply them to foreign policy pursuits, but others less so. Similar arguments can be made about the degree to which these states can create innovative and effective strategies for enhancing regional order, and the extent to which they can counter domestic political pressures seeking to minimize the expenditure of resources to regional order building.

The first two conditions primarily concern the *capability* for regional order creation. The third is about *willingness*: we doubt that regional powers automatically seek regional order creation. It is more likely that there are various triggers that stimulate the willingness to do so (Prys 2010, Fawcett and Gandois 2010). One possible trigger is the pursuit of major power status by a regional power. Others include potential security threats from outside of the region, exposure to major exogeneous or endogenous political shocks, and/or a variety of domestic political motivations. These would need to be specified in a comparative assessment of regions.

2.5 Conclusion

We provide here an initial attempt at laying a foundation for future comparative regional analysis and some applicable research questions. The conditions we list and the theoretical bets we offer regarding global and regional powers, we believe, constitute critical additional steps in the development of comparative regional analysis. We address some of these considerations further in Chap. 8.

However, the key to a more systematic, comparative analysis of regions and their applicability to conflict and cooperation processes will require at least five additional steps. The first is the need to revisit the conceptualization and measurement of regional powers, a task that appears to be at least as complex as the conceptualization and measurement of regions.[39] Second is the delineation of specifications under

[39] For the difficulties involved with delineating regional powers and the literature that has attempted to do so, see Nolte (2010) and Neumann (1992).

which major powers and regional powers are able and willing to demark conditions for the operation of interstate politics in their region. The third task is to clearly specify the types of regional fault lines and global conditions that would comprise the most powerful effects conditioning major power and regional power attempts at imposing order and stability in a region.

Fourth, scholars need to search explicitly for systematic evidence regarding the causal mechanisms at play that may link regional powers to the reduction of conflict within their regions. A quick look at the data on regions and regional powers suggests that there are likely a range of mechanisms that may be at work. Some appear to be quite simple: overwhelming capabilities may create a deterrence effect for other regional members, making them more pacific in their relationships with each other. At the other end of the spectrum are complex, substantial efforts by powers to create architecture to maximize regional order and stability. Parsing out these different causal mechanisms linking regional/major power presence to reduced conflict and increased regional cooperation will not be an easy task.

The final challenge is a methodological one. We suspect that one of the reasons why quantitative researchers have shied away from the region as the appropriate unit of analysis is due to the "small-N" problem. As an illustration, our approach to regional delineation (requiring extensive information about interstate interactions) limits our analysis to observations that span the decades between 1950 and 2010, yielding approximately an N of 50–60 regional unit observations. This small sample creates challenges when utilizing advanced statistical models: we can control for perhaps one or two variables using chi square tests[40] or analysis of variance, but we cannot generate an analysis involving simultaneously more variables. One alternative is to create hierarchical models, integrating dyadic units of analysis with region-level units, although the range of variables at the region level that can successfully fit within this model is also difficult to increase beyond one or two (McCallister 2016). A second alternative is to create a new unit of analysis, which we tentatively call the *region country MIDs involvement per year*, referring to the percentage of states in their regions engaged in MIDs, annually across a decade of regional delineation (see Chap. 8). How these problems can be addressed both to maintain the validity of the theoretical argument, and as a target of alternative specifications (robustness tests) remains to be seen.

These five challenges constitute formidable obstacles for theoretical development and empirical analysis. Yet, we suspect the effort is worthwhile if scholarship can move forward systematically toward a comparative analysis of regional effects in international politics.

[40] For instance, doing so using two by three tables for region hierarchy type (no hierarchy, regional hierarchy, major power hierarchy) and the mean level of MIDs for each type consistent with our hypotheses, we find significance levels at 0.005, but we are unable to approximate the substantive effects of these differences.

Appendix 1: List of Regional Categories Used in Quantitative Studies of Conflict and Cooperation

"The Powerful West"	Asia (Former Soviet Union)
"West"	Asia (Other Non-Tiger)
Africa	Asia (Pacific)
Africa (Central and East)	Asia (South and Central)
Africa (North)	Asia (South)
Africa (South)	Asia (Southeast)
Africa (Sub-Saharan)	Asia (Southeast) and Pacific
Africa (West)	Asia (West)
Africa and Middle East	Asia (West) and Africa (North)
Americas	Asia and the Pacific
Americas (Central and South)	Australia, Canada, and Europe
Americas (Central, South, and Caribbean)	Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
Americas (Central)	Eurasia
Americas (Latin and South)	Europe
Americas (Latin and Caribbean)	Europe (Central)
Americas (Latin)	Europe (Central and East)
Americas (North and South)	Europe (East)
Americas (North)	Europe (East) and Post-Soviet Union
Americas (North) and Europe (West)	Europe (East) and Soviet Union
Americas (North), Europe (West), and Japan	Europe (Post-Communist)
Americas (North), Europe (West), and Oceania	Europe (West)
Americas (South)	Europe (West) and the British Settler Colonies
Americas (Caribbean)	Former Communist
Asia	Former Soviet Union
Asia ("Tiger")	Islands
Asia (Central) and Eurasia	Middle East
Asia (Central) and Europe	Middle East and Middle East (North Africa)
Asia (Central) and Europe (East)	Oceania
Asia (Central) and Soviet Bloc	Pacific
Asia (Central), Europe (East), and Post-Soviet Union	Post-Communist States
Asia (East and South)	Unclear
Asia (East and South) and Oceania	Western Democracies
Asia (East and Southeast)	Western Democracies and Japan
Asia (East)	Western Hemisphere

(continued)

(continued)

"The Powerful West"	Asia (Former Soviet Union)
Asia (East) and Pacific	Yugoslavian Countries
Each entry is recorded in its corresponding article as a single region	

Appendix 2: States, Regions, and Border States, 2001–2010

Region	Core states	Periphery states	Region	Core states	Periphery states
North America	Canada	East Asia		Cambodia	Australia
	Cuba			China	Brunei
	Mexico			Indonesia	East Timor
	United States			Japan	Fiji
South America	Argentina	Bolivia		Korea (North)	Kiribati
	Brazil	Ecuador		Korea (South)	Marshall Islands
	Chile	Paraguay		Laos	Micronesia
	Colombia	Uruguay		Malaysia	Nauru
	Venezuela			Myanmar	New Zealand
	Peru			Philippines	Palau
Middle East	Bahrain			Singapore	Papua New Guinea
	Egypt			Taiwan	Samoa
	Iran			Thailand	Solomon Islands
	Iraq			Vietnam	Tonga
	Israel				Tuvalu
	Jordan				Vanuatu
	Kuwait		South Asia	Afghanistan	Maldives
	Lebanon			Bangladesh	
	Oman			India	
	Qatar			Nepal	
	Saudi Arabia			Pakistan	
	Syria			Sri Lanka	
	United Arab Emirates		Border States	Angola	
	Yemen			Antigua and Barbuda	

(continued)

(continued)

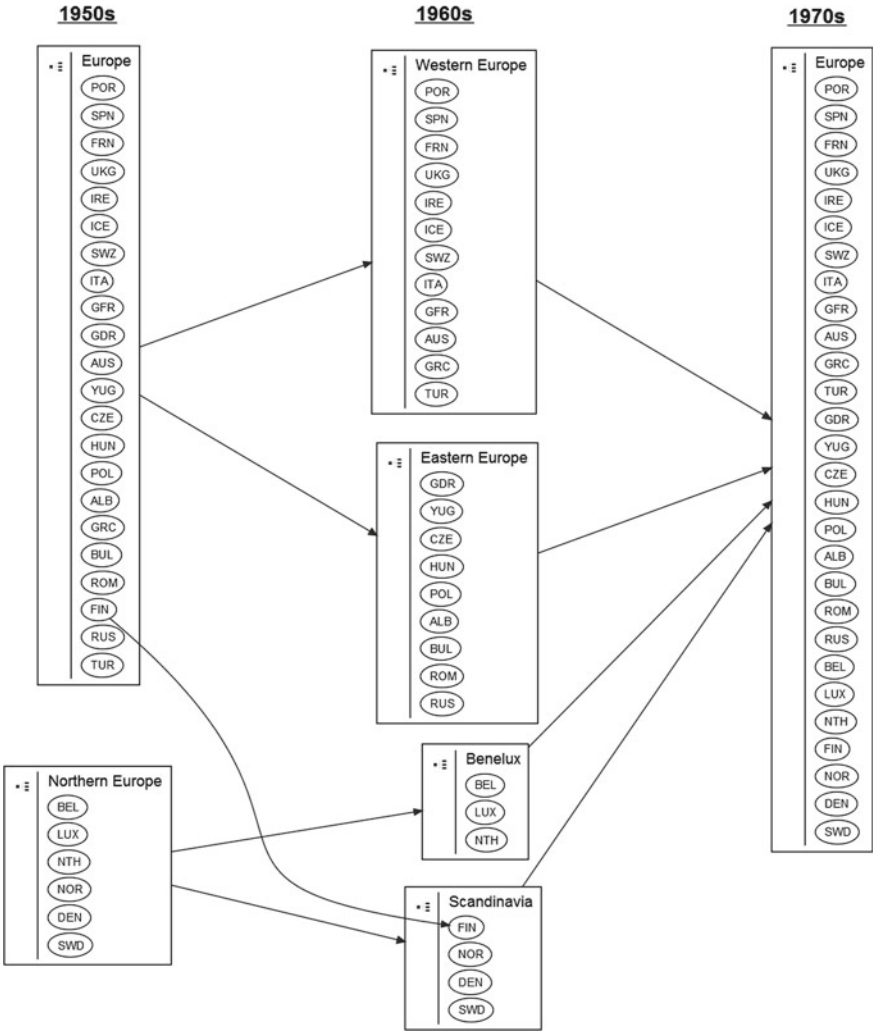
Region	Core states	Periphery states	Region	Core states	Periphery states
Europe	Albania	Andorra		Armenia	
	Algeria	Iceland		Azerbaijan	
	Austria	Kosovo		Bahamas	
	Belarus	Liechtenstein		Barbados	
	Belgium	Malta		Belize	
	Bosnia	Moldova		Benin	
	Bulgaria	Monaco		Bhutan	
	Croatia	Montenegro		Botswana	
	Cyprus	San Marino		Burkina Faso	
	Czech Republic			Cameroon	
	Denmark			Central African Republic	
	Estonia			Chad	
	Finland			Comoros	
	France			Costa Rica	
	Georgia			Djibouti	
	Germany			Dominica	
	Greece			Dominican Republic	
	Hungary			El Salvador	
	Ireland			Equatorial Guinea	
	Italy			Eritrea	
	Latvia			Gabon	
	Libya			Ghana	
	Lithuania			Grenada	
	Luxembourg			Guatemala	
	Macedonia			Guyana	
	Morocco			Haiti	
	Netherlands		Honduras		
	Norway		Jamaica		
	Poland		Kazakhstan		
	Portugal		Kyrgyzstan		
	Romania		Madagascar		
	Russia		Malawi		
	Serbia		Mali		

(continued)

(continued)

Region	Core states	Periphery states	Region	Core states	Periphery states
	Slovakia		Mauritania		
	Slovenia		Mauritius		
	Spain		Mongolia		
	Sweden		Namibia		
	Switzerland		Nicaragua		
	Tunisia		Niger		
	Turkey		Panama		
	Ukraine		Sao Tome y Principe		
	United Kingdom		Seychelles		
West Africa	Guinea	Cape Verde	St. Kitts and Nevis		
	Ivory Coast	Gambia	St. Lucia		
	Liberia	Guinea-Bissau	St. Vincent and Grenadines		
	Nigeria		Suriname		
	Senegal		Tajikistan		
	Sierra Leone		Togo		
Southern Africa	Mozambique	Lesotho	Trinidad and Tobago		
	South Africa	Swaziland	Turkmenistan		
	Zambia		Uzbekistan		
	Zimbabwe				
Central Africa	Burundi				
	Congo (Dem. Rep.)				
	Congo (Rep.)				
	Ethiopia				
	Kenya				
	Rwanda				
	Somalia				
	Sudan				
	Tanzania				
	Uganda				

Appendix 3: Changes in European Regions, Shown by Decades, 1950–1980



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Chapter 3
Borders, Rivalry, Democracy, and Conflict in the European Region, 1816–1994

Explaining why states become involved in conflict is a core concern in the study of international relations. Explaining why states become more democratic is a core interest in the comparative study of politics. While we remain reluctant to combine these foci, we know much more today than we did 25–30 years ago about the factors encouraging or discouraging conflict and democracy. Yet there is always the possibility that some of what we think we know is not quite accurate. For instance, contentions about the democratic peace have been important drivers in improving our collective understanding of conflict processes. The focus has largely been placed on how democratic political systems and their decision-makers supposedly do things differently than autocratic political systems and their respective decision-makers. We can generate long lists of how regime types differ in international politics, but we still don't agree on why regime type should make so much difference. One possibility that has never been entirely eliminated is the extent to which the central focus is simply misplaced. There is a consensus that democratic states, subject to a few, still contentious but important caveats mainly involving age and development level, are unlikely to fight one another. Our immediate question is whether this peace should be attributed mainly to democracy or to some intervening variable that influences both democracy and conflict. A second, perhaps related question is whether or to what extent democratization is driven by external drivers of threat. If regime type helps explain external conflict, does external conflict also help explain regime type?

[1] Crescenzi and Enterline (1999: 93) conduct a time series investigation of the relationships between democracy, democratization, and interstate war from 1816 to 1992. They find that the statistical strength and sign of the relationships among these variables reflect strong spatial and temporal heterogeneity. Hence, they conclude that the regional level, rather than the global level, holds more promise for understanding the interrelationships between democratization and interstate conflict.

An earlier version of this chapter appeared as Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, "Boundary Disputes, Rivalry, Democracy, and Interstate Conflict in the European Region, 1816–1994," Conflict Management and Peace Science, 28, 3 (2011): 280–305.

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_3

We pursue these questions by examining the relationships among strategic rivalry, unstable boundaries, democracy, and interstate conflict. We carry out the examination in a regional context focusing solely on European states.[1] Not only do we limit our investigation to Europe, but we also examine our variables at the regional level. We make no claims that studying one region can provide definitive answers to the questions that we pose. The European region is merely a starting point. We also have some expectation that different regions may well yield different relationships. Although the signs of the relationships should be similar, the relative significance of the variables may vary from region to region. Rivalries might be more important in one region while unstable boundaries could be more salient in another. Some regions have become heavily democratized while others have not. Regions also vary in the extent to which interstate relations are characterized by conflict. Similarly, regional aggregation does not preclude the need to examine dyadic relationships at a later point.

Our findings suggest that in the European context, rivalry and unstable boundaries are alternative manifestations of external threat. Both have significant, if not identical effects on stimulating interstate conflict. Regime type does not appear to have an independent effect on interstate conflict when we take either rivalries or unstable boundaries into consideration. This finding suggests that factors other than regime type appear to be much more important in accounting for contemporary tendencies toward more peaceful interactions. At the same time, we also find, as did Gibler (2007), that external threat indicators negatively predict changes in democratization. In short, greater threat is associated with less democratization.

Some readers may find the democracy–conflict findings disappointing, but we see them as an opportunity to open an extremely rich research program integrating domestic and international processes in which others, including ourselves, are already engaged. It may also ultimately allow us to evade the paralysis of multiple interpretations on the democratic peace that are not always directly testable and which may prove to be simply misdirected. The issue is not one of drumming democracy out of our equations but, rather, to give it the appropriate specification and salience in our explanations of interstate conflict.

Even more to the point, the real question is how many other factors are as, or more, important in accounting for interstate conflict? Flipping the question around, we also need to probe further into the question of external influences on democratization processes that are too often thought to be strictly internal to political systems.

3.1 The Gibler Argument

In an early phase of work on the democratic peace idea, there existed a widespread sentiment that rival hypotheses that might explain the sources of the dyadic reductions in conflict had been tried and found wanting (Maoz and Russett, 1992; Reiter 2001; Russett and Oneal 2001). Whether this was ever really the case or not, stronger

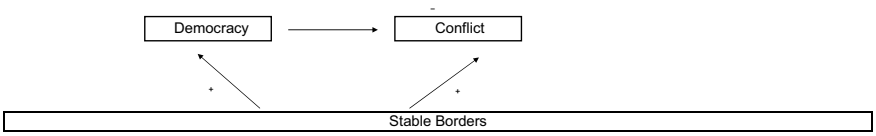

Fig. 3.1 Gibler version of the omitted variable Bias model

alternatives to an emphasis on regime type have emerged in recent years. Neighborhood effects, in which external conflict strongly facilitates or weakens the probabilities of democratization (Hintze 1975; Thompson 1996; Rasler and Thompson 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005) is one possibility. Another is the argument that the democratic peace outcome owes more to capitalism and economic growth and development (Mousseau 2000, 2009; Mousseau et al. 2003; Hegre 2000; Weede 2003; Gartzke 2007; McDonald 2009) than it does to one of the presumed effects of economic development (i.e., democratization). Even some of the stronger advocates of the role of joint democratic dyads seem to have backed away somewhat from their initial emphasis on regime type per se in their shift to a more integrated focus on Kantian dynamics (economic interdependence, democratic dyads, and international organizations).

A fourth development is Gibler's (2007) alternative argument that the relationship between regime type and conflict is spurious. What is most important is the absence of territorial disputes, which reduces conflict considerably and facilitates the emergence and maintenance of democratic political systems. Instead of drawing a causal arrow from regime type to conflict, Gibler (see Fig. 3.1) has arrows emanating from stable borders to democracy and conflict. Whether there is a causal arrow from democracy to conflict is left somewhat open-ended. If the democracy–conflict relationship is genuinely spurious, there should be no direct relationship once one controls for stable borders. It remains conceivable, however, that the democracy—conflict relationship is merely much weaker than previously imagined. Democracy could still have some independent impact on conflict, but it may not be a major driver.

The rationale for suggesting that stable boundaries are the missing link between democracy and conflict involves an extended theory about the linkages that connect external threat to regime type. Our interpretation of this theory is portrayed in Fig. 3.2. High levels of external threat lead to domestic military preparations (militarization) which in turn lowers the costs of coercively repressing domestic dissidents, leads to governmental centralization to better prepare for an attack, and raises the cost of government and, presumably, state revenues and taxation to pay for the militarization and centralization. The uncertainties and costs associated with high levels of external threat are also likely to reduce domestic economic growth rates. Slow economic growth means more economic inequality is likely while mobile capital (for instance, nonagrarian technology) is less likely. The availability of mobile capital is expected to restrain taxation levels to avoid capital flight; its absence means fewer restraints of that sort are apt to be operative in situations of little mobile capital. Higher inequality leads to popular demands for redistribution. High pressure for

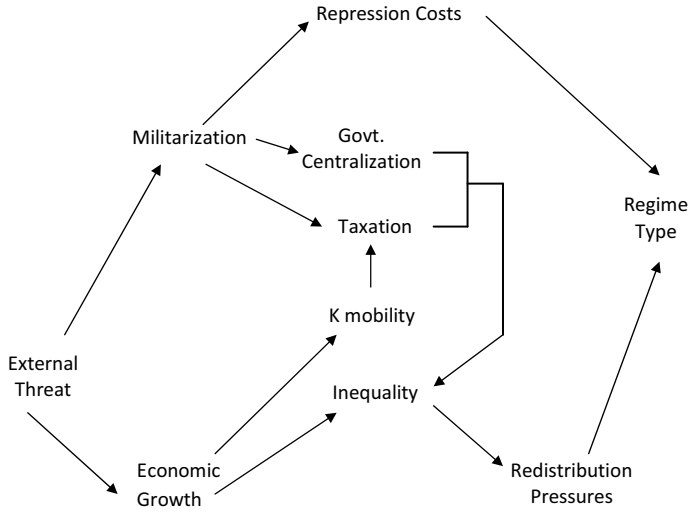

Fig. 3.2 An interpretation of Gibler's external threat-regime type argument

redistribution and low repression costs favors the emergence and maintenance of autocracy. High redistribution and high costs of repression favor the emergence and maintenance of democracy.[2]

The complexities captured in Fig. 3.2 may take a while to pursue in empirical testing.[3] But the argument does offer a plausible and attractive interpretation of the links between the external environment and roughly binary propensities towards autocracy and democracy. One prominent variable is of course missing from Fig. 3.2. Interstate conflict is omitted altogether. If we take our cues from democratic peace arguments and Fig. 3.1, regime type might lead to external conflict. Alternatively, interstate conflict may generate external threat (and vice versa as is implied in Fig. 3.1). Nor is there anything precluding a direct linkage between external threat and regime type via interstate conflict.

However, the point of this discussion is not to draw attention to work still to be done or to try to complicate the linkages mapped in Fig. 3.2 any further than they already are. Rather, the point is to provide one extended justification for thinking

[2] Gibler is explicitly borrowing heavily from Boix's (2002) emphasis on inequality, redistribution pressures, and repression costs in explaining democratization. One of the attractions of the Boix argument is that he has also recently extended it to explain civil wars (Boix, 2008) which suggests that further extensions of the model displayed in Fig. 3.2 are possible. There are also overt connections to the war and state making literature (see, for instance, Rasler and Thompson, 1989; Tilly, 1990; Porter, 1994; and Desch, 1996). Gibler's stable boundary emphasis is also linked closely to John Vasquez's (Senese and Vasquez, 2008) steps-to-war stress on territorial disputes as the core issue in interstate conflict.

[3] Research on the threat-militarization-central government concentration path is underway in the form of Thies (2004, 2005, 2007) and Rasler and Thompson (2009a). Rasler and Thompson (2009b) and Thompson and Reuveny (2010) focus on some of the implications of inequality.

that stable boundaries, one way to reduce adjacent external threats, might be linked to both democracy and conflict. In other words, with some juggling and elaboration, we could easily derive Fig. 3.1's argument from Fig. 3.2's argument. Gibler (2007) did not pursue these theoretical and modeling questions directly. Instead, he chose to first examine an entirely different theory concerning factors thought to be conducive to the emergence of border disputes. Focusing on three factors (colonial history, ethnic separation, and terrain differences), Gibler can predict cases of territorial dispute in the 1946–1995 era (Huth and Allee 2002) reasonably well.[4] The three factors useful in generating unstable boundaries are then employed in a second step to predict dyadic democracy levels. The outcome of this analysis yields a significant and negative relationship between the boundary stability proxies and joint democracy. In a third step, the boundary stability proxies, and joint democracy are regressed against the onset of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). Two of the three boundary instability proxies (ethnic separation and terrain differences) are positive and significant. Joint democracy is also positive, contrary to democratic peace expectations, but insignificant.

Gibler (2007: 529) concludes that democracy "has little or no effect on conflict once controls are included for stable borders". A few lines later, he suggests that what has been referred to as a democratic peace is really a stable border peace. Moreover, Gibler (2007: 529) argues.

> A stable border peace implies that democratic states are more peaceful, but this is not due to any quality inherent in democratic government; rather, the development path necessary for democratization selects democracies into a group of states that have settled borders, few territorial issues, and thus, little reason for war against neighbors. With only minor, nonterritorial issues remaining for these states, mediation and arbitration become both easier and more likely for democracies, while the need for defensive alliances, military buildups, and aggressive crisis bargaining also decreases.

We find this to be a highly plausible re-interpretation of the democratic peace and it deserves much more exploration.[5] There are a host of issues that might be examined. Figure 3.2, for instance, suggests a rich theoretical and empirical field into which we might plunge or, in our case, reconnoiter once again. Ultimately, we will pursue all of these linkages but first we need to examine further the basic threat, democracy, conflict nexus. We propose to use a different approach to estimate the same relationships and if our findings are similar to Gibler's, we have more evidence to suggest that the "democratic peace" arguments should be re-interpreted.[6] Moreover, we believe that Gibler's findings against a democratic peace argument lose some traction when he relies on proxy indicators for unstable boundaries in relationship to democratization and conflict processes. While we find there is ample room to more fully delineate just what explains what, it is clear that Gibler's strongest

[4] Note that this auxiliary theory extends even further the scope of the theory sketched in Fig. 3.2.

[5] The implicit emphasis on evolutionary selection processes is particularly attractive.

[6] Conversely, different relationship outcomes might suggest that the multiple processes under examination are even more complex.

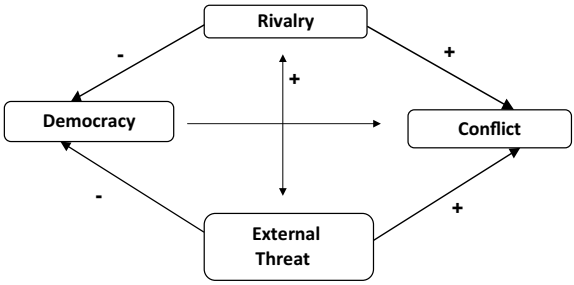

Fig. 3.3 Rasler and Thompson version of the omitted variable bias model

relationships are between boundary dispute factors and territorial disagreements.[7] Hence, considerable variance remains to be accounted for when it comes to explaining democracy and conflict.

We prefer to tackle the main question of the relationships among stable borders, democracy, and conflict in a more direct manner than Gibler's approach. Where Gibler carefully establishes environmental-historical proxies for unstable boundaries in the post-World War II era and then examines the relationships of the proxies with democracy and conflict, we propose looking at the direct relationships among disputed boundaries, democracy, and conflict. We think we can do this for a longer period, 1816–1994, and we also suspect that there are strong regional effects at play in these processes. Before we examine the dyadic relationships, we choose to first examine these relationships at the regional level. We also wish to introduce a fourth factor, interstate rivalry, that we have found to be a useful index of external threat in other and related circumstances, most especially in terms of territorial disputes (Rasler and Thompson, 2006; Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson, 2007).[8] We see rivalry and unstable borders as two different indicators of external threat. As Gibler (2007) establishes quite well, the more general question involves the causal relationships among external threat, democracy, and conflict (see, for instance, Colaresi and Thompson 2003).

3.2 Threat, Democracy, and Conflict

While it is quite tempting to jump into the complexities of Fig. 3.2, we begin more prudently with a focus on the linkages suggested in Fig. 3.3. We substitute the more general concept, external threat (as implied by Fig. 3.2) for Gibler's stable borders

[7] While we do not wish to make too much of pseudo R-squares, the summary relationships between equations including boundary stability factors and territorial disputes are in the 0.34 range. The same index for equations including boundary stability factors and joint democracy average about 0.10, while the pseudo R-squares for regressing conflict on joint democracy and boundary stability are about 0.23.

[8] Adding rivalry to the causal map also permits us to extend this line of argument to another literature on rivalry and state making in the less developed world and elsewhere.

term in Fig. 3.1. The basic argument is that high levels of external threat make more open political systems less likely in the first place and once in place, more difficult to sustain. Hostile neighborhoods encourage centralized efforts to cope with nearby enemies. More benign neighborhoods do not guarantee democratization, but they establish a context in which democratization is more feasible. Thus, we have external threat leading to democracy negatively and conflict and democracy selectively leading to reduced conflict as in our initial model sketched in Fig. 3.3.

There are a variety of indicators that might qualify as measures of external threat. Gibler prefers disputed boundaries. There is no question that situations involving neighbors who question the location of mutual boundaries can lead to hostile rhetoric, physical clashes, and full-scale invasions. States with mutually accepted borders are more secure, other things being equal, than states with disputed borders. Rasler and Thompson (2004), however, single out strategic rivalry as another example of external threat. Similar hostile rhetoric, physical clashes, and full-scale invasions can emanate from conflict with rivals. Some states are rivals at least in part because they have disputed boundaries. Similarly, some states have disputed boundaries that they are more likely to emphasize in interstate interactions if they also have a rivalry relationship with the state with which they share the disputed boundary.

The general relationship between rivalry and disputed boundaries is not yet fully worked out.[9] We do not propose to alter that state of affairs in this article. For our purposes, strategic rivalry and disputed boundaries are considered (until we know otherwise) similar and possibly equal representations of external threat. We will examine their individual effects on conflict, but our expectation is that the overlap is too great to treat them as totally independent phenomena and we anticipate utilizing them as alternative manifestations of external threat.

We employ the strategic rivalry operationalization of rivalry (Thompson 2001). Strategic rivals are states that perceive themselves as involved in a relationship characterized by threat, identification of the other as an enemy, and roughly similar capability statuses.[10] We develop a new measure of unstable boundaries by systematizing information found in Biger (1995) and we combine this data with the information reported in Huth and Allee (2002) and the ICOW project (Hensel and Mitchell 2009). These sources provide information that encompasses the twentieth century through about 1994–95. Biger and the ICOW project also provide information on the

[9] See, for instance, Huth (1996, 2000), Hensel (2000), Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson (2007), and Senese and Vasquez (2008).

[10] Roughly similar capabilities do not preclude highly asymmetrical rivalries. States with high capability occasionally "promote" weaker states to rival status because they perceive a high degree of threat (e.g., the United States and Cuba). States with low capability occasionally promote themselves by exaggerating their ability to compete with stronger states (Cambodia/ Kampuchea versus Vietnam in the late 1970s or Paraguay in the mid-nineteenth century are examples). A third type of situation concerns two states in which the relationship becomes increasingly asymmetrical without altering a rivalry established when the two states were more comparable. Finally, a relationship involving two non-major powers can also be asymmetrical (as in the case of India and Pakistan). The more general observation is that the rivals of major powers tend to be other major powers, albeit with some exceptions. The rivals of non-major powers tend to be other non-major powers.

nineteenth century.[11] Thus, the basic time frame for our empirical analyses will be 1816–1994.[12] Our aim is to aggregate democracy, international conflict, rivalry and unstable boundaries across all European dyads per year to generate four time series.

We depart from convention by postponing an examination of dyadic relationships. We prefer to begin our analysis at the regional level and the initial inquiry will be restricted to the European region (encompassing both east and west Europe). We do not assume that regional analyses will substitute for dyadic analyses or that the two formats will necessarily generate identical outcomes. We start at the regional level in part to better control for the usual problem of heterogeneity that is associated with pooled, cross-sectional designs.[13] We also think that we should be able to observe the relationships suggested in Fig. 3.1 at the regional level. Why? Because as regions become more characterized by stable boundaries, the absence of interstate rivalries, and more democracy, we should expect to observe less regional conflict. We should also be able to assess systematically the empirical relationships among the four variables.

Yet there is more at stake than simple methodological and observational convenience. Scholars who study democratization tend to focus on domestic processes. Students of the democratic peace are fixed on dyadic interactions. Some of our earlier work (Thompson 1996; Rasler and Thompson 2004) has been motivated by the assertion that democratization and pacification processes are also influenced by external threat environments. High levels of external threat lead to domestic political concentration in several ways, and not only in a country-to-country way. Land exchanged for military services can lead to inequalities in landholding and aristocratic stratification. Hostile neighborhoods encourage political power concentration just as defensive preparations tend to lead to bureaucratic expansion, higher state expenditures and revenue collection efforts, and expansion of the military and bureaucracy. All these processes can create barriers to democratization that may take some time to overcome.

To best capture the dimension of the external neighborhood, we need to move away from the monad and the dyad. Full-fledged systemic analyses are not sufficiently discriminating in the sense that many different types of neighborhoods are aggregated

[11] There should be no question that all the sources are equal in usefulness. Biger's approach is to discuss each pair of adjacent states and to comment generally on the history of the boundary. What a reader gets is mainly information about whether the boundary was ever contested, whether it continues to be contested, or when it stopped being contested. Since our operationalization is focused on simply specifying whether a boundary is contested in a given year, Biger's limited information can serve our purposes, especially since we also have more precise information in the other two sources.

[12] The rivalry data are currently in the process of being extended through 2009. The boundary dispute data are conceivably up-datable. At some future point, it should be possible to extend the analysis another decade beyond our current 1994 stopping point.

[13] It seems quite conceivable that different regions will yield different empirical outcomes. Some regions have limited variance on regime type while others have been quick or slow to democratize. Rivalry relationships are denser in some regions than in others. Unstable boundaries seem also to vary in terms of salience in different parts of the world.

into one system. Regions, we think, can be more discriminating in capturing distinctive external threat environments.[14] South America, Europe, and the Middle East, for instance, are shorthand terms that convey very different geographical configurations and, more importantly, markedly different conflict (and democratization) histories. In this respect, regions offer an opportunity to homogenize to some extent the general nature of the neighborhood under examination and the local pace of change toward or away from more (less) external threat and/or democratization. At the same time, we realize that regional evidence can only be assessed as preliminary information, for or against our arguments, en route to more precise specifications.

Regions, nonetheless, are interesting units of analysis that have yet to fully receive the attention that they deserve. As the ultimate delineations of neighborhoods, no two regions have the same resource endowments, conflict histories, or geography. None of these factors determine what behavior will ensue within regions but they can impose boundaries on what can and cannot be accomplished that decision-makers must internalize to varying extents. For instance, tropical regions have had different economic growth prospects in the twentieth century because European migrants in the nineteenth century favored their chances of surviving diseases in more temperate regions and, to a considerable extent, European capital followed. Some parts of the world have experienced considerable bloodletting over attempts to unify a region while others have experienced relatively few attempts. Similarly, some regions have long histories of coerced unification and others have histories of persistent competition. Some regions are focused on shared water supplies (and thus are more likely to conflict over water scarcity issues) while others are hemmed in by mountains, deserts, or jungles (and thus have been less likely to fight with outsiders). If the world seems easily differentiated by regional differences, perhaps it is time that we try to capture their influences better in our modeling efforts.

As noted, we have distinctive proper names for regions but in fact the official names rarely tell us how exactly the regions differ in terms of the types of neighborhood parameters that they constitute. Yet we know that the Middle East is a different neighborhood than South America which, in turn, is different from South Asia. We also have good reasons to think that western Europe, as a region, has become a type of peaceful, cooperative, and affluent neighborhood that little resembles other regions. Of course, it was not always that way, but the more general point is that it is exceedingly difficult to capture the differences in regional histories over centuries vary parsimoniously. Dummy variables are of limited utility for this problem. Similarly, it is also difficult to control for the effects of rich, powerful, and now democratic regions in biasing large-N analytical outcomes with dummy variables. Examining regions as separate neighborhoods, especially in instances when neighborhood is argued to be a critical factor, offers one possible antidote to both problems (complex histories and the possible biases).

[14] Various rationales for examining regional processes can be found in Kacowicz (1998), Gleditsch (2002), Buzan and Waever (2003), Katzenstein (2005), Miller (2007), and in the edited volumes by Lake and Morgan (1999) and Kacowicz et al. (2000).

We chose to begin with Europe for several reasons. It was still the world system's central region through some point in the first half of the twentieth century. It has experienced substantial democratization so that of all the regions, except for North America, it should afford us the best chance of observing whether democratization influences conflict patterns. Moreover, the region has also experienced considerable interstate conflict. Unlike several other regions, it has also contained the home bases of quite a few great powers and, consequently, a number of strategic rivalries. It may not be an ideal place to look at boundary instability since we lack systematic data before 1815 when a fair amount of boundary formation had already taken place.[15] But Europe also retained a number of small states that later became parts of Germany and Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century. New states were later created from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the demise of the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia's post-Cold War fragmentation. In that respect, there is at least some opportunity to observe the emergence of newly disputed boundaries. The flux in the size of the European region, however, does cause some problems when the values of the main variables are normalized for system size.[16]

Since we are aggregating at the regional level, it is possible to summarize the trends in external threat, democracy, and interstate conflict fairly easily and quickly. Figure 3.4 shows 1816–1994 plots for our four indicators. The two indicators for external threat are roughly similar in shape. Both decline moderately in the first half of the nineteenth century and then begin to build up in the second half of that century. Unstable boundaries increase again after World War I and then begin a rapid descent through the 1980s before turning up quickly in the early 1990s, thanks in part to recent Balkan fragmentation. Rivalries decline after World War I only to spike upwards just before and during World War II, before falling off sharply through the early 1990s.

The trend in European democratization should not be surprising. Upward movement is relatively flat through the first half of the nineteenth century before increasing through World War I and its immediate aftermath. The 1930s constituted a temporary setback with movement upwards on track once again after World War II, albeit dampened because of combining eastern and western Europe in one region. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War led to a rapid increase in mean democracy scores. Interstate conflict in Europe is no less unusual. European conflict fluctuated at a discernibly higher average level before the major outbreaks of World Wars I and II than afterwards.

[15] Similarly, regime types were also shaped to varying extents prior to 1815, thereby artificially censoring our ability to examine the full gamut of regime type development.

[16] The east–west cleavage of the region may also be problematic. We treat all of Europe as a whole in this chapter, but it could be profitable to treat western and eastern Europe separately in a future analysis.

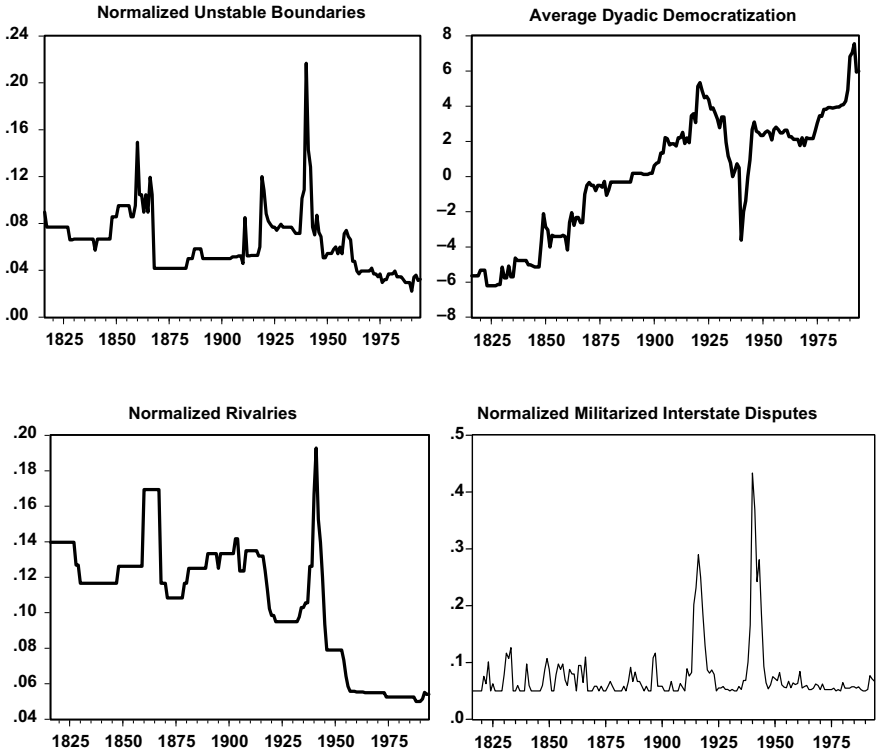

Fig. 3.4 Plots of external threat (unstable boundaries and rivalries), democratization and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), 1816–1994

3.3 Methodology

We estimate two single-equation error correction models (ECM), which enables us to test for both contemporary and long-run multiplier effects of *democratization*, *unstable boundaries*, and *rivalry* on *international conflict* well as the long- and short-run influences of *unstable boundaries* and *rivalry* on *democratization* for the 1816–1994 time period.[17] We expect that the effects of these independent variables will not only be immediate but accumulate over time. An error correction model (ECM) is utilized for several reasons. First, the model avoids the issues of dealing with integration problems since it can be used with either stationary or non-stationary

[17] Rather than estimating a vector error correction (VEC) model, we estimate a single error correction model because our theory clearly distinguishes between dependent and independent variables. By relying on ordinary least squares estimation, we can also interpret the effects of the independent variables more directly than the impulse response results of the VEC model. Lastly, we prefer the one-step approach in a single ECM rather than the two-step Engle and Granger ECM, because we have stationary and non-stationary time series under investigation.

series (DeBoef and Keele 2008). Second, it allows us to estimate the combinatorial influences of three types of dynamic effects: (a) the immediate influence of an independent variable on Y where the effect does not persist into the future; (b) the immediate effect of X on Y combined with an influence of X that persists into the future while decaying over time; and (c) in the absence of an immediate influence of X on Y, X instead has an equilibrium effect on Y over the long term. In short, an ECM model allows us to estimate the independent variables with both the first differences and levels in an ordinary least squares equation, thereby simplifying our interpretation of both their short- and long-run effects. Other time series models with first differenced independent variables focus on the short-term effects, at the expense of the long-term influences. Likewise, time series models that estimate only the lagged effects of independent variables do so at the expense of understanding the short-term influences (DeBoef and Keele 2008). Finally, an error correction model is the most general but conservative time series model available because it imposes few restrictive assumptions on either the immediate or lagged (long-term) effects of the independent variables (DeBoef and Keele 2008).

In addition to these advantages, we believe that the error correction model is appropriate given the nature of the variables under consideration. We have strong reasons to believe that the effects of *democratization*, *unstable boundaries*, and *rivalry* will not only be contemporaneous but accumulate over time. In other words, they exhibit long-memoried processes. Democratization is a good illustration. Past empirical evidence shows that democracies cluster in space and time (O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Crescenzi and Enterline 1999; Gleditsch 2002); that changes toward greater democracy in a single nation-state will diffuse to neighboring states (Starr 1991, 1995; Starr and Lindborg 2003); and that as the frequency of democracies within a geographic region increases, the more likely non-democratic states in the region will also democratize (Cederman and Gleditsch 2004; Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Unstable boundaries and rivalry are likewise long-memoried processes. Unresolved territorial boundaries, for instance, will increase conflict in the short run, but they also become ensconced in national memories, identities, and political and strategic discourse, and they are likely to result in repeated conflicts over time (Goertz and Diehl 1992; Hensel 1996; Huth 1996; Vasquez and Henehan 2001; Rasler and Thompson 2005; Senese and Vasquez 2008). As for rivalry, the empirical evidence shows that the emergence and presence of an interstate rivalry is linked to more conflict between the participants in the short term (Vasquez and Leskiw 2001; Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson, 2007). However, rivalries once formed do not disappear easily; they "lock in" quickly and are maintained over long periods until political shocks either in the domestic or the international environment dislodge the "institutional stability" built into rivalries (Goertz et al. 2005: 767). In short, we have strong theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that *democratization*, *unstable boundaries*, and *rivalry* will have both short- and long-term influences. Consequently, we utilize a single equation error correction model (ECM) as opposed to other static approaches, because it is best suited for estimating these kinds of temporal effects simultaneously.

At this point, we need to address one remaining issue—stationarity in our time series. Typically, error correction models are used with variables that are nonstationary in their levels, but when these series are first-differenced, they are stationary, indicating a co-integrating relationship or that they share a long-run relationship above and beyond their short-term influences. Therefore, nonstationarity and co-integration in the time series are usually considered to be prerequisites for these kinds of models. However, DeBoef and Keele (2008) demonstrate that stationary variables in their levels are also appropriate for these models and non-stationarity is not required for single error correction models. Nonetheless, we conducted KPSS tests for non-stationarity in our variables for the 1816–1914 time period. The results of these tests indicate that (at the 0.05 alpha level) *democratization* and *rivalry* are non-stationary in their levels but stationary in their first differences. Meanwhile, *international conflict* and *unstable boundaries* are stationary in both their levels and their first differences. Since we have time series that exhibit both stationary and non-stationary processes, DeBoef and Keele (2008) maintain that the single error correction model is especially appropriate in these circumstances.

We estimate the following two ECM models:

$\Delta \text{Democratization}_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Democratization}_{t-1} + \beta_0 \Delta \text{Unstable Boundaries}_t + \beta_1 \text{Unstable. Boundaries}_{t-1} + \beta_2 \Delta \text{Rivalry}_t + \beta_3 \text{Rivalry}_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$, $\Delta \text{International Conflict}_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{International Conflict}_{t-1} + \beta_0 \Delta \text{Democratization}_t + \beta_1 \text{Democratization}_{t-1} + \beta_2 \Delta \text{Unstable boundaries}_t + \beta_3 \text{Unstable boundaries}_{t-1} + \beta_4 \Delta \text{Rivalry}_t + \beta_5 \text{Rivalry}_{t-1} + \beta_6 1866 \text{ Outlier}_t + \beta_7 \text{World War I}_t + \beta_8 \text{World War II}_t + \varepsilon_t$,

where *International Conflict* = sum of militarized disputes (with a hostility level of 2 or more) normalized by the number of dyads in Europe per year[18]; *Democratization* = the sum of the average democracy score for each European dyad and then normalized by the number of European dyads per year[19]; *Unstable boundaries* = the sum of the presence of unstable boundaries among European dyads, normalized by the number of dyads per year[20]; *Rivalry* = the sum of the presence of rivalry among European dyads, normalized by the number of dyads per year; *World War I* = a dummy variable with 1914–1918 coded 1 and 0 otherwise and *World War II* = a dummy variable with 1941–1944 coded 1 and 0 otherwise. The sample in our data

[18] We do not differentiate between verbal and physical conflict within an MID. Data were derived via EUGene, version 3.204. A value of .05 is added to the international conflict to log the variable.

[19] Democratization is measured conventionally in terms of the 21-point Polity scale that encompasses an interval stretching from absolute autocracy (–10) to full democratization (+10). In addition, 6.0 has been added to the democratization variable in order to log the variable; 6.0 is slightly larger than the largest negative for democratization score at –5.8.

[20] Unstable boundaries are based on the disputes located in three datasets: ICOW or Issues of Correlates of War data set (last updated by Hensel and Mitchell in April 2009), Biger (1995), and Huth and Allee (2002). We started with a list of the territorial disputes and the years of these disputes provided by Huth and Allee (2002) between 1919 and 1995; then we added more territorial disputes from Biger which cover the earlier nineteenth century; finally, we added any remaining territorial and river disputes provided by ICOW not reported by Biger.

Table 3.1 Single Error Correction Models of Democratization on Unstable Boundaries and Rivalry in Europe, 1816–1994

Variable	*Coeff*	*SE*
Short Term (First Differences) Δ Unstable Boundaries$_{(t)}$	−0.188*	0.109
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$	−0.705**	0.278
Long Term (Levels) Unstable Boundaries$_{(t-1)}$	−0.034	0.057
Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$	−0.009	0.059
Democracy$_{(t-1)}$ or (Error Correction Adjustment)	−0.043**	0.020
Constant	−0.036	0.130
Residual Diagnostics N	179	
Adjusted R^2	0.08	
LM test; $df = 2$	4.14**	
Arch F test; $df = 1$	1.40	
Ljung-Box Q	51.37; ($df = 36$)	

Dependent variable is change in democracy; **$p <= .05$; *$p <= 0.10$; two-tailed tests.

set excludes the German and Italian states (i.e. Hanover, Bavaria, Baden, Saxony, Wuerttemburg, Hesse Electoral, Hesse Grand Ducal, Mecklenburg-Scherin, the Two Sicilies, Modena, Parma, and Tuscany) because we have no information on their *rivalries* and *unstable boundaries*.[21]

In the context of an error correction model, we interpret the short- and long-term effects of an independent variable in the following manner: the immediate effect of a shock to *Unstable boundaries* at time *t* on *Democratization* is equal to β_0 and the long-run multiplier effect is equal to the coefficient on lagged *Unstable boundaries* divided by the coefficient on lagged *Democratization*, or $\beta_1 / (-\alpha_1)$. The rate at which the system returns to its equilibrium following a temporary shock is given by the ECM adjustment coefficient, α_1.

3.4 Results

Table 3.1 reports the error correction model for the 1816–1994 period when *democratization* is the dependent variable. In the upper portion of the table, *unstable boundaries* and *rivalry* both have short-term negative influences on *democratization*. As

[21] Although we deleted these Italian and German states for the models that we report herein, we estimated the models in Tables 1 and 2 with the presence of Italian and German states in the sample. The results did not differ from the current findings reported herein.

Table 3.2 Post-estimation simulation results: expected values for change in democratization, 1816–1994[a].

Variable	*Expected Y for Max. Value of X*[b]	*95% Confidence Interval*	*Expected Y for Min. Value of X*[b]	*95% Confidence Interval*
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$	-0.198	-0.362, -0.040	0.275	0.073, 0.469
Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$	0.012	-0.071, 0.095	0.018	-0.071, 0.105
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$ + Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$ Δ Unstable Boundaries$_{(t)}$	-0.200 -0.117	-0.392, -0.008 -0.248, 0.010[d]	0.279 0.187	0.057, 0.501 0.018, 0.349[d]
Unstable Boundaries$_{(t-1)}$ Δ Un.Bound + Un.Bound$_{(t-1)}$ Baseline Model[c]	-0.029 -0.161 E(Y) = 0.015	-0.157, 0.097 -0.364, 0.043[d] 0.016, 0.046	0.049 0.221 E(Y) = 0.015	-0.071, 0.168 0.009, 0.434[d] 0.016, 0.046

[a] Simulations are based on Table 3.2 and are generated by CLARIFY: Software for interpreting and presenting statistical results, version 2.0 (Tomz et al. 2001). [b] Expected Y values are derived from maximum or minimum values of X variable with all others at their mean. [c] Baseline model is generated with X variables held at their mean level. [d] 90% confidence level.

for the long-term influence, *unstable boundaries* and *rivalry* are negative but statistically insignificant. Despite the correlation between *rivalry* and *unstable boundaries* in their levels ($r = 0.62$), *rivalry* does not exert a significant influence on *democratization* when *unstable boundaries* is left out of the equation. Likewise, when *rivalry* is left out of the equation, *unstable boundaries* does not have a significant effect on *democratization*. Although the error correction coefficient for *democratization* is significant and falls appropriately between –1 and + 1, we find no shared long-term relationship between *unstable boundaries* or *rivalry* and *democratization*; only short-term relationships are observed. Finally, the residual diagnostics indicate that this model does have residual autocorrelation problems. However, we believe that the tests for autocorrelation are affected by the volatile variation in *democratization* during the early years of the series, primarily between 1816 and 1835. When we re-estimate this model for the 1836–1994 period, the results for the coefficients are basically the same and the residuals are devoid of any autocorrelation.[22]

Based on the model in Table 3.1, we also generated post-estimation simulations for the expected values of the dependent variable to provide added evidence about the relative impact that rivalry and unstable boundaries have on changes in *democratization*. These simulations were estimated by CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results (Tomz et al. 2001) and they are presented in Table 3.2. The results indicate that the expected value for the dependent variable is –0.198 when the *change in rivalry* (short-term effect) was at its highest value while the remaining variables were held constant at their mean. This result is best compared with the

[22] Moreover, we estimate both Quandt-Andrews breakpoint tests for the model in Table 3.1, and the tests yield statistically insignificant F-tests indicating that there are no major changes in the intercept, the slope or the error term behavior over this time period.

other expected values of Y when the remaining independent variables are at their maximum. The short-term *changes in rivalry* (Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$) and *unstable boundaries* (Δ Unstable Boundaries$_{(t)}$) are associated with a negative expected value of *democratization* with the exception of the *rivalry levels* (Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$) variable which is near zero and falls outside of the confidence interval. This result is not surprising given the lack of a significant long-term relationship between rivalry and democratization found in Table 3.1.

More interestingly, the outcome shows that the *change in rivalry* has a slightly stronger negative effect on democratization (–0.198) than the *change in unstable boundaries* (–0.117). Unstable boundaries in its *levels* (Unstable Boundaries$_{(t-1)}$) has a negative but essentially negligible influence on *democratization*. The combined influence of both the *change* and the *levels of rivalry* exert a slightly stronger negative effect on democratization (–0.200) than the combination of the *change* and *levels of unstable boundaries* (–0.161). From a substantive point of view, there is not much difference in the negative influence of these two variables. This pattern holds for the most part when the expected values of Y are estimated, as each relevant independent variable is held at its smallest value. In this case, we expect that lower values of rivalry and unstable boundaries will have a positive influence on democratization. Table 3.2 does indeed show these relationships. Meanwhile, as the *change in rivalry* declines, it exerts a stronger positive relationship on the expected value of *democratization* (0.275) than the *change in unstable boundaries* (0.187). Yet, the combined influence of the *change in rivalry* and its *levels* (0.279) does not appear to be substantively greater than the combined influence of the *change in unstable boundaries* and its *levels* (0.221). Nonetheless, the expected value of *democratization* (0.279) is not only larger but more robust, since it falls within the 95% confidence internal, in comparison to the *change in unstable boundaries*, which falls within a 90% confidence interval. Overall, the total influence of *rivalry* (both in its changes and levels) exerts a stronger influence on *democratization* in comparison to the total influence of *unstable boundaries*.

In sum, these results corroborate Gibler's (2007) findings that link sources of *unstable boundaries* to *democratization* at least in the short term. We also find that strategic *rivalries* have a short-term influence on *democratization*. However, neither of these external threat variables shares a long-run relationship with *democratization*. Precisely what this may mean will need to await the examination of different regions and probably less aggregated, dyadic tests as well. But once again, external threat has been found to have a significant effect on democratization.

Table 3.3 reports the estimates for the 1816–1994 time series model when the dependent variable is *international conflict*.[23] The top of the table presents coefficients for the first differenced variables which indicate the immediate or short-term

[23] We also estimated a Quandt-Andrews breakpoint test for the 1816–1994 period in order to see if there was any instability or break in the parameters of the data generating processes. A break can occur when there is a change in the intercept(levels), the slope of the parameters, to changes in *democratization* along the lines of Model A (with and without the presence of short- and long-term variables for *unstable boundaries* and *rivalry*). Again, there are no statistically significant relationships from short- and long-term conflict to democratization changes.

Table 3.3 Single Error Correction Models of International Conflict on Democratization, Unstable Boundaries and Rivalry in Europe, 1816–1994.

	A.1816–1994 (With Rivalry)		*B.1816–1994 (Full Model)*	
Variable	*Coeff*	*SE*	*Coeff*	*SE*
Short Term (First Differences) Δ Democratization$_{(t)}$	0.061	0.077	0.041	0.077
Δ Unstable Boundaries$_{(t)}$	0.197 *	0.112	–	–
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$	1.024 **	0.289	1.239 **	0.271
Long Term (Levels) Democratization$_{(t-1)}$	0.018	0.022	0.007	0.021
Unstable Boundaries$_{(t-1)}$	0.162 **	0.065	–	–
Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$	0.006	0.061	0.079	0.054
International Conflict$_{(t-1)}$ or Error Correction Adjustment	−0.627 **	0.063	−0.571 **	0.060
World War I (1914–1918)	0.912 **	0.123	0.831 **	0.119
World War II (1941–1944)	0.742 **	0.111	0.756 **	0.113
Constant	−1.295 **	0.186	−1.415 **	0.182
Residual Diagnostics N	179		179	
Adjusted R-square	0.41		0.39	
LM test; $df = 2$	0.68		1.00	
Ljung-Box Q	55.32		53.49	
	(df = 36)		(df = 36)	

Dependent variable is change in international conflict. **$p <= 0.05$.

influences of these variables. The bottom part of the table shows coefficients for the lagged or long-term influences of the independent variables. The first column in Table 3.3 shows the results for all of the variables in the model, while the second column estimates the models for *rivalry* without the presence of *unstable boundaries* due to the high correlation between the variables in their levels (r = 0.62).

Turning to the short-term influences, Table 3.3 shows that in the full model (Model A), *unstable boundaries* and *rivalry* have immediate, statistically significant influences on international conflict while *democratization* does not. In the restricted model (Model B) that excludes *unstable boundaries*, *rivalry* has a significant impact which is not surprising given the significant impact for *rivalry* in the full model. Short-term changes in *democratization* have no influence on *international conflict* across all these models.[24]

[24] We also checked to see if there could be a possible collinear effect that might suppress *democratization*'s influence on *conflict* by dropping the latter two variables from Model A, and short-

We turn now to the long-term influences of *democratization*, *rivalry*, and *unstable boundaries*. Since the long-term influence of *rivalry* failed to have a significant influence on *international conflict* in the 1816–1994 model, we estimated a second model excluding *unstable boundaries* given the high correlation between these two series.

Moving to the long-term influences of these variables in Table 3.3, we find that *unstable boundaries* exerts the only long-term significant influence on increasing *international conflict* in Model A. When *unstable boundaries* has been excluded, *rivalry* does not lead to escalated conflict in the long run (see Model B). With or without the presence of *unstable boundaries* in these models, neither *rivalry* nor *democratization* in their levels has a significant influence on *conflict*.

The error correction coefficient in Model A is –0.63. It is statistically significant and located appropriately within the –1 and + 1 values. The long-range multiplier coefficient (LRM) which represents the total long-term impact of *unstable boundaries* on conflict is 0.26 and the Bewley transformation regression yields a standard error of 0.06, indicating that the LRM is statistically significant. The LRM coefficient also indicates that *international conflict* will increase over future time periods at a rate of 63% per period until *unstable boundaries* no longer exerts any positive influence. Thus, *international conflict* will increase 0.164 units at t; 0.061 units at $(t + 1)$; 0.022 units at $(t + 2)$; 0.008 at $(t + 3)$; 0.003 units at $(t + 4)$; and 0.001 units at $(t + 5)$. By the fifth year, *unstable boundaries* no longer have an influence on *international conflict.* Finally, the diagnostics indicate no autocorrelation problems in the residuals.[25]

The post-estimation simulation results for Model A (Table 3.3) are reported in Table 3.4. As expected, the results show that high values of *rivalry* and *unstable boundaries* have a positive effect on international conflict, while their low values are associated with lower values of international conflict. The expected value of international conflict when the *change in rivalry* is at its highest value (0.311) is more than twice the size of the expected value of international conflict when the *change in unstable boundaries* is at its highest level (0.138). This size difference is also reflected in the expected values of the dependent variable when both variables are at their lowest points (−0.377 versus −0.177). As for the long-term impact, only the levels variable for *unstable boundari*es exerts a strong influence while *rivalry* in its levels has a zero relationship. So, short-term effects of *rivalry* exert a stronger impact

and long-term changes in *democratization* still do not predict significantly to conflict. Finally, we checked to see if short- and/or long-term changes in *international conflict* predicted.

[25] We also estimated these three models by excluding the war years in our time series in an effort to insure against overfitting the model with the inclusion of dummy variables. Although there were slight changes in the Model A results, the results from Models B and C were very similar to those reported in our Table 3.3. Short- and long-term influences of *democratization* did not have a significant declining influence on *international conflict*, even while controlling for the collinearity between long-term *rivalry* and *democracy*. Short-term influences of both *rivalry* and *unstable boundaries* exert strong positive influences on *international conflict*, while only *unstable boundaries* has a significant influence on conflict in the long run. Meanwhile, the error correction estimate for international conflict was –.64 and similar to the value reported in Table 3.3, Model A.

Table 3.4 Post-Estimation Simulation Results: Expected Values for Change in International Conflict, 1816-1994[a]

Variable	*Expected Y for Max. Value of X*[b]	*95% Confidence Interval*	*Expected Y Min. Value of X*[b]	*95% Confidence Interval*
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$	0.311	0.128, 0.492	−0.377	−0.581, −0.162
Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$	0.007	−0.076, 0.092	−0.004	−0.092, 0.081
Δ Rivalry$_{(t)}$ + Rivalry$_{(t-1)}$ Δ Unstable Boundaries$_{(t)}$	0.315 0.138	0.127, 0.507 0.009, 266[d]	−0.372 −0.177	−0.597, −0.152 −0.346, −0.015[d]
Unstable Boundaries$_{(t-1)}$	0.212	0.042, 0.389	−0.158	−0.293, −0.027
Δ Un.Bound + Un.Bound$_{(t-1)}$	0.356	0.094, 0.606	−0.339	−0.612, −0.067
Δ Democratization$_{(t)}$	0.079	−0.112, 0.263	−0.085	−0.325, 0.142
Democratization$_{(t-1)}$	0.020	−0.037, 0.073	−0.046	−0.169, 0.079
Δ Democ + Democ$_{(t-1)}$ Baseline Model[c]	0.099 E(Y) = 0.002	−0.110, 0.319 −0.028, 0.034	−0.133 E(Y) = 0.002	−0.392, 0.141 −0.028, 0.034

[a]Simulations are based on Table 3.3, Model A and are generated by CLARIFY: Software for interpreting and presenting statistical results, version 2.0 (Tomz et al. 2001)
[b]Expected Y values are derived from maximum or minimum values of X variable with all others at their mean
[c]Baseline model is generated with X variables held at their mean level.

on international conflict than the short-term effects of *unstable boundaries*, while the long-term impact of *unstable boundaries* is stronger. Yet, the total combined impact of both the short- and long-term influences of *rivalry* and *unstable boundaries* is not much different. The total impact for *rivalry* on the expected value of *international conflict* is 0.315, while the total impact of *unstable boundaries* is 0.356. Finally, the expected values of *international conflict* associated with changes in *democratization* are mostly zero.

Once again, the outcome reinforces Gibler's earlier findings. External threat indicators have direct impacts on European interstate conflict. *Rivalry* has a stronger short-term effect while *unstable boundaries* exerts a stronger long-term influence. However, the combined short- and long-term effects for *rivalry* and *unstable boundaries* appear to be similar according to the post-simulation estimates. The impact of external threat on conflict lasts a short period in comparison to the slower impact of external threat on *democratization* in subsequent years. *Democratization*, on the other hand, is an insignificant factor in predicting interstate conflict.

3.5 Conclusion

We are grappling with a complicated set of processes that could eventually tie together external threat, regime type, inequality, state-making, economic growth, and both internal and external conflict. The current article only nibbles at these relationships. We find that external threat is linked to democratization and external conflict, but that democratization is not related to external conflict. These findings reinforce similar, if less direct outcomes reported in Gibler (2007) for the post-World War II era. Temporally, we cover more years (1816–1994) but spatially our results are more circumscribed to the European region.

Whether these same relationships hold in other regions remains to be seen. Whether they do or do not hold up in other regions, we leave open-ended for now the equally interesting question of why some regions move toward settled boundaries and few rivalries and others do not. Is it a matter of time, the decisiveness and/or destructiveness of war, or the imposition of hegemonic orders by extra-regional powers (to name but three possibilities)? In other words, the linkages sketched in Fig. 3.2 are likely to need even further complication by the addition of more variables.

In the last two decades, quantitative studies of international politics have been greatly invigorated by analyses that have successfully integrated internal (democratization) and external (conflict) relationships. While some of these findings may prove to require substantial re-interpretation, the more general approach to linking domestic processes to and with external threat and conflict appears to be on the right track. The prospect of linking two empirical processes—democratization and conflict—with a single theory is alluring. Meanwhile, we appear likely to discover that democratization processes are much less internal and conflict processes are much less external than we had thought.

Working through the implications of these findings and determining their place within a more complicated nest of relationships will take some time. The preliminary findings, nonetheless, are encouraging that there is an opportunity to bring together a number of different processes in ways that are both familiar and novel. If in the process of so doing, we end up establishing substantial bridgeheads between "comparative" and "international" politics, so much the better.

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Chapter 4
In Search of Super Asia

4.1 Introduction

Examinations of[1] regional politics typically assume that the regional level of analysis is compelling because most actors confine much of their behavior to their immediate geographical niche. Many actors may interact only with adjacent states, but since they usually have multiple proximate states, the resulting clusters of interaction can quickly become more complex and multilateral than a simple pair of states with shared borders. Furthermore, complementary and competing security and economic interests characterize these complex interactions alongside varying degrees of hierarchy amongst engaged actors. These regional niches constitute the areas within which most states' politics occur,[2] so given the potential importance of regional niches, how are we to know which clusters are most appropriate and how they might change over time? Where does one region begin and another end? What should we do with states that participate in more than one regional cluster? What should we do with groups of states called regions by practically everyone but fail to cluster?

Determining the proper contours of regions is a challenge, and no clear consensus appears to exist. However, potentially more challenging is determining how regional spaces change over time and how the evolution of space affects our understanding of both the international politics of that space as well as comparative regionalist research more broadly. We focus on this last question in this chapter, although it overlaps with questions of identifying subsystems and problems surrounding states that participate in multiple regions. Contrary to most regional lists that fix regional

[1] An earlier version of parts of this chapter were first published as Manjeet S. Pardesi, "The Indo-Pacific: A 'New' Region or the Return of History?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, 2, 2020.

[2] See, for example, the importance of regional engagement to identifying regional powers in Cline et al. (2011). For the large variety of regional categorizations but with no emerging "gold standard" in empirical analyses of international political phenomena, see Volgy et al. (2017).

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_4

boundaries,[3] there appears to be a far greater degree of flexibility and movement. In constructivist parlance, regions are intersubjective creations (Ruggie 1999, 225): while physical geography changes slowly, states' political, economic, and strategic behavior can override locational realities.

We explore in this chapter the evolution of a "Super Asia" region, which we designate as those sovereign states from the contemporary "stans" east. This selection is based on the traditional discussion of a possible Super Asia, originating in British economic and strategic interests in the nineteenth century, but also consistent with contemporary dialogue surrounding the American "pivot" toward a single Super Asia as the space that "spans two oceans—the Pacific and the Indian" (Clinton 2011). To evaluate the evolution of this region, we use two complementary tools: a brief review of the foreign policy history of the space over the past two hundred years, and, using available data since 1950, we illustrate the decline and rise in regional cohesion using network analysis to identify politically relevant subgroups (see Chap. 2; Rhamey 2012, 2019; Volgy et al. 2017). Underlying this development are global and regional shifts in hierarchy, which we identify descriptively as being an important factor driving the cohesion of all states in the potential Super Asian space. Global major powers' and rising major powers' interests may nudge foreign policies into more ecumenical behavior within the space during some periods while creating deep fragmentation and localization of politics in others.

Some suggest that the internal politics of regions are significantly impacted by the extent to which a space is "porous" or penetrated by the interference of external powers' engagement with regional powers and their neighborhoods (Katzenstein 2005). In this chapter, we offer the possibility that the effects of penetration in a space by external powers extend to the evolving geographic contours of the politically relevant region itself. Furthermore, through this initial exploration, we develop a preliminary evaluation of regional transition over time that might be employed more broadly toward developing theories of regional change globally. As such, this chapter is but one preliminary step in a broader comparative regionalist endeavor that seeks to generate theoretically interesting findings surrounding regions as substantively relevant to our understanding of the international system.

4.2 Whither Super Asia?

How many regions are there in the eastern half of Eurasia, and how does it affect international politics? An uninformed student might hazard the guess that there was something called Asia. A better-informed student might rattle off the following candidates: Northwest Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, with an ambiguous South Pacific grouping including Australia and New Zealand lurking over the southern horizon. Surprisingly, the uninformed student may be closer to the truth. There are certainly many references in the literature to the six, and there

[3] See those by the Correlates of War, the United States State Department, or the World Bank.

are certainly many scholars who have built their careers around understanding these entities as significantly different "areas" for inquiry. However, the compartmentalization of the eastern half of Eurasia into separate regions, we will argue, was a momentary Cold War blip in time. Furthermore, the degree of fragmentation has important consequences for the level, and scope, of international order.

Will Asia's past become its future or will a variety of dynamics in this broad geopolitical space prevent that fragmentation? Before the Cold War and afterward, a Super Asia stretching from the Pacific to India appears to be the more accurate way to envision the geographical arena in which east Eurasian states interact, corresponding with the dominant security thinking of both major and regional powers. It has not always been that way: coalescing in the early nineteenth century, it disappeared for a few decades during the Cold War and now seems to be re-emerging.

Preventing a return to that past lies in competition between regional powers and the penetrating behaviors by external powers, both hindering the development of broader regional order.

Fundamentally, a region in international politics is a cluster of states whose characteristics and interactions are somehow unique from the broader international system. To identify such clusters in a way usable to an analysis of regional cohesion and change, we assess both descriptively and analytically the on and off again presence of a Super Asia region by evaluating the behaviors of states within the potential regional space along two dimensions: (1) to what extent do states in the potential Super Asia space engage one another, creating increasing regional cohesion, and how does such cohesion change over time? And (2) to the extent there are changes in regional cohesion, what possible causes may relate to these changes? We answer these questions descriptively and analytically, providing a narrative analysis of pre-World War II Asian strategic engagement and then complementing a continued narrative discussion of the postwar period with a network analysis of Super Asian interactions from 1950 to 2010.

Regions are neither fixed structures nor ontological truths "out there" in world politics (Lewis and Wigen 1997). While cultural cohesion is slow-moving and may provide the backdrop to some foreign policy behaviors, politically relevant regions should be thought of as processes that emerge as a consequence of the "interaction capacity" of the states concerned, whether economic or security-centric (or perhaps both).[4] While it is widely accepted that a cultural Asia and an economic Asia have a deep historical presence, we contend that a strategic Asia has been in place for much of the last two centuries because of a sequence of policy decisions constructed to achieve decision-maker goals.

In the ideal, whether arrived at descriptively or analytically, a clear, unquestionable identification of Super Asia would be a group of states that actively engage one another, with significant foreign policy activity (cooperative or conflictual) mutually flowing from one state to another, but not engaging any other outside group. Likewise, there is an absence of Super Asia if there are multiple clusters of states that exist which lack ties with one another, or if some number of states lack clear ties altogether with

[4] On the interaction capacity in international systems, see Buzan and Little (2000: 91–96).

potential Super Asia region members. Reality is far more fluid than these simple characterizations, but the extent to which the group of possible Super Asia states more closely resembles one extreme or the other may provide some barometer of its evolution.

The story of the rise following the Second World War, decline in the Cold War, and recent resurgence of Super Asia's contours is one of external interference by major powers alongside the emergence of regional powers. As a general trend, the unchallenged strategic engagement of Britain (through British India) and, more recently the United States, grant the geographic space a broader cohesion, whereas the conflictual divisions developed with the defeat of the Japanese Empire and the segmenting of the space into spheres of influence by competing external major powers divided the region into more localized camps. As China and India continue to rise in the context of America's strategic pivot to Asia, will the cohesiveness of a possible Super Asia continue to solidify, or will internal security challenges, along with the interference of external actors, create new fault lines in the twenty-first century?

4.3 British India, Qing China, and Strategic Asia

While scholars have long recognized the "East Indies" stretching from "Calcutta to Canton" and including "the Indian Ocean and the East Asian littoral, fading into the South China Seas somewhere over what we would call the Western Pacific," as a single economic unit (Fichter 2010: 3), the extant literature has ignored the fact that this region also constituted an integrated strategic unit. The origin of this strategic system has its roots in Britain's command over India's finances (through taxation) and manpower (in the British Indian army).[5] Recent scholarship on Britain's global empire (Darwin 2009: 1, 4) has recognized the crucial role played by the "sub-empire" of India that served to maintain the region's porousness "as the main base from which British interests in Asia could be advanced and defended. Indian soldiers and a British garrison paid for by Indian revenues were the 'strategic reserve' of the British system in Asia."

India was crucial to maintaining British military and economic influence in the Asian space. While British India managed its own foreign affairs, especially as they pertained to Southeast Asia and China, it remained subordinate to the interests of Britain and was the locus of British control extending into Southeast Asia. From 1808 onwards, Indian soldiers participated in every Anglo-Chinese military encounter until the Second World War (Harfield 1990), providing roughly half (10,000) of the troops during the First Opium War (Matzke 2011: 41).

[5] In contrast, the Ming naval expeditions did not create a single strategic unit here, for there was no meaningful interaction between the Ming Empire and the Delhi Sultanate, the most important power on the subcontinent. Even the later Portuguese thrust into this part of Asia did not create a single strategic system as Portuguese (and European) power remained marginal to Asian strategic affairs until 1750. See Lach (1965, xiii).

Later, with 18,000 troops, India (as a part of the British expeditionary forces) provided the second-largest number of allied troops after Japan to suppress the Boxer Rebellion from 1898 to 1901 (Harfield 1990). Indians also worked in all of Britain's treaty ports in China as policemen, watchmen, and security guards (see Thampi 2005: 140–178). In fact, by the 1930s, Indians were the "fourth largest foreign community" in China behind the Japanese, the Russians, and the British (Markovits, 2000: 59). So crucial was the role of India in British strategy towards China that the noted French Sinologist Louis Dermigny (1964: 781) has argued that Britain dominated India simply to use its resources against China.

As evidence for the relative strategic unity of the region, Qing China realized that the threat the empire faced along all three of its major frontiers—on land in Xinjiang and Tibet, and the maritime frontier in the South China Sea - emanated from British India (Mosca 2013). Writing immediately after the First Opium War, Hsü Chi-Yü, the foremost Qing "barbarian expert", noted that Britain, which consisted merely "of three islands, simply a handful of stones", had suddenly become "rich and strong" because Britain's "power … lies in the five Indias."[6] Wei Yuan, another notable Qing "barbarian expert", even conceived of a grand alliance with the western powers in Asia (Russia, America, and France) and with Qing tributaries in Nepal, Burma, Siam, and Annam to destroy the British power in India by land and at sea (Mosca 2013: 287–288). While this alliance remained in the realm of wishful thinking, prominent Chinese leaders continued to think of this region as a single strategic unit even in the early twentieth century.[7]

4.4 Rise of Japan and World War II

Maintaining the preliminary cohesiveness of the region, Japan managed its rise as a regional and then major power through an alliance with Britain. While Russian expansionism was certainly one of the motivators for the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, it had clear implications for the regional space: recognition of the "independence" of China and Britain's position in India. In fact, between 1905 and 1911, Japan even agreed to come to the defense of British India if its security was threatened (Best 2004: 236–248). By 1923, however, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was terminated, ushering in Japanese expansion into China and Southeast Asia and creating the coming strategic theater of the Second World War.[8] One day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, British India declared war on Japan. Notably, Japanese grand strategy in the Second World War was conceived at the

[6] Quoted in Teng and Fairbank (1965: 42–43). Since ancient times, the Chinese had divided India into five regions—north, south, east, west, and central.

[7] See, for example, Sun Zhongshan's argument of the centrality of India to British power (Zhongshan 1994: 161–162).

[8] While India and Australia were never a part of the Japanese Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (even as India featured prominently in the cultural "pan-Asia" of Japanese thought—see Bharucha 2006), the Indo-Pacific was the strategic theater of the Second World War in Asia.

Indo-Pacific level and included the separation of India and Australia from Britain as well as assisting Indian independence.[9] However, Japan was finally defeated in Burma (and in Imphal and Kohima in northeastern India) with Indian resources, and it "was Indian soldiers, civilian laborers and businessmen who made possible the victory of 1945" in this theater (Bayly and Harper 2005).

During this period, the porousness of the region from external major powers began to experience a transition from British economic and security interests toward those of the United States. However, much like Britain, the U.S. continued to view the Super Asian space as a relatively singular geopolitical unit. For example, the Indian Agent-General in Washington stressed during the war the strategic importance of India in the context of the developments in the "Far East" and as a supply base to China in his conversations with American government officials (as opposed to the British who saw a more prominent role for India in the Middle East, see US. Department of State 1942: 593–598). Furthermore, between 1942 and 1945, American soldiers trained up to 66,000 Nationalist Chinese troops in Ramgarh, India, who re-entered China by air over the Himalayas, or via the Ledo/Stillwell Road (from northeastern India into southwestern China via Burma) to fight the Japanese (White 1972: 136–137). British India underwrote the cost of training and supplying these soldiers in return for America's defense and industrial assistance.

4.5 Evaluating Region-ness in the Post-World War II Era

Beginning in the 1950s, data on the capabilities and foreign policy interactions of independent states emerges, allowing for an analytical assessment of relative "region-ness" of Super Asia in addition to a historical account. In so doing, we evaluate regional cohesion in the potential Super Asia space using network measures to descriptively identify the extent of mutual engagement in the foreign policy behaviors of potential Super Asia members and external major powers, consistent with previous evaluations of regions in Chap. 2 and elsewhere (Cline et al. 2011; Rhamey et al. 2014). To identify this engagement, we follow the approach of the Regions of Opportunity and Willingness (ROW) data (Rhamey 2012, 2019; Volgy et al. 2017) outlined in Chap. 2.[10] Table 5.1 provides the total number of clusters, or regions, identified by this method. While other chapters employ region identification by decade from the ROW data, we determine the periods of interest substantively to coincide with periods of American strategic engagement: in the Cold War, before (1950–1960), during (1961–1972), and after the Vietnam conflict (1973–1978); and after the Cold War, before (1990–2000) and after 9/11 (2001–2010).[11]

[9] On this Imperial Conference decision of 15 November 1941, see Lebra (2008: 64).

[10] We use the 0 to 14 scale from most conflictual to most cooperative for COPDAB and the 20 point −10 to 10 scale from Goldstein (1992) for IDEA.

[11] The gap from 1979 to 1989 is an artifact of events data availability so far in the ROW dataset. COPDAB ends in 1978, and IDEA begins in 1990.

We also provide a measure of Super Asia's "regional cohesion", defined as the proportion of non-isolate states that are members of the largest region in the "stans" east, denoting the extent to which a cohesive, unbroken Super Asian space may exist or if the space is alternatively fragmented across separate unique clusters.[12] The maps in Fig. 4.1 illustrate the progression of the space (See Table 4.1).

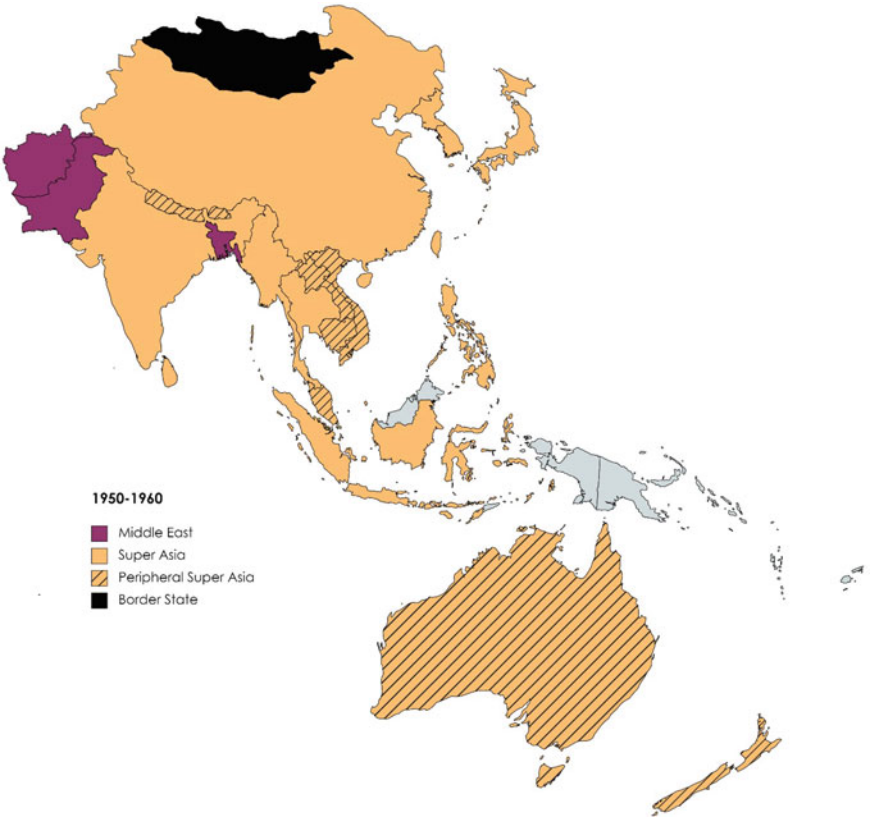

Fig. 4.1 Maps of Super Asia Evolution, 1950–2010[13]

[12] Note, the process of rapid decolonization in the region dramatically expands the number of micro-states, creating a number states with no ties, in later time periods. To prevent these isolates from driving down our assessment of regional cohesion, we drop them from the calculation. The inability of Palau or Nauru to actively engage their most proximate neighbors is not necessarily representative of the extent to which a strategically relevant Super Asia exists to active region members.

[13] Peripheral states are those that do not actively engage the region in network analysis, but due to contiguity can only be placed in one nearby region. Border states are those that either do not actively engage any region or engage more than one region relatively evenly, and thusly do not cluster with one region or another uniquely. Map made using historicalmapchart.net, governed by an attribution-sharealike 4.0 license (CC BY-SA 4.0).

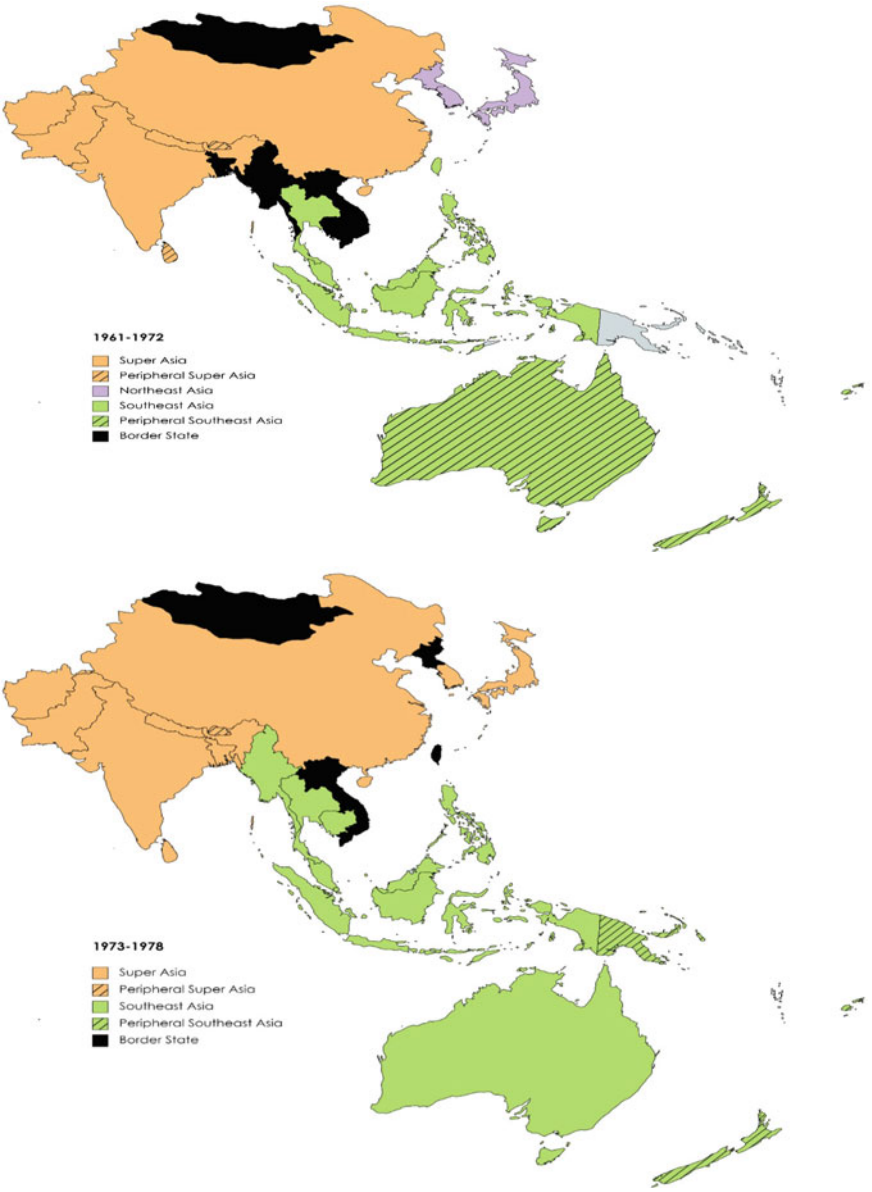

Fig. 4.1 (continued)

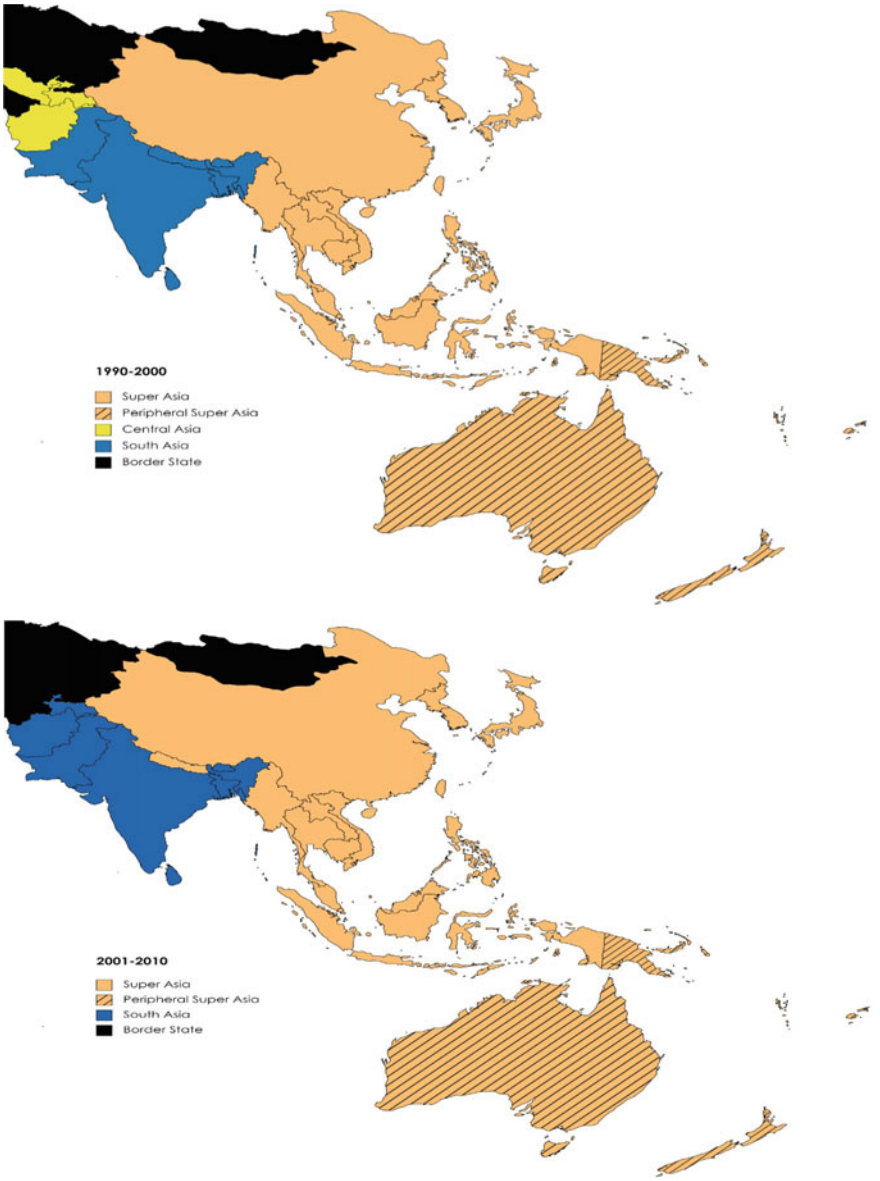

Fig. 4.1 (continued)

Table 4.1 Regional cohesion in Super Asia across five time periods

Time period	Regions	Region cohesion
1950–1960	2	0.82
1961–1972	3	0.40
1973–1978	2	0.53
1990–2000	3	0.60
2001–2010	2	0.71

In addition to assessing cohesiveness for each period, we determine the centrality of prominent regional actors, rising or potential regional powers, to determine the extent to which some regional actors may be playing a role in Super Asia's development (Table 4.2). Further, we also include the foreign policy engagement of the United States, across both cooperation and conflictual foreign policy, flowing toward states within potential Super Asia to determine the role of a dominant external major power in its development (Table 4.3). These analytical findings, alongside our continuing historical account, demonstrate that a relatively more even distribution of ties between key regional actors and increased cooperative foreign policy engagement by the United States appears to coincide with a more cohesive Super Asian space.

Table 4.2 Centrality of prominent regional actors, # of 1st degree ties

	1950–1960	1961–1972	1973–1978	1990–2000	2001–2010
Australia	3	7	7	15	9
China	8	10	9	15	12
India	7	8	10	11	11
Indonesia	8	8	6	11	11
Japan	9	12	5	16	10

Table 4.3 Proportion of American Foreign Policy activity directed at Super Asian Space

	Conflict	Cooperation	Total
1950–1960	0.35	0.27	0.28
1961–1972	0.63	0.33	0.43
1973–1978	0.40	0.19	0.24
1990–2000	0.26	0.30	0.29
2001–2010	0.31	0.36	0.34

4.6 The Early Cold War

The major powers continued to treat Asia as a single strategic unit from the early postwar years until the 1960s. Unsurprisingly, the 1950s represent the period of greatest cohesion among potential Super Asian states across our sixty-year time period, with post-war Japan playing the most central role after the end of Allied occupation in 1952. However, the division between the two superpowers that would characterize the latter half of the Cold War, including decolonization and external military intervention, began to develop as post-World War security concerns gave way to the challenges of global bipolarity. Within the region, India also continued to focus on Asia as a singular strategic entity as a legacy of British strategic policy during World War II. During the war, Britain created the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC)[14] where British-Indian soldiers worked to restore Indo-China to French colonial rule and the East Indies to the Dutch in 1945–46. They were also involved in disarming Japanese soldiers in the region and repatriating Japanese prisoners of war (Prasad 1958). Furthermore, the Indian soldiers of the Raj constituted almost a third of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan itself (Prasad 1958: 57). Given the important role that it had played in the war, the soon-to-be independent India thought of itself as the "policeman and arsenal of the East" in early 1946, in the words of the senior Congress leader Asaf Ali who was appointed as independent India's first ambassador to the United States. Soon after independence, Nehru asserted that "the future of Asia will be powerfully determined by the future of India. India becomes more and more the *pivot* of Asia (Gopal 1979: 59). Nehru (1950: 329) not only thought of India as the "pivotal centre … in terms of [the] defence" of South and Southeast Asia, but also believed (Nehru 1985: 536) that India "would inevitably exercise an important influence" in the Pacific. Importantly, early independent India tried to play a role commensurate with that idea, as evidenced by its relatively high centrality in the broader region, close behind China and Indonesia, despite its foreign policy challenges with its contiguous neighbors.

In January 1949, India's strategic view of a unified Asia remained consistent, organizing the first conference of Asian states to deal with an Asia-specific issue: Indonesian independence. India not only played a leading diplomatic role, but Indian aircraft also made several sorties in the late 1940s in defiance of the Dutch air blockade. A month following the Conference on Indonesia, India organized a Conference of Commonwealth countries on Burma to discuss that country's internal security and economic issues, leading to military and economic support (Ton 1963: 150–184). In 1951, India signed friendship treaties with Burma and Indonesia that had security-related undertones, and the friendship treaty signed with the Philippines in 1952 was tantamount to a non-aggression pact. Not surprisingly, China believed that India was in the process of creating an "Asiatic Military Alliance" to check the spread of Communism in Asia (China Digest 1949: 13).

[14] The SEAC was headquartered in Sri Lanka and included India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Australia's Christmas Island, the not-yet-independent Maldives, and all states that comprise "Southeast Asia" today.

That Asia represented a single strategic unit at this point was also apparent during the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) by the United States in 1954 to check Chinese Communism (Fenton 2012). Apart from the United States, Britain (in Malaya), and France (in Indo-China), the rest of the member states of SEATO were the Indo-Pacific states of Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, along with only one state from what we consider Southeast Asia today: Thailand.

The Korean War (1950–53) highlights the porous yet unified nature of a strategic Super Asia during the early part of the Cold War. Given that China and the United States did not have formal diplomatic links, India played the role of an interlocutor between these states during the war. New Delhi also played a leading role at the United Nations during the postwar Korean settlement. Notably, 6000 Indian troops and administrative personnel led by Indian officers landed in South Korea and implemented the exchange of some 23,000 prisoners of war (Heimsath 1956). At the same time, India also signed a separate peace treaty with Japan in 1952 after rejecting the "unequal" San Francisco Peace Treaty (SFPT). New Delhi not only waived all wartime reparations owed by Tokyo, but India also granted Japan the most-favored-nation status, which was refused to Tokyo by the signatories of the SFPT. This treaty heralded Japan's "return to Asia" after the war as it helped Japan in its negotiations with Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which were then underway (Sato 2005), highlighting the multilateralism of the Super Asia space.

Under Nehru's leadership, Japan was also invited to the 1955 Bandung Conference, even as Japan became a member of the United Nations only in 1956. Nehru also introduced Communist China, and its Premier Zhou Enlai, to Asia and the world at Bandung. While Sino-Indian tensions were apparent at Bandung itself, Asia was conceived as a single strategic unit until the early 1960s. In fact, the United States feared that an "Eastern Bloc" led by India and China was emerging at Bandung that would be inimical to America's Cold War priorities (Parker 2006).

4.7 Regional Fragmentation and the Cold War

On the eve of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the divisions that would characterize the remainder of the Cold War were apparent. India informed China that the eight-year-long 1954 Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet would not be renewed until status quo ante (as perceived by India) was restored along the Sino/Tibetan-Indian border after arguing that this agreement was meant to maintain peace not only between China and India, "but also … [in] South East Asia" (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 1961–1962). As shown in Table 4.3, American conflictual behavior in the region spikes, mainly due to the Vietnam War, but also due to heterogeneous engagement with important regional players. For example, during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the United States provided military assistance to India and even informed the Chinese that it was sending an aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal (Hoffman 1990: 196–210). However, India's disastrous defeat meant that India could no longer provide military

leadership in Southeast Asia, as New Delhi itself needed external assistance to meet the challenge from Beijing. As such, India was eliminated from the ranks of potential Super Asian regional power, resulting in a corresponding deterioration of regional engagement in Southeast Asia. At the same time, Washington's focus shifted to the Vietnam War while developing disinterest in South Asia due to New Delhi's strong objections against American intervention. This interplay further exacerbated regional fragmentation as American strategic interests became more narrowly focused on smaller regional subgroups in contradiction to the broader articulation of singular regional space during the 1950s and the British era.

Internally, the emergence of the Association of Southeast Asia in 1961 and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 meant that Asia was finally being "split" into distinct strategic theaters of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia that we are all too familiar with today. By the 1970s, following American withdrawal from Vietnam, American engagement reaches a low point in the post-Cold War era (Table 4.3). Internally, while India and China remain strongly engaged (Table 4.2), other key players experienced a rapid decline in their interconnectedness within the Super Asian space. Divisions that developed between subgroups were accentuated by the economic stagnation in South and Southeast Asia, while many of the economies in the Northeast took off, and Australia and New Zealand focused their activity extra-regionally. Finally, the division of Asia (and the world) into distinct sub-regions according to America's Cold War priorities, and the consequent emergence of area studies programs in American academia, consolidated the boundaries of these sub-regions of Asia (Lewis and Wigen 1997: 157–188).

While strategic links between Asia's sub-regions continue after the 1960s (for instance, the Sino-Pakistani nuclear and missile nexus), these links are quite limited, and this larger strategic Asia did not form a single geopolitical unit for the major powers for the remainder of the Cold War. However, by the end of the Cold War, Asia was in the midst of fundamental economic transformation. China was more than a decade into its dramatic economic reforms when the Cold War ended, while India had just begun the process of embracing the market after shedding its socialist shibboleths. This economic transformation of Asia began blurring the subregional boundaries and is now heralding the re-emergence of Super Asia.

4.8 Re-emergence of Super Asia Following the Cold War

In 1991–92, India launched its "Look East" policy to promote greater economic and strategic integration with its eastern neighbors (Saint-Mezard 2006). At the same time, given its growing dependence on the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean for energy resources from the Persian Gulf to fuel its rapidly growing economy, General Zhao Nanqi, the director of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, asserted in 1993 that China "was not prepared to let the Indian Ocean become India's Ocean" (quoted in Roy 1998: 170). By the end of the 1990s, the Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was arguing that Japan did not want to see "China and India… struggle for

hegemony in Asia … in the twenty-first century" (quoted in Togo 2007: 89). Thus, the 1990s demonstrate a peak in both the interconnectedness of region members (Table 4.1) and the centrality of Asia's leading powers (Table 4.2), laying the foundations for Super Asia's re-emergence.

China and India's maritime interests are already well-known in the literature on the IndoPacific.[15] For example, China worries about its vulnerability in the Malacca Strait, through which more than 80% of its oil imports pass. More recently, China announced a $1.6 billion fund in support of its "maritime silk route" project to build commercial ports and enhance connectivity with Southeast Asia and the countries of the Indian Ocean region (Krishnan 2014). More than half of India's total foreign trade passes through the Strait of Malacca as well. India's largest overseas offshore oil and gas fields in Russia's Sakhalin region travel through the South China Sea before passing through the Strait of Malacca to supply India (Dutta 2006). At the same time, India is also engaged in hydrocarbon exploration in the South China Sea: a region disputed with China (Bhaumik 2013). Naturally, Asia's rising giants will invest in their naval and air capabilities in tandem with their growing commercial and energy interests, as all other great powers have in the past.

However, many of Asia's emerging trade and energy corridors are not purely maritime routes. China has cultivated ties with Myanmar and Pakistan in an attempt to reduce its Malacca Dilemma.[16] A natural gas pipeline connecting Yunnan and other parts of southwestern China with Kyaukpyu on the western coast of Myanmar became fully operational in late 2013 (BBC News 2013). Similarly, the Karakoram Highway already connects China's Xinjiang with Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions, and plans are underway to connect the highway to the Pakistani port city Gwadar near the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Work has also begun connecting southern China with Singapore via several countries in Southeast Asia by a high-speed rail network to ease the flow of goods and people between these countries (People's Daily 2011). China is also planning on connecting Xinjiang with Gwadar via a rail link (Ng 2013). This Chinese power projection into Central and South Asia leads to conflict with growing Indian interests in the space (Rhamey 2020).

For its part, India is also promoting land connectivity with Southeast Asia. A highway linking northeast India with Thailand via Myanmar has been developed (Reddy 2013), and initial plans are also underway to extend this highway to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (Livemint 2014). Another ambitious project includes the combination of a maritime corridor from southern India to Dawei in Myanmar and a land corridor from there into Thailand (Mohan 2012a). Both Japan and United States are also promoting better connectivity between India and Southeast Asia (Bagchi 2014). In a significant recent development, India and China have also begun to explore

[15] See, for instance, Mohan (2012b).

[16] While ameliorating China's Malacca Dilemma, China's approach towards Myanmar and Pakistan does not decrease the importance of the Indian Ocean as oil and gas will still need to be shipped via the (greater) Indian Ocean sea lanes to the ports of these countries before being transported overland to China.

overland connectivity through Myanmar and Bangladesh through an initiative that will significantly impact their economies if successfully implemented (Krishnan 2013).

Despite these converging land and naval connections, in the most recent time periods, India has carved out its own space within Asia. However, China has thus far managed to retain the countries of neighboring Southeast Asia within its region through economic and security engagement. For example, the Chinese army has been undergoing intense training near the Myanmar-China border since 2013 due to the ongoing ethnic conflict between Myanmar's government and the Kachin state. While the possibility of the ethnic conflict spilling over into China is real, the gas pipeline to China also passes through this state (Xin and Li 2012; Wong 2013).

These potential territorial conflicts highlight both the re-integration of Super Asia as well as some of the emerging fault lines. Unlike the unified security perspective of the British in the nineteenth century, the high-level engagement between China and India in the most recent time period illustrates repeated conflictual behavior, though sufficiently isolated that South and East Asia no longer cluster in the same space. For example, the Chinese military incursion into Ladakh in Indian-Kashmir in 2013 highlights the continued strategic salience of the world's longest unmarked border. Indian strategists have already begun to debate whether it is in their interests to respond to China's intrusions along their common land frontiers by bolstering India's naval presence on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, given that India enjoys an edge over China around the Malacca Strait (Joshi 2013).

The Tibet-factor also affects the contours of strategic Asia and highlights the continental dimensions of military power. Indeed, Tibet may present something of the dividing line that currently prevents the coalescence of South and East Asia. Any Chinese military activity in Tibet has consequences for Sino-Indian relations. The China-India border is essentially the Tibet-India border, because the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile reside in India along with thousands of Tibetan refugees. However, given that most of South and Southeast Asia's major rivers (such as the Brahmaputra, Mekong, and Salween) originate in Tibet and that China has plans to build dams and divert these water resources, it has been argued that China's growing military infrastructure in Tibet "complicate[s] the planning of other water claimants downstream, in much the same way as more robust PLA [People's Liberation Army] presence in the disputed areas of the East and the South China Sea raise concerns by other disputants" (Kamphausen 2012).

We have argued that except for the last three decades of the Cold War, Asia's three subregions (South, Southeast, and Northeast Asia) and two oceans (Indian and Western Pacific) have predominantly constituted a single strategic unit for close to two centuries. This broader strategic Asia that emerged as a consequence of sustained politico-military interactions between its constituent units was a continental as well as a maritime system. Similarly, the Super Asia reconstituting itself since the end of the Cold War is re-emerging due to the growing politico-military processes. As such, Super Asia is hardly "new" or "unnatural"; in fact, it represents the return of history. While fault lines have emerged between a region with India in the south and a much larger Asia–Pacific space with China in the east, we would not be surprised if future

updating of the regions data demonstrates a continued return to a singular Super Asia. Recent events such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and American nuclear submarine sales to Australia suggest that a singular strategic orientation continues to evolve.

However, while the United States plays an important role in maintaining the process of coalescence in Super Asia, just as it played a pivotal role in the fragmentation of the 1960s and 70s, it cannot alone define the strategic contours of Asia. Competition between prominent regional actors that are relatively central to the broader network is key to defining the space.[17] Japan dominated the position of centrality in both the early time periods (Table 4.2), partly due to the United States' backing but also in terms of its overall economic development status at the end of the Cold War. China, however, gained the spot of most central state in the 2001–2010 time period, albeit with a relatively evenly distributed engagement with Japan, India, Indonesia, and Australia.

Rising regional and major powers China and India are at the forefront of the processes that are redefining strategic Asia, albeit remaining within their distinct areas of influence for the time being, as Japan, Asia's other leading power, is already thinking in Super Asia terms as it tries to emerge as a "normal" military power. Furthermore, consistent with previous discussion of the rising economic and security integration over land and sea, this Chinese-Japanese cluster is making in-roads into key historical neighbors of India—Nepal and Myanmar. The reorientation of Japan toward the region is a departure from its previous, extra-regional focus during the Cold War, and it will be interesting to see if Australia likewise follows suit.[18] In particular, Japanese policymakers have shown an interest in developing strategic links with other regional democracies—the United States, Australia, and India—in the form of a "democratic security diamond" to hedge against the rise of China (Abe 2012). Asia's medium powers, such as Australia (Australian Department of Defense 2013) and Indonesia (Natalegawa 2013), are either already making official statements using the term "Indo-Pacific" or are thinking in terms of a broader strategic Super Asia even when not using this term. For example, Singapore has brought India into its idea of strategic Asia out of balance-of-power considerations (Goh 2005), while South Korea had also begun to think in terms of a larger Asia because of its growing energy needs, the North Korea-Pakistan nuclear axis, and because it plans to play a more proactive international role (Chung 2011).

[17] China and Japan are not the only important players in the space, though they are most consistently at the core of the space across all time periods. During most of the Cold War, Australia is completely disengaged and only tangentially engaged in the latter period (and even so, not consistently). Indonesia experiences similar peripheral behaviors, albeit less detached, and India, while important, emerges at the head of a separate South Asian subgroup in the post-Cold War period.

[18] A recent analysis of regional foreign policy engagement by regional and major powers found that Japan was unique as a major power in not engaging in significant activity toward its regional space apart from the international system (Cline et al. 2011).

4.9 Conclusions: Looking Forward

An important contributing factor to regional development appears to be the rise of regional powers and the relative porousness of the region(s) to external major power interference. Rather than taking the region as fixed and looking at state or dyadic behavior (for instance, Solingen 2007), we can evaluate the impact of the broader multilateral behaviors described here on the overall stability, conflict, organization, and architecture that may emerge within the regional space. Applying similar criteria to other regions, whether the Middle East or Europe, and then comparing them to the development of Super Asia may provide insights into the requisite causal factors necessary for attaining certain regional outcomes. As with Super Asia, those implications may be due either to its coalescence or fragmentation. While comparison of regions, independent of identification method, has been of rising interest in IR research, greater attention to the formation of multilateral behaviors over time—or how regions rise and fall—is likely to be a fruitful avenue for future research and, possibly, of great import to the future of the international system.

To the extent a Super Asia is emerging, the evolutionary process still has some way to go. While during no time period does a single Super Asia completely cover the examined space, the closest periods to the ideal are in the 1950s and 2000s (Table 4.1, Fig. 4.1), where the number of regions is limited to only 2, and the proportion of active states in the largest region is at its peak. Though the levels of regional cohesion have not returned to those observed in the first full decade of the Cold War, the latest time period shows significantly higher levels of regional cohesion than any point since, with 71% of all region members falling within the largest regional cluster, which includes China and Japan. However, the remaining 29% of actively engaged states appear within a separate South Asian region that includes India, the most notable difference from the more encompassing regional space from the 1950s, which included all engaged states except for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Interesting is the behavior of Australia. While loosely involved in the most recent time period in a very peripheral sense, it fails to engage the proximate clique, including China and Japan. While Australia does have ties to other states in the area, it does not have ties uniquely apart from others in the international system, given the relatively dramatic degree of Australian extra-regional foreign policy activity. The result is that Australia remains somewhat torn between the local space and the broader system, not residing within the identified East Asian clique in a majority of years in the ten-year period.

Overall, American conflict appears to correspond with a decrease in the observed levels of regional cohesion. Notably, the most fragmented periods correspond with American military intervention in Southeast Asia. Following the Cold War, where American foreign policy takes on a relatively more cooperative nature, the levels of regional cohesion appear to be somewhat less than the peak of the Cold War, with the 2001–2010 period reaching a cooperative maximum.

Although the current South and East China Seas disputes make the region seem uniquely maritime in its strategic orientation, the two regional powers remain strategically focused on their more proximate naval spaces (India in the Strait of Malacca and China in the South China Sea). This division likely fuels the continued fault lines between South and East Asia in the 2000s. While a full-fledged continental system already exists, a full-fledged maritime system is still emerging. The United States is the only naval power capable of roaming the Western Pacific and the Indian Oceans at will.

Region-making is an avowedly subjective enterprise. However, discerning the contours of the regions that have been made and are in the process of emerging (or re-emerging) need not be equally subjective. We have made a case for the existence of a Super Asian region for most of the last 200 years. Simultaneously, this initial attempt at describing the behaviors of states in the Super Asian geographic space illustrates both the potential of broad regional organization led by a rising China and India and the complexity of parsing out subgroup behaviors and their potential causes. As a substantively interesting level of analysis unto itself, regional coalescence and disintegration have many possible implications for international politics, from the conflict behaviors of states (Volgy et al. 2018), to the development of regional architecture (Powers and Goertz 2011), to the rise and fall of major powers (Volgy et al. 2014). Identifying these subgroups and analyzing their change over time has the potential to supplement existing dyadic and systemic analyses while also more appropriately accounting for the inherent geographic clustering present in international politics.

As for empirically confirming Super Asia's emergence, our verdict is a qualified "maybe". While the initial 1950s description of a unique, large, unified space acting uniquely from the broader international system does appear to be present, the re-emergence of such a space is occurring to a greater extent than in the 1990s or most of the Cold War; it still has some way to go before being a clear, unqualified reality. First, the most obvious division in the space is between India and China, and if that division continues, it may expand regional fragmentation into the Southeast Asian space as India seeks a more global role. While China's rise is perhaps the most likely driving force behind regional coalescence, challenges from within (Japan) and without (India, United States), as well as continued local hesitance (Australia), may hinder Super Asia's development in the near future.

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Chapter 5
Is There a Central Asia and Does It Matter?

5.1 Introduction

Where exactly[1] is Central Asia? Does the region extend from the Caspian Sea to Mongolia, or should the line be drawn somewhere in between? Is Turkey, which is socio-culturally closer to the Central Asian states, but is physically on the European continent, part of Central Asia? What about China's eastern province of Xinjiang, which is more Turkophone than Chinese? And there is also the case of Afghanistan which, though right in the middle of any geographic delimitation of Central Asia, does not fit by any socio-cultural criterion. Different criteria often produce different regions, so no two analysts may fully agree what the appropriate regional delimitations are. The result can be inefficient foreign policy making. According to one Central Asia scholar (Starr 1997: 167), a good example of this is the inconsistent geographical delineation used by the U.S. government

> which has impeded the development of a coherent Central Asia policy. The State Department groups the five former Soviet states of Central Asia with Russia and considers Afghanistan part of South Asia, while the Defense Department's Central Command treats the six countries together. Such uncoordinated arrangements have reduced the United States' ability to build regional success on the national success in Afghanistan.[2]

Why have both policymakers and social scientists not bothered with identifying Central Asia's boundaries? One explanation, as William Zartman has pointed out

[1] This chapter updates an earlier version that appeared as of this work appeared as Leila Zakhirova, "Is There a Central Asia? State Visits and Empirical Delineation of the Region's Boundaries," *The Review of Regional Studies*, 42, 1 (2012): 25–50. We thank three remarkable students who have assisted with data collection. It would not have been possible to make the revisions without the talents and professionalism of Alexandra Trudeau and Brayden Sorenson and the number-loving-pivot-table-genius Hannah Gilsdorf who gave up her summer in order to prepare the dataset for analysis, including generating new tables and updating old data.

[2] This quote from 2005 about the success in reforming Afghanistan does not take into consideration what followed in subsequent years which were less than successful. Sometimes it pays to wait longer to make such pronouncements.

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_5

back in the heyday of the regional studies movement in the 1960s, is that generally "regions tend to be assumed first and identified later" (as cited in Thompson 1981a, p. 213). Another view is that within Central Asia, critical questions of international relations have been pushed into the background by a heavy emphasis on domestic issues. As such, the relationships among the five Central Asian states have not been fully or systematically studied. Thus, three decades after the Soviet Union's collapse and despite the urgency of such international issues as regional security, border disputes, and conflict over natural resources, we know very little about how the Central Asian states interact at the regional level to resolve various regional problems. Yet a third explanation is that it doesn't matter what the boundaries really are. We disagree with this view because identifying the boundaries of Central Asia provides useful information about the internal nature of regional international relations that can help us assess the way the Central Asian region is related to the international system as a whole. In the absence of a common regional delineation, we can never be certain that regional studies are treating the proper or even the same regional unit of analysis even when scholars claim that they are.

The aim of this study is to minimize the distinctions between various ideas of what Central Asia is. In order to stop assuming Central Asia, this study seeks to make a systematic attempt to identify it using concrete data.[3] The analysis begins with the commonly assumed boundaries of Central Asia as comprised of the five former republics of the Soviet Union's southern tier and identify its boundaries based on interstate interaction.[4] The conventional approach is to assume that groups of states that are considered to be "natural" regions, or are perceived as constituting a region, will form regional subsystems in world politics. Such regions tend to focus more on problems and actors within the region than on extra-regional issues and actors. In a regional subsystem, states "maintain a relatively regular and intense pattern of interaction" (Thompson 1973).

Whether the five Central Asian states constitute a single region or not is an empirical question. One way to delineate the geographic boundaries of Central Asia is to use a type of interaction data: intergovernmental visits.[5] An analysis based on such data begins with the assumption that visits between heads of state and government officials reflect a serious form of international relations which has important utility in establishing subsystemic boundaries of a region. State visits generally serve as indicators of foreign policy interests. While some visits are ceremonial, the majority involve a deliberate interaction with other states for the purpose of obtaining assistance, bargaining leverage, and in some cases compliance (Thompson 1981a). Government

[3] The first systematic treatment of Central Asia as a regional unit is found in Buzan and Waever (2003). They describe Central Asia as a distinct regional *subcomplex* within a greater Russian security complex. However, Buzan and Waever's definition of Central Asia is based mainly on security relations. For a greater discussion see their chapter 13, pp. 423–429. See also Allison (2001), who claims the five Central Asian states constitute "a loose securitycomplex".

[4] Specifically, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

[5] For other works using intergovernmental visits as a proxy for interstate interaction, see Thompson (1981a); Nitsch (2007); Volgy et al. (2011); and Kastner and Saunders (2012).

representatives, however, do not tend to visit all of their counterparts. It is this selectivity which determines who interacts with whom in a given region. As such, visit patterns can help us identify regional boundaries based on interstate interactions.

Such data provide a reasonably reliable proxy for identifying the extent to which a subsystemic pattern is emerging. They can also help identify a nuanced view of interstate interactions both in terms of regularity (i.e., who interacts with whom) and intensity (i.e., how often states interact with each other). The aim is to discover the basic patterns of interstate relations to see whether a regional bloc exists. In other words, is there a Central Asia? If so, what does it look like? More specifically, to what extent are the foreign policies of the Central Asian states primarily oriented toward the region in which they find themselves? Is there one bloc or are there multiple, overlapping, nested subsystems of various types that seem to be forming? Depending on what the structure of the international relations is, they all have different foreign policy implications.

The logic of the argument presented in this study is straightforward. First, the analysis will begin with a brief background on regional subsystems. Second, several theoretical approaches will be discussed about the type of structures one might expect to find in Central Asia. Third, the strengths and limitations of the data will be assessed. The final section will analyze the empirical findings vis-à-vis the structural models and end by offering general conclusions about the structure of international relations in post-Soviet Central Asia.

5.2 Background on Regional Subsystems

The study of regions as a distinct unit of analysis first became popular in the 1960s when scholars became increasingly uneasy with explanations of world politics in terms of an exclusively bipolar model (Binder 1958; Brecher 1963; Zartman 1967; Banks 1969; Berton 1969; Hellman 1969; Sigler 1969; Cantori and Spiegel 1969; 1970). Among the many reasons for this dissatisfaction was the assumption that regional or local politics was nothing more than a miniature interplay of great-power politics. Regions, in other words, were perceived to be mini-international systems that behaved in ways similar to the global system. This was particularly the case in the post-World War II period when the global overlay of the Cold War masked regional variations (Buzan 1997). It took an area specialist to challenge this analytical bias before scholars of international relations began to view regions as entities distinct from the international system. Binder (1958) disagreed with the claim that international politics takes place in a single global system. He instead claimed that it is comprised of a network of systems operating at the global, regional, and domestic levels. Any model containing a great power bias cannot, he argued, effectively explain the behavior of less than great powers. This is because, "insofar as a situation of mutual deterrence obstructs great power intervention, the smaller powers are free to act" (Binder 1958, p. 409).

In many respects, Binder's revolt against the abstractions of generalist international relations explanations marked the beginning of the regional subsystem idea urging scholars to study regions in their own right rather than as part of a global system. The movement prompted regional studies scholars to come up with various criteria about what constitutes a regional subsystem.[6] Some offered a "kitchen sink" approach (Cantori and Spiegel 1970) while others thought one or two attributes sufficed (e.g., Zartman 1967; Brecher 1969; Hellman 1969). In an effort to minimize such distinctions, Thompson (1973) classified the various definitions and conceptual attributes of a regional subsystem into four necessary and sufficient conditions: geographical proximity, regularity and intensity of interaction between regional actors, internal and external recognition as a distinctive area, and a minimum size of at least two actors. These categories continue to resonate in the regional subsystem literature today (see for example, Buzan 1997; Lake and Morgan 1997; Buzan and Waever 2003; Salloukh and Brynen 2004; Allison 2008). In addition to the four categories identified by Thompson (1973), a regional subsystem is further characterized by "a certain distinctiveness and proximity, not only in the geographical but also in the economic and political sense" (Vayrynen 1984: 340). Proximity, in other words, is established by means of mutual interaction. The study of regional subsystems in international relations thus means that the geographical perspective is combined with political, economic, and social dynamics. In the presence of a subsystem the important sources of change in the region cannot be exclusively domestic in nature, as changes in one part of the subsystem can become the catalyst of change in other parts of the region. In the presence of a strong regional subsystem, in which the regional identity is presumably stronger than individual national identities, there are no national solutions to regional problems.[7]

The end of the Cold War paved the way for the emergence of new regional groupings of states, especially in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Studying states grouped into such regional clusters is advantageous for two important reasons. First, it provides a level of analysis midway between the nation-state and the global system. By focusing on intermediate groups, we reduce the number of units to be analyzed and therefore lessen the complexity of world politics. At the same time, we increase the subtlety of analysis in an otherwise quantitatively oriented field. Second, it provides a broader perspective on the international politics of regions without undermining their unique characteristics. It does so by forcing us to look at the larger picture as well

[6] It is important to note here that *regional subsystem* is not the same as *regionalism*, which refers more to the economic and political processes of integration among geographically proximate states. Regionalism is best understood as "an active process of change towards increased cooperation, integration, convergence, coherence and identity" (Allison 2004: 465). *Regional subsystem,* by contrast, defines regions based on disproportionate concentration of economic and political flows that are intra-regional as opposed to extra-regional. See Vayrynen (2003) for more discussion on the differences between old versus new regionalism. For other works on regionalism, see Mansfield and Milner (1999), Hettne and Soderbaum (2000), Noble (2004), Salloukh and Brynen (2004), Kelly (2007), Allison (2008), Collins (2009), and Powers and Goertz (2011).

[7] For a critique of the earlier works on regional subsystems, see Boals (1973).

as making us aware of the interconnectedness of developments (Noble 2004). Ultimately, knowing who interacts with whom on a regular basis will help international actors devise effective policies in resolving existing and future regional conflicts.

5.3 Structural Approaches

There are a number of prevailing abstract approaches about the type of structures one might expect to find in Central Asia; however, they are not all mutually exclusive. Rather, they are iterative in the sense that first, what is the extent of the interaction in the region: is it high, medium, or low (model I); if the interaction is low, what is the nature of the interaction: is it fragmented (model II), or is it skewed toward an external actor such as the former metropole or an alternative patron (model III). Each model will be discussed separately.

Model I: The structure of international relations among the five Central Asian states could be high, medium, or low; however, what volume of interaction deserves the 'high' mark versus 'low' is an arbitrary measure. To determine the extent of the interaction among a group of states in close geographic proximity to one another we must first assess how inward focused the interactions are. What percent of the state visits are concentrated among the five Central Asian states? To deal with these questions objectively, the obvious solution is to compare the intra-Central Asian interaction to other groups of states that are interactive regional subsystems. Unfortunately, we lack objective benchmarks about other subsystems against which we can judge the data on Central Asian interaction. Thus, in the absence of comparable information, one is forced to adopt a minimum threshold by which Central Asian intraregional activity can be measured. One straightforward threshold is to view the distribution of state visits in terms of percentages (75, 50, and 25%). While such thresholds are often arbitrary, they do help organize big datasets in such a way as to reveal important patterns of activity. For example, 75% of interaction is greater than 50% and if more than 50% of the Central Asian activity is intra-regional as opposed to extra-regional, it is then possible to argue that Central Asia constitutes a highly interactive regional subsystem, providing support for model I.

Model I, essentially, is based on the assumption that in an increasingly global world while all places are somewhat related to each other, near places are more related (O'Loughlin and Anselin 1996). Such regions are sustained by at least two or more generally proximate actors which tend to focus more on problems and actors within the region than those outside the region.[8] Western Europe, ASEAN, and the Mashriq region[9] of the Middle East are examples of such subsystems, in which interstate relations tend to be more inwardly oriented. If there is a semblance of a

[8] The number of regions that can satisfy high thresholds of interactive autonomy is small.

[9] The Mashriq region refers to the Arab countries east of Egypt and north of the Arabian Peninsula, i.e., Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Syria. Iran has been increasingly involved in this region since 1979.

highly interactive subsystem emerging in the region, the Central Asian states will likely shift their foreign policies away from dealing mainly with local politics toward more regional issues. However, this does not mean that their relations will necessarily become more cooperative. Rather, an increase in interstate interaction will link the subsystemic members in such a way that the actions of one state will have serious consequences on the actions of the other members of the subsystem. If the subsystem is characterized by cooperative relations, the Central Asian states might actually be able to resolve a number of problems plaguing the region such as water-energy regulation, transport infrastructure, border disputes, and regional security. If, on the other hand, regional relations are mainly conflictual, competing national interests of the Central Asian states in the economic and foreign policy areas are likely to pose the greatest danger to regional stability. In short, the highly interactive subsystem approach presupposes that regularly interacting proximate actors are likely to form one subsystem.

Model II is an alternative approach with an underlying assumption that in the developing world, especially in the post-colonial period, regional subsystems are unlikely to form because states are often preoccupied with domestic concerns and, thus, their foreign policies tend to focus mainly on local issues (i.e., border disputes) with their immediate neighbors. Such states are less likely to join larger collectivities and to deal with relatively distant issues even within their respective regions, resulting in a fragmented subsystem. This thinking is consistent with Dominguez (1971), who argues that as peripheries break away from the imperial center, they are likely to face severe resource limitations and an increase in the probability of local conflicts. Border disputes are often the inevitable outcome of imperial dissolution shaping the foreign policies of the newly independent states in ways that keep their interests mainly local rather than regional. Thus, the collapse of colonial empires initiates a trend toward the fragmentation of the world into pockets of smaller-scale subsystems. In such a world order, states are likely to deal mainly with adjacent neighbors, often forming bilateral relations, for overloaded by domestic pressures and demands, they lack the resources to engage in regional projects. Fragmented subsystems in general tend to be more numerous than their highly interactive counterparts. The Caucasus (i.e., Armenia-Azerbaijan), parts of sub-Saharan Africa where the Democratic Republic of the Congo often clashes with its neighbors Rwanda and Uganda, and many of the subregional clusters in South America such as Argentina-Brazil, Chile-Peru-Bolivia, or Columbia-Venezuela are just a few examples of fragmented subsystems.[10]

If interstate interaction is limited (i.e., if regional activity is neither high nor medium), model II is more likely to characterize regional boundaries. In a fragmented region, the existing dyadic disputes are likely to persist unresolved and the presence of extra-regional actors (e.g., Russian border guards, U.S. air bases, or international organizations) will be needed to resolve interstate conflicts. A subsystem marked by fragmentation is characterized by a low degree of interaction. This means that the existing tension among the Central Asian states over natural resources such as water and energy will only escalate and could possibly destabilize the region in the future.

[10] For a good summary of Dominguez's argument, see Pickering and Thompson (1998).

Model III: Fragmentation is not the only structural form that regions with low interaction activity can take. An alternative approach is advanced by Cooley (2005) who suggested that hierarchical institutions left by an imperial core have lasting influence over the structure of regional interactions within the former empire. This metropole-centered approach, which envisions "all roads leading to the former metropole," (or in the case of the five Central Asian states, to Moscow) is likely to characterize the initial stage of regional interactions in post-Soviet Central Asia. Literature on post-colonialism suggests that security and stability concerns often keep the metropole involved in the political, economic, and military affairs of its former colonies. While such interactions are expected to diminish over time, path dependence makes it advantageous for the newly independent states to continue interacting with the former metropole long after imperial relations have dissipated. In some instances, the metropole may actually seek to return to its peripheries for economic benefits. At the same time, building upon existing bilateral relations with the former colonial power maximizes the new states' strategic and economic benefits. This is clearly more beneficial than building new relations with former peripheral neighbors in the region. In a system characterized by core-periphery relations, it makes sense for the post-colonial system to maintain this hierarchical trend, and the tie to the core remains strong long after the peripheries have broken away from the metropole. For example, the Francophone states of West Africa have been variably francocentric since independence. This situation is different from other post-colonial regional clusters such as South Asia that became decidedly unfriendly to the former metropole.

In a region characterized by limited interaction, an alternative to fragmentation, in short, is a metropole-centered region. If model III is in operation, the Central Asian states will continue to lie within Russia's sphere of influence, which means any conflict resolution in the region will require the intervention of Russia. Similarly, in cooperative relations, Moscow will continue encouraging bilateral relations over multilateralism, and as a consequence, dictating the terms of bilateral interactions. This may not be a bad thing in the short term but if the Central Asian states are serious and uniform in their aspirations to minimize their dependence on Russia in the long term, then institutionalizing mutual interaction within the region may be their only way of reducing Moscow's influence. Of course, a subsystem characterized by hierarchical interactions does not need to be metropole-centered. With enough power and influence, alternative patrons can easily assume the former metropole's role. In Central Asia, China, Iran, Turkey and to some extent the United States could play this role.

Since systematic empirical analysis regarding all five Central Asian states remains rare, the interaction data examined through the three models should help steer us in the right direction toward filling that gap. It is an opportunity to watch new subsystems emerge in a region whose successful development cannot take place in isolation. More importantly, the structural models provide a better understanding of the "regional" context in Central Asia. Whether the Central Asian states are moving toward a more interactive regional subsystem or still holding on to pre-1991 Moscow-centered forms of interaction provides important insights and clues about their foreign policies.

5.4 Research Design and State Visits Data

Intergovernmental visits have proven to be a useful and a fairly reliable measure of interstate interaction for the purpose of identifying regional boundaries (Modelski 1968; Brams 1969; Christopherson 1976; Hughes and Volgy 1970; Pearson 1970; Kegley and Wittkopf 1976; Thompson and Modelski 1977; Thompson 1970; 1981a; 1981b; Nitsch 2007; Volgy et al. 2011; Kastner and Saunders 2012). Since intergovernmental visits are all public information printed in the press, three particular databases are used to compile the data: (1) Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), (2) World News Connection (WNC), and (3) Access World News (AWN).[11] While generally it is always better to rely on originals and not translations to get all the nuances of events, for the purpose of simply identifying when and where government visits took place and between what countries, *FBIS* is by far the best single fully searchable source that offers daily coverage of intergovernmental visits.

This type of data, however, has an important shortcoming: it tends to be biased toward cooperative relations more than conflictual ones (Kegley and Howell 1975). This is because visits, presumably, are more likely to take place between friendly dyads than hostile ones. Thus, any pattern of intergovernmental visits so identified should reveal only cooperative regional subsystems. Yet, in a regional subsystem in which all interactions count, adversaries can be just as important as friends. By the same token, in his delineation of the Middle Eastern subsystem, Thompson (1981a, p. 234) argues that conflict is well imbedded in visit patterns because it is not uncommon for "relatively active visit dyads (e.g., Egypt and Libya or Algeria and Morocco) to engage in military hostilities with each other." In the case of Central Asia, the distinction between conflict and cooperation is less important (at least for the purpose of identifying subsystemic boundaries) than the general volume and direction of interactions. State visits, while at best a proxy for foreign policy priorities, do provide information about which states are more important to Central Asian states.

There are three other characteristics of the research design that require elaboration. First, on the matter of case selection, an ideal way to identify the subsystemic boundaries of a given region would be to look at the whole world and see if the five Central Asian states emerge as a subsystem. Unfortunately, the existing datasets do not all cover the same time frame in question (namely the 1992–2021 period), nor do they contain complete information on the Central Asian states.[12] Another way to assess the boundaries of Central Asia is to start inductively with the five Central

[11] *FBIS* is a U.S. based news source that monitors and provides translated transcripts of foreign radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, periodicals, and government statements. But as with any government funded initiatives, they often get discontinued or morph into something else. Open access to the *FBIS* got discontinued in 1996. Or rather it morphed into *World News Connection*, another open source for foreign news translated into English. It, too, eventually got discontinued in 2013. Thus, data after 2013 came exclusively from *Access World News* which covers news from around the world.

[12] Gary King's events data (King and Lowe, 2003) is an example of a dataset that lacks information on Central Asian states.

Asian states and then to look at all their interstate interactions with every actor in the world over time. By looking at a region this way, we should be able to discern how well the five Central Asian states are connected among themselves relative to non-regional actors.

Second, the unit of analysis is a dyad where only bilateral visits are examined. Visits made solely for the purpose of attending a multilateral meeting are dropped from the dataset, unless there was a clear indication that bilateral relations took place on the sidelines.[13] Using dyads may potentially blur the distinction between local interactions and the more comprehensive regional interactions among the Central Asian states. However, by looking at each country one by one, we can determine with a reasonable degree of certainty whether the orientation of individual states is dyadic or pan-regional. The dyads are further restricted to the Central Asian states as either visitor or visited.

Third, the timeframe of this study covers the three decades (1992–2021) following the collapse of the USSR. Looking at 30 years' worth of data rather than focusing on certain points in time help reveal general structural patterns of interaction over time. Furthermore, this period is aggregated into ten-year intervals (i.e., 1992–2001, 2002–2011, and 2012–2021).[14] Temporal aggregation of data is crucial for identifying general structural tendencies over time (Thompson 1981a). Such aggregation also helps account for the influence of major events on the international politics of the region. For example, in the early years immediately following independence, the Central Asian states assigned a key role to the development of new ties with the international community. For the first time in the history of the region, the Central Asian states inaugurated embassies both at home and abroad, forming foreign policies without Moscow's intervention. Escaping from Russia's hegemony through the cultivation of new partners to generate the needed capital for economic development took precedence in each of Central Asian state's foreign policy formulations.[15] At the same time, the region attracted little attention from global powers that were hesitant to commit resources.

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[13] For the purpose of identifying which states are high priorities to a given state, it is not uncommon for scholars to focus on bilateral rather than multilateral relations. See for example, Kastner and Saunders (2012).

[14] The 2012–2021 period requires further clarification. Covid-19 certainly hampered intergovernmental visits in 2020 and to a lesser extent in 2021. In the midst of the pandemic most state visits moved online. As a result, there were only 78 intergovernmental visits in 2020. By comparison, there were 254 visits in 2019 and 197 visits in 2018. Virtual visits were excluded from the final dataset simply because the three databases used to collect the data provided uneven or incomplete coverage of online meetings. Thus, including partial data introduced just as much bias as leaving them out altogether. At least, focusing the analysis only on physical intergovernmental visits made data analysis comparable across the three time intervals. The data for 2021 were limited to the first half of the year with a total of 117 state visits recorded. It is conceivable that this number could have been higher (by how much it's not clear) but at the time of the writing of this chapter, it was not possible to include the data for the entire year.

[15] Olcott (1996) provides a detailed discussion of each Central Asian state's foreign policy priorities during the early 1990s.

> Central Asia was not considered part of the 'developing world' like sub-Saharan Africa, nor the source of security threats like the Middle East, nor of global economic importance like East Asia. International oil and gas companies moved more quickly, but their interest was naturally narrow (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017, 5-6).

By the mid-1990s, however, the leaders of the Central Asian states realized that no matter how much they tried, the old economic ties to Moscow could not be broken overnight (Anderson 1997). Moreover, foreign governments became disillusioned with the overhyped potential of the region's oil and gas reserves rivaling those of the Persian Gulf, and the consolidation of super-presidential systems[16] with concentrated power and weak legislatures made the region unattractive for much of the outside world. Even Kyrgyzstan's quasi-democratic regime, which had facilitated much of the visit networks during the early years of independence, had by the mid-1990s become increasingly authoritarian and the number of intergovernmental visits declined. Tajikistan was the only Central Asian state which continued to see more visitors to and from its neighbors and the international community due to the bloody civil war that plagued the country until 1997.

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent basing of US troops in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan marked a major restructuring of international politics in Central Asia, which became "securitized as a critical front in the Global War on Terrorism" (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017, 5–6). The US "war on terror" has served to revitalize regional alliances with Russia while simultaneously strengthening bilateral relations with the United States. As such, it serves as a good starting point for the second decade of state visits. This decade includes significant political events such as the death of Turkmenistan's president in 2006, the ousting of Kyrgyzstan's president by a popular revolt the year before, and the severing of the US-Uzbek relations in the aftermath of the brutal repression of the Andijan riots by Karimov's regime in Uzbekistan. Due to the post-9/11 structural influences in the region, one could expect more inter-governmental visits in this period than during the previous decade.

5.4.1 Data Restrictions

The analysis of intergovernmental networks is restricted to visits to and from three groups of Central Asian government officials: presidents, prime ministers, and cabinet-level ministers. The deputies of these officials were also included because

[16] Superpresidentialism, according to Fish (2000), refers to "an apparatus of executive power that dwarfs all other agencies in terms of size and the resources it consumes; a president who enjoys decree powers; a president who de jure or de facto controls most of the powers of the purse; a relatively toothless legislature that cannot repeal presidential decrees and that enjoys scant authority and/or resources to monitor the chief executive; provisions that render impeachment of the president virtually impossible; and a court system that is controlled wholly or mainly by the chief executive and that cannot in practice check presidential prerogatives or even abuse of power." For other works on superpresidentialism see Colton (1995), Ishiyama and Kennedy (2001).

they tend to do the majority of the traveling. This is a common occurrence in developing countries, where the risk of a coup or uprising in the absence of state leaders tends to be more real than in established governments. Because the visits data contain information on governmental representatives of different rank, the visits are subjected to a weight scale. Since a visit involving a president is presumably more politically significant than a visit by a minister of culture, the following weight scale is applied to the data: a visit involving a head of government (in some states it is the president, in others, it is the prime minister) is scored as ten visit points; a visit by a prime minister (only if he/she is second in command) and or vice president is scored as eight visits points; a visit by a foreign minister or a defense minister is scored as six visit points; a visit by any cabinet level minister (other than foreign and defense ministers) is scored as four visit points; and a visit by deputies of prime ministers or cabinet level ministers is given two visit points.

Based on the weighted scale, all visits in the sample are further subjected to three additional restrictions. First, since government officials seldom travel alone, often heading a multimember delegation, the visit points are restricted to the highest ranked official of the delegation (e.g., if the Uzbek president travels to Iran with his foreign minister and minister of education, that particular visit is coded at the level of the president only). Ideally, one needs to retain as much information as possible on each visit, but news reports are rarely specific as to the identities of the members of a delegation, mostly focusing on the highest ranked official(s) of the delegation.[17] Some officials simply do not receive much coverage in a large entourage. Mixing reports with full versus uneven coverage of visits involves just as much, if not more, data distortion as does the full exclusion of the delegations. By awarding more weight to the highest ranking official, I minimize data bias by treating each visit solely on the basis of the head of the delegation.

Second, because not all visits to and from Central Asia are of equal structural interest, they are further restricted to a minimal threshold of one percent of total visit points for any given decade. This is because the occasional exchange of visits between Turkmenistan and Vietnam does not possess the same subsystemic significance as the intense interaction between Turkmenistan and Iran, for example. Thus, any state with less than one percent of the total visit points in a ten-year period is dropped from the analysis. This threshold eliminates a large portion of the visit pattern "noise," thereby focusing analysis on the more significant and general patterns of interaction.

Third, the visit points are restricted to bilateral visits only. Multilateral visits are treated separately but in conjunction with bilateral visits for several reasons. First, multilateral visits greatly inflate the influence attributable to host nations (Brams 1969), thereby skewing visit points in favor of the host country, unless there is a policy of rotating locations. Second, attendance in multilateral meetings tends to be passive, especially if the meetings are large and take place somewhere outside the region. It is often difficult to know how much effect such meetings exert on subsystemic interactions. For example, a meeting of a hundred foreign ministers

[17] For example, news reports emanating from the Middle East usually list all the important ranking officials, but reports from Russia focus exclusively on whoever is heading the delegation.

at the annual meeting of the United Nations says a lot less about the subsystemic interaction of a group of proximate states than a regular meeting of Central Asian foreign ministers in the region.

5.5 Empirical Findings and Analysis

The final dataset consists of 34 active participants in the Central Asia visit networks. For the purpose of analysis, the paired interactions of each dyad are summed up within each ten-year period so that each unique dyad represents the total number of interactions. For example, if Kazakhstan visited Russia 10 times during the 1992–2001 period and received 15 visitors from Russia during the same period, the Kazakhstan-Russia dyad is coded as having a total of 25 visits. While such aggregation of data blurs the distinction between those who visit and those who receive visitors between a pair of states, it helps to focus the analysis on the regularity and intensity of interactions between a dyad. Table 5.1 lists the participants in the Central Asia network for each ten-year period listing states in the order of states with the highest number of visits on top to states with the lowest number of visits toward the bottom. As expected, all the Central Asian states are part of the subsystem since the visits data are restricted to the Central Asian states as visitor or visited. However, not all five Central Asian states (in bold in Table 5.1) are as active in the region. At the high end, Kazakhstan is much more interactive than Turkmenistan, for example.

The most obvious feature of Table 5.1 is that the network size in each of the ten-year period stayed relatively constant. The events of 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan generated significant number of state visits in the region over the past thirty years. The establishment of U.S. military bases in Central Asia and Russia's efforts to counterbalance American power by strengthening its own military presence in the region, as well the 2001 founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—intergovernmental security organization established by China, Russia, and four of the Central Asian states—contributed to the overall regional interaction.

A second feature of particular pertinence is that major powers Russia and China (in italics), and mid-level powers Turkey and Iran (in italics), remain prominent in each decade. They are in the top nine most interactive participants in the Central Asia visit network. To what extent the actors involved in the Central Asia network of visits constitute a full-fledged interactive subsystem, or several fragmented smaller subsystems, or a small regional structure within a larger subsystem of the former imperial core is the subject of the following sections. By examining the visit patterns with a focus on the degree of fit for each of these models will help identify which actors are politically more salient to whom, which is in some ways what the subsystem idea is all about.

Table 5.1 Principal participants in the Central Asian visit networks, 1992–2021 (Central Asian states in bold)

(1992–2001)	(2002–2011)	(2012–2021)
Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan
Uzbekistan	*Russia*	Uzbekistan
Russia	Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan
Turkmenistan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan
Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	*Russia*
Iran	*China*	*China*
Turkey	*Iran*	*Turkey*
China	*Turkey*	*Iran*
United States	United States	India
Ukraine	Ukraine	Azerbaijan
Pakistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
India	India	Pakistan
Germany	Azerbaijan	UAE
Azerbaijan	South Korea	United States
Afghanistan	France	Belarus
France	Pakistan	South Korea
Georgia	Germany	Armenia
Belarus	Poland	Germany
Israel	Belarus	Japan
United Kingdom	Japan	Qatar
Armenia	Georgia	Saudi Arabia
Japan	Malaysia	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Egypt	Georgia
Egypt		Hungary
Lithuania		Malaysia
		Latvia
26 States	24 States	27 States

Source Data compiled using news reports from the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, *World News Connection* and *Access World News* databases for the years in question

5.5.1 Highly Interactive Subsystem (Model I)

At a January 1993 meeting, leaders of the five Central Asian states agreed to refer to the entire region as *Tsentral'naia Aziia* (Central Asia), which for the first time included Kazakhstan. Since then, much scholarship has been generated focusing on various aspects of Central Asian states' domestic and international politics as if the five states constitute a distinct region. If the Central Asian states indeed constitute

Table 5.2 Highly interactive subsystem model

Years	Intra-Central Asian*		Neighbors		World		Total Visit Points
	Visit Points	%	Visit Points	%	Visit Points	%	
1992–2001	890	8.2	3918	35.9	6102	55.9	10,910
2002–2011	630	6.5	3950	41.0	5063	52.5	9643
2012–2021	1616	14.6	3114	28.1	6368	57.4	11,098

*In this table, three categories of bilateral visits are used: intra-Central Asian, neighbors, and the rest of the world. The intra-Central Asian category refers to the interactions among the five Central Asian states. A state is considered 'neighbor' if it shares a land border with one of the Central Asian states; thus, Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan constitute the neighbor category. The third category refers to all other countries with which the Central Asian states interacted over a thirty-year period that do not fall into the first two categories

a distinct region, we should be able to delineate its boundaries by looking at the volume of state visits that stays in the region relative to the volume that goes out. At the high end, it is reasonable to expect about 50% or more of the state visits to take place among the five Central Asian states. At the low end, at least 25% of the total visits would have to be intra-Central Asian in order to assume that there is some sense of regional belonging. Overall, the greater the concentration of visits among the five Central Asian states, the greater the support is for model I.

Table 5.2 breaks down the total number of visits into three categories with visits involving (a) only Central Asian states, (b) a Central Asian state and its immediate neighbors, and (c) a Central Asian state and one other state not included in the first two categories. Surprisingly, the visits distribution is less biased toward the Central Asian states. While some Central Asia bias is expected since the visits data are restricted to Central Asian participation as either visitor or visited, the outcome, nevertheless, suggests that there are fewer intra-Central Asian visits taking place than one might expect. The intra-Central Asian visits constituted less than 10% in the first two decades (dipping to a dismal 6% during the second decade). These numbers do not exactly scream "highly interactive regional subsystem." That said, the data for the third decade suggest that the intra-Central Asian interaction is expanding (accounting for 14.6% of the total visits). It will be interesting to see if the upward momentum of the third decade persists into the future. One could argue that thirty years is perhaps not long enough for a highly interactive subsystem to emerge.[18] Nevertheless, table 5.2 suggests that a pattern of interstate interaction among the five

[18] One of the most highly interactive subsystems in the world today is arguably the European Union (formerly renamed as the EU in 1993), but it began as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) back in the 1950s. The original member states of what came to be known as the European Community (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany) grew in size to include twenty-one new members. From the establishment of the ECSC in 1951–2021, the EU subsystem had seventy years to develop into a highly interactive region. Perhaps, the Central Asian subsystem needs more time to develop as did the EU.

Central Asian states is low and therefore there is weak support for model I, at least for now.

Perhaps more indicative of the weakness of the Central Asian region is the presence of an overwhelming support in favor of the neighbors. In each ten-year period, interaction with the neighbors captures at least a third of the total network visits, with the second decade (2002–2011) capturing 41%. This is particularly significant considering there are only four countries that share a land border with the Central Asian states (namely, Russia, China, Iran, and Afghanistan). If a highly interactive subsystem refers to a relatively regular and intense pattern of interactions among proximate states, then the Central Asian subsystem would have to be defined more broadly. What the visit patterns suggest is that any delineation of subsystemic boundaries of Central Asia cannot ignore the neighbors, particularly Russia and China. By the same token, the existence of two major powers in the region may partly explain the low intra-Central Asian interaction levels by constraining the development of a regional subsystem.

However, not all of the 34 actors active in the region are of equal subsystemic significance. By distinguishing among the actors on the basis of relative involvement within the subsystemic network we can separate the core from the periphery members. As summarized in Table 5.3, three groups of states are distinguished according to the extent of each state's participation in the Central Asian subsystemic network. The subsystemic *core* consists of those states which are involved in 10% or more of the total network visits. The subsystemic *periphery* is composed of those states with at least 5% but less than 10% of total visit points. The third group, the subsystemic *fringe*, includes those states which constitute less than 5% of the total visit points.

The proportional divisions in Table 5.3 reflect the volume of interaction. They also indicate that relative involvement within the region is characterized by some fluctuation. All five of the Central Asian states plus Russia are consistent members of the core with China briefly joining the club during the second decade (2002–2011). Among the core group, Kazakhstan remains consistently the most interactive state over the 30-year period accounting for 33%, 37% and 29% of all visits in each decade, respectively.

Turkmenistan remained relatively interactive in the region despite its deliberate attempt to stay out of any regional endeavors, predicated on its neutrality status and even after its self-imposed isolation, which Ashgabat adopted after the alleged assassination attempt on the President Niyazov's life in 2002. Its position in the subsystemic core would be an empirical puzzle had it not been for Turkmenistan's colossal reserves of oil and natural gas, which have generated a few visits to and from the outside world.

Russia's membership in the subsystemic core is probably the easiest to explain. Its share of visit points accounted for 19% and 21% in the first two decades, respectively, before dipping down to 12% in the third decade. Given the interconnected nature of the Soviet Union, all the former republics were dependent on Moscow politically, economically, and militarily. For example, in the period between 1920 and 1991, Moscow made policy decisions in these areas in ways that kept the republics

Table 5.3 Core, periphery, and fringe states in the Central Asian visits network, 1992–2021

	(1992–2001) (% of total visit points)	(2002–2011) (% of total visit points)	(2012–2021) (% of total visit points)
Core (10% +)	Kazakhstan (33%)	Kazakhstan (37%)	Kazakhstan (29%)
	Uzbekistan (23%)	Russia (21%)	Uzbekistan (24%)
	Russia (19%)	Kyrgyzstan (19%)	Kyrgyzstan (24%)
	Turkmenistan (18%)	Tajikistan (19%)	Turkmenistan (20%)
	Kyrgyzstan (18%)	Uzbekistan (17%)	Tajikistan (17%)
	Tajikistan (16%)	Turkmenistan (14%)	Russia (12%)
		China (10%)	
Periphery (5–9%)	Iran (9.8%)	Iran (7%)	China (8%)
	Turkey (9.7%)	Turkey (7%)	Turkey (6%)
	China (6%)		Iran (5.5%)
Fringe (1–4%)	United States (4%)	United States (4%)	India (3%)
	Ukraine (4%)	Ukraine (4%)	Azerbaijan (3%)
	Pakistan (3.5%)	Afghanistan (3%)	Afghanistan (3%)
	India (3%)	India (2%)	Pakistan (3%)
	Germany (2%)	Azerbaijan (2%)	UAE (3%)
	Azerbaijan	South Korea (2%)	United States (2.6%)
	Afghanistan	France (2%)	Belarus (2.5%)
	France	Pakistan (2%)	South Korea (2.5%)
	Georgia	Germany	Armenia (2%)
	Belarus	Poland	Germany
	Israel	Belarus	Japan
	United Kingdom	Japan	Qatar
	Armenia	Georgia	Saudi Arabia
	Japan	Malaysia	Ukraine
	Czech Republic	Egypt	Georgia
	Egypt	Armenia	Hungary
	Lithuania		Malaysia
			Latvia
			France
	26 states	25 states	28 states

dependent on Russia. Moreover, foreign affairs with adjoining states were always the exclusive domain of Moscow. As such, none of the Central Asian states maintained representation abroad during the Soviet period. Shared borders between the republics were managed. The Soviet government also did not permit direct trade relations between the Central Asian states and their non-Soviet neighbors (Webber 1996). Control of energy supplies was and remains an effective sphere of Russian

dominance in Central Asia, whose landlocked geography keeps the states reliant on Russian infrastructure for transit routes. It is therefore not all surprising that in the first years of independence, Russia used its control of the Soviet era oil and gas pipeline system to seek concessions from energy rich Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, thereby maintaining its monopoly through most of the post-Soviet period. Russia also maintains its influence in the region by strengthening its military presence especially in the aftermath of 9/11 when it established military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan where they continue to operate to this day (Olcott 2005).

Apart from the Central Asian core states, of equal interest is the information supplied by table 5.3 on the composition of the periphery and fringe states. Only three states constitute the region's periphery: China, Iran, and Turkey. In addition to Russia, China is another great power whose involvement in the region is fairly easy to explain. Its initial peripheral position (it accounted for only 6% of the total visit points in the 1990s) nearly doubled by the turn of the century but then lessened its centrality in the most recent decade (2012–2021). Sharing borders with three of the Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), China's interest and delayed involvement in the region was shaped mainly by two considerations: security threat and energy. Despite new security threats from its own Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang, China was slow to assert its national interests in Central Asia during the first decade after the Soviet dissolution. As long as the Central Asian states lay within Russia's sphere of influence, China did not feel the need to compete for regional dominance. Even several disputed border issues between China and Kyrgyzstan were resolved peacefully. While intergovernmental visits were exchanged at the high official levels with Central Asian presidents and foreign ministers visiting Beijing and their visits reciprocated by Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng in the early 1990s, all these visits were regarded more as a publicity effort than a formation of close cooperative relationship between these states (Olcott 2005). Not until the creation of a security organization—the Shanghai Fivein 1996 that Beijing was able to exert its influence in the region alongside Russia. The 1997 bombings in Xinjiang solidified China's foothold in the region based on the fear that in seeking greater autonomy from Beijing the Uighur population might find sympathizers among its Turkophone Muslim neighbors in Central Asia. In the 2000s, China began intensifying its security and economic engagement in Central Asia with "the driving priority of modernizing and stabilizing the restive western province of Xinjiang and the surrounding Central Asian region" (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017, 169). Beijing wasted no time in increasing its influence in the region through the Shanghai Five, which with the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001 was renamed to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). China also began to court its Central Asian neighbors through various attractive economic aid packages designed to develop the region's energy sector. Increased Chinese influence in Central Asia meant that (a) the Central Asian states would gain a new transportation route that would bypass Russia; (b) China would tap into a new source of energy to satisfy its insatiable domestic demand; and consequently (c) new allies in Central Asia would be less inclined to support Xinjiang's demand for autonomy.

Of the peripheral regional actors, Iran's membership in the regional network starts out strong accounting for almost 10% of the region's total visit points in the 1990s but declines in the subsequent decades to 7% in the 2002–2011 period and then to 5% in the last decade. The conventional view is that Iran's high hopes of becoming a major player in Central Asian states' international relations have been largely unrealized (Roy 2000; Olcott 2005). Tehran views Central Asia as its natural geopolitical sphere of influence, yet the ideological nature of the Iran's theocratic regime has disadvantaged its relations with its secular neighbors to the north. In the first years following the Soviet collapse, Iranian officials relied on rhetoric of historical and cultural affinity to advance their economic and geopolitical interests in the region. It hosted numerous multilateral meetings with the Central Asian leaders. Yet it managed to develop a close relationship with only two of the Central Asian states. Its relationship with Tajikistan is bound by cultural and linguistic affinities. The evolution of Iran's relations with Turkmenistan has its roots in mutual interests in the energy sector. Iran offers the most direct outlet for Turkmenistan's landlocked natural gas resources. However, Tehran's efforts of serving as a transit route for Central Asian energy resources were stifled by the late-1990s due to US policy toward Iran, which denied to Central Asia the least expensive pipeline route. This is arguably a reason for Iran's position in the Central Asian region's periphery. However, Iran has no inclination of reducing its influence in the region anytime soon.

Turkey is another mid-level power in the region whose visit patterns places it solidly in the Central Asian regional periphery all throughout the three decades, accounting for nearly 10% of the region's total visit points immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and then dipping down to 6% by the turn of the century and staying there in the most recent decade. Like Iran, Turkey viewed the newly independent post-Soviet states in Central Asia as offering great opportunities for expanding its geopolitical influence on the basis of historical and cultural heritage. For Turkey, under president Turguz Ozal partnering with the newly independent states presented new opportunities for extending Ankara's influence. In the 1990s, Ozal gathered the leaders of the new Turkic states for a series of summit meetings both at home and in Central Asia. The first such meeting was held in Ankara in 1992 after which Ozal made a well-publicized trip to the region in 1993. After Ozal's death, President Suleiman Demirel continued the initiative, holding summits in 1994, 1995, and 1996 and traveling to the region in 1996 (Olcott 2005).

For Central Asian leaders, Turkey's secular model of development was particularly attractive, and they welcomed Ankara's advances to the region with open arms. This sort of thinking was mutual in the early 1990s with the Turkish politicians "attracted to the romantic image of a Pan-Turkic commonwealth of nations, an embracing of the 'Turkic' peoples of CA" (Allison 2001). Ankara wasted no time in dispatching Turkish delegations to the region, among other things, offering scholarships to Central Asian students, extending technical and financial support for replacing the Cyrillic alphabet with Latin, making Turkish media television programs available at preferential rates, and offering expertise in modernizing infrastructure (Anderson 1997; Olcott 2005). Nonetheless, as the 1990s advanced, the Central Asian leaders realized Ankara's limitations as a regional power and turned their attention

to more influential powers such as the United States and the EU. Moreover, Russian policymakers played a major role in putting considerable pressure both on the Central Asian states to keep a balanced policy toward Turkey and on Ankara to loosen its pursuit of regional dominance. Turkey was sensitive to Russian concerns because despite its cultural links with the Central Asian states, its trade relations with Russia was much more significant (Olcott 2005). Besides Russia, two additional regional powers, namely, China and Iran, were successful in thwarting Ankara's aspirations to expand pan-Turkism into the region. But that may be changing, according to one analyst, who says two recent developments may be turning the tide in Turkey's favor (Hedlund 2021):

> One is Turkey's deepening alliance with Azerbaijan. The latter's rout of Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh war last year opened new opportunities for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to project geopolitical influence into Central Asia. Turkey's robust military support for the Azeri offensive was a decisive factor. Now, Yerevan must accept a corridor across its territory, from the southern part of Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan, an Azeri exclave landlocked between Armenia and Iran. The route gives Turkey a clear path to the Caspian Sea, allowing Ankara to break free from dependence on Iran and mount a more forceful challenge to Russia.

These developments have the potential to vault Turkey to Central Asia's subsystemic core at some point in this decade. Of course, this is contingent on how much the Central Asian states try to distance themselves from Russia's sphere of influence. Until then, Turkey's visits to and from Central Asia remain firmly rooted in the region's periphery.

In the aggregate, the fringe consists of several European states, a South Asian wing (Afghanistan, India and Pakistan), a Middle Eastern wing (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Israel), an East Asian wing (South Korea and Japan), and the United States. The less than five percent participation threshold for fringe status usually means that a fringe member interacts with only a few members of the core. In general, fringe connections to the larger subsystem are tenuous, owing to their outlying geographical positions and to the ups and downs of specific bilateral relationships (Thompson 1981a).

Table 5.4 summarizes the relative positioning of the five Central Asian states within the subsystemic core, which, except for Kazakhstan, is less than constant. Based on their participation in the visits network, Kazakhstan with a population of

Table 5.4 Relative positioning of the Central Asian states within the region, 1992–2021

1992–2001		2002–2011		2012–2021	
	% of Visits		% of Visits		% of Visits
Kazakhstan	33.1%	Kazakhstan	37.4%	Kazakhstan	29.2%
Uzbekistan	22.6%	Kyrgyzstan	19.4%	Uzbekistan	23.8%
Turkmenistan	18.4%	Tajikistan	19.0%	Kyrgyzstan	23.7%
Kyrgyzstan	17.7%	Uzbekistan	16.7%	Turkmenistan	20.1%
Tajikistan	16.3%	Turkmenistan	14.1%	Tajikistan	17.3%

over 18 million[19] is clearly the most interactive state among the five states dominating each decade with a share of at least one-third of the region's total visits distribution. Surprisingly, Uzbekistan, with a population nearly twice the size of its northern neighbor (34 million) was less successful in achieving leadership status, although it does remain in second place in two of the three decades examined. Despite being the most populated country to the south of Russia, self-sufficient in energy and gold, and the world's sixth leading producer of cotton, Uzbekistan's share of visit distributions was at best 20% less (in the most recent decade) and at worst over half the size of Kazakhstan (in the second decade). In thirty years of interstate relations, Uzbekistan accounted for between 17 and 24% of the total visit distributions, placing it in the regional pecking order even lower than its resource-poor neighbors to the west (Kyrgyzstan) and to the south (Tajikistan) during the second decade. To the extent that this is indicated by participation in the visit network, regional leadership remained a distant reality for Uzbekistan under President Karimov's 27-year rule during which the country's borders remained relatively closed to international trade and visits.

With the death of Karimov in 2016, the country seems to be going through its version of "Uzbek Spring" under its reform-oriented new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev (Sobhani 2018). Unlike his predecessor, he seems to have a more active foreign policy. And according to one recent enthusiastic report, the reform-oriented president has reduced forced labor, closed the country's most notorious prison camp, and ended its Soviet era planning in the all-important cotton industry (*The Economist* Oct 23, 2021). According to a Freedom House report, a year after Mirziyoyev's rise to the top leadership position, he began to dismantle his predecessor's policies most notably in the foreign policy area with Uzbekistan "significantly improv[ing] relations with neighboring states" (Nishanov 2017). Figure 5.1 summarizes Uzbekistan's history of visits in the decades following independence. Sure enough, there is an impressive hike in visit points in the five-year period following the leadership change in 2016 with the most visit points recorded in 2019 in all of Uzbekistan's post-Soviet history. The steep drop in 2020 is clearly covid-related with Central Asian states suspending all travels abroad as well as restricting domestic movement of people.

As one regional observer put it:

> Among his first steps, Mirziyoyev sought to repair relations with Uzbekistan's neighbors. With multiple trips to Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, Mirziyoyev demonstrated Uzbekistan's desire to cooperate on regional issues long ignored by Karimov. The reopening of the borders and more cordial and friendly intraregional relations have allowed Uzbek citizens to visit their families and trade with the neighboring countries. While under Karimov transport links with neighboring nations were limited, the Mirziyoyev government moved fast to establish new train and plane routes to these countries (Nishanov 2017).

[19] The population numbers for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are taken from the World Bank's 2020 assessment.

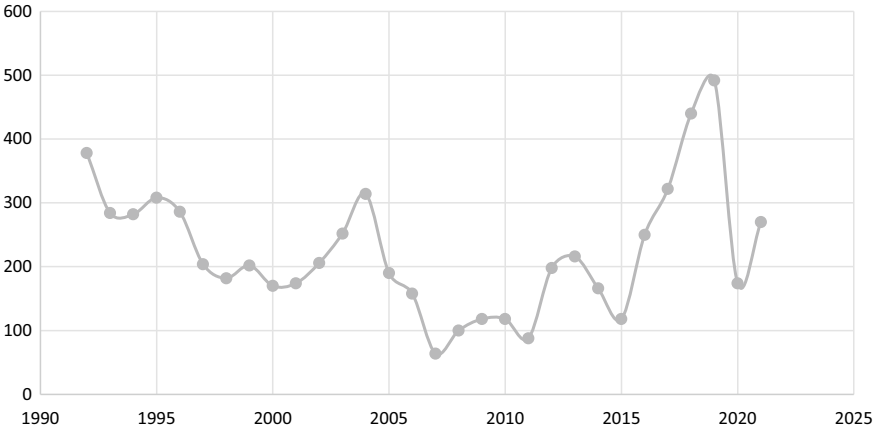

Fig. 5.1 Uzbekistan's annual visit points, 1992–2021

5.5.2 Fragmented Regional Subsystem (Model II)

In the absence of a highly interactive regional subsystem, we need to reexamine the visits data for possible existence of several smaller-scale local subsystems. One way to test this model is to examine each Central Asian state's visit share with its adjacent neighbors relative to that of geographically distant states. The assumption here is that if the Central Asian states are interacting mainly with immediate neighbors, they are likely engaged in smaller local subsystems rather than a highly interactive regional subsystem. Table 5.5 summarizes the visits data on the basis of each Central Asian

Table 5.5 Fragmented subsystems model (visits points/percent)

	1992–2001		2002–2011		2012–2021	
	Neighbors	*World*	*Neighbors*	*World*	*Neighbors*	*World*
Kazakhstan	1184	2426	1336	2267	1236	2004
	(33%)*	(67%)	(37%)	(63%)	(38%)	(62%)
Kyrgyzstan	548	1384	458	1412	938	1692
	(28%)	(72%)	(25%)	(75%)	(36%)	(64%)
Tajikistan	440	1340	418	1414	528	1394
	(25%)	(75%)	(23%)	(77%)	(27%)	(72%)
Turkmenistan	586	1422	286	1074	598	1636
	(29%)	(71%)	(21%)	(79%)	(27%)	(73%)
Uzbekistan	536	1934	278	1330	814	1832
	(22%)	(78%)	(17%)	(83%)	(31%)	(69%)

*The numbers in parentheses reflect the share of visits distribution for each country

Table 5.6 Uzbekistan's visit patterns with its neighbors, 1992–2021 (visit points)

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Intra-Central Asian	Total Visit Points
1992–2001	132	126	180	58	496 (20%)	2470
2002–2011	64	70	20	48	202 (13%)	1608
2012–2021	194	206	150	196	746 (28%)	2646

state's visit history with its neighbors relative to everybody else over the past three decades.

Overall, in all cases, interaction with immediate neighbors was offset by an overwhelming interaction with non-neighbors (Table 5.5). The 33% representing Kazakhstan's interaction with neighbors in the first period rose to 37% by the second period and 38% in the third period. This pattern is not surprising considering that two of Kazakhstan's neighbors are Russia and China. Of Kazakhstan's five neighbors, Russia alone captured more than half of the total visit points (approx. 57%). Other Central Asian states tended to interact with adjacent neighbors roughly a third of the time (somewhere between 22 and 29%). Uzbekistan in the second period was an exception interacting with neighbors only 17% of the time. Tashkent's isolationist policy under President Karimov explains much of the visit patterns.

Another way to check for the presence of a fragmented subsystem in the region is to start with the most centrally located Central Asian state and to examine its relations with neighbors. Uzbekistan is the only country which shares a land border with all other Central Asian states. According to the fragmented subsystem model, Uzbekistan is expected to interact more with the four Central Asian states than with non-neighbors. Yet according to the visit patterns summarized in Table 5.6, the volume of state visits to or from Uzbekistan was not concentrated between Uzbekistan and its littoral neighbors. In fact, Uzbekistan's interactions with its neighbors were relatively small compared to its interactions with distant states. Out of Uzbekistan's 2470 total visit points in the first period, its share with immediate neighbors accounted for only 20% of the total interaction. Then it dips significantly to 13% in the second period before going up to 28% by the third period. The decreased interaction during the second decade was largely due to Uzbekistan's stance to remain uncommitted to any regional frameworks. Chilled relations with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan also contributed to the decline in visits during this time period. This is also the time period in which the Turkmen president accused Uzbekistan of aiding in the assassination attempt against Turkmen president Niyazov's life.

Uzbekistan's visit patterns provide some support for the Dominguez model. While its relations with adjacent neighbors were limited during most of the 30-year post-Soviet period, Uzbekistan managed to interact with its neighbors on average about 21% of the time in any given decade. Overall, in none of the three periods examined

can the relative activity with neighbors be considered sufficiently significant for the presence of relatively autonomous local subsystems within a larger regional subsystem. Even Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which have a tendency to interact with their adjacent neighbors more than might otherwise be expected, can hardly be called the hub of a separate subsystem containing China, Russia, and Iran. It is more likely that Kazakhstan (and to some extent Kyrgyzstan) is operating in a Russia-dominated subsystem, while Turkmenistan seems to be operating in and out of the Iranian subsystem.

5.5.3 Russia-centered Subsystem (Model III)

The visits data have so far revealed that a highly interactive subsystem (model I) consisting only of the five Central Asian states does not yet exist. As long as Russia, China, and to some extent Iran, continue to play prominent roles in the international relations of these states, an autonomous subsystem is not likely to emerge in Central Asia any time soon. The visits data have also revealed that except for Uzbekistan, several pockets of smaller subsystems (model II) do not adequately characterize the current structure of interstate relations in Central Asia either. While local issues continued to dominate the foreign policies of the Central Asian states, they have consistently sought relatively distant actors to resolve such issues.

Cooley's Russia-centric approach (model III) assumes that Moscow's interaction with the Central Asian states should remain relatively high in the post-Soviet period. By examining the Central Asian network of intergovernmental visits, we should be able to discern whether Russia continues to be more salient to the Central Asian states than the other actors in the region. Additionally, by looking at the visit distributions between Russia and the Central Asian states individually will help distinguish whether the structure of regional interactions is entirely Russia-centered or partially so, with some states being more Russia-centric than others.

Table 5.7 summarizes the political importance of Russia for the Central Asian states. Based on information supplied by Table 5.7, it is clear that Russia held a prominent position in Central Asian international politics although its influenced has waned in the third decade. When viewed together, Russia's interaction with the Central Asian states accounted for 19 and 21% in the first two decades, respectively.

Table 5.7 Political importance of Russia and other regional powers (visit points/percent)

	1992–2001		2002–2011		2012–2021	
	Visits	%	Visits	%	Visits	%
Russia	2034	19	2008	21	1304	12
China	646	6	960	10	850	8
Iran	1054	10	608	6	634	6
Turkey	1066	10	654	7	602	5

Except for the third period, visits to and from Russia dominated the network of intergovernmental visits compared to other regional powers.

The nature of regional interactions changed in Russia's favor by the mid-1990s, as the Central Asian states began to realize that ties to Russia could not be broken overnight. Russia alone was able to capture more than one-fifth of all Central Asian interstate visits. In the absence of concrete thresholds for what constitutes "centrism" (i.e., what makes a state a high foreign policy priority for the Central Asian states) one can argue that 19%, or 21%, is more "centric-like" than let's say 10%. At the aggregate level, then, when the visits of all the Central Asian states to and from Russia are examined together, Russia emerges as the most active participant in the region's international relations.

Whether all five Central Asian states are equally Russia-centered is an empirical question which requires the disaggregation of the visits data. Russia-oriented tendencies, in other words, must be examined on a country-by-country basis in each ten-year period. Table 5.8 breaks down the visit points by the most interactive dyads. A quick visual inspection makes it clear that the four out of five Central Asian states Russia-oriented. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and for the most part Tajikistan displayed Russia-centric tendencies throughout the three periods. The visit distributions of Turkmenistan were more oriented toward Iran rather than Russia.

For Tajikistan, Russia was unequivocally the most important partner during the decade immediately following the Soviet collapse. Russia alone accounted for 30% of all the visits to or from Tajikistan that decade. No other country came close to replacing Russia's dominance. Iran as the second most active partner captured only a third of Russia's share of total visits. Russia's prominence in Tajikistan during the 1990s could be attributed to the civil war which erupted in 1992 and lasted until a peace settlement was reached in 1997. During this period, Russia was highly instrumental in mediating the peace settlement between the warring factions. During the second decade, Russia maintained its lead position with 19% of the total visit points but managed to slip to second place (after Kyrgyzstan) in the third decade. Nevertheless, long after the civil war ended, Moscow continues to maintain a significant military presence in Tajikistan with an estimated 7,000 troops. The contract for Russia's 201st Military Base in Tajikistan (formerly known as the 201st Motorized Rifle Division), previously set to expire in 2014, was extended to 2042 in 2013 (Putz 2021). Its objective is to protect the Tajik-Afghan border and to prevent extremist Islamic groups from Afghanistan seeking a safe haven in the mountains of Tajikistan.

Russia was similarly significant for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For Kyrgyzstan, Russia was the most important partner accounting for 16, 22, and 13% of Kyrgyzstan's total visits in each period, respectively. As the least militarized of the Central Asian states and apprehensive about its larger neighbors' military might, Kyrgyzstan had little choice but to rely on Russia for protection. Kazakhstan's visit orientations also remained disproportionately Russia-centered. In each period following Kazakhstan's independence, visits to and from Russia account for 19, 24 and 12% of Kazakhstan's total visits, respectively. This interaction can be explained by at least three factors. First, Kazakhstan shares a 1,500-mile border with Russia, which means that Kazakhstan naturally had to maintain close ties with Russia.

Table 5.8 Top Interactive dyads by visit distributions, 1992–2021 (percent)

	1992–2001	% of visits	2002–2011	% of visits	2012–2021	% of visits
Kazakhstan						
	Russia	19	Russia	22	Russia	12
	Turkey	8	China	9	Kyrgyzstan	10
	China	6	Turkey	6	China	8
	Iran	5	Kyrgyzstan	4	Uzbekistan	6
	USA	5	USA	4	Turkey	5
Kyrgyzstan						
	Russia	16	Russia	22	Russia	13
	Turkey	10	Turkey	10	Kazakhstan	12
	China	9	China	9	China	8
	Kazakhstan	8	Kazakhstan	9	Uzbekistan	8
	Uzbekistan	7	USA	8	Tajikistan	7
Tajikistan						
	Russia	30	Russia	19	Kyrgyzstan	10
	Iran	11	Iran	15	Russia	9
	Uzbekistan	9	China	10	Iran	8
	Kyrgyzstan	5	Afghanistan	9	Uzbekistan	8
	China	4	France	4	Pakistan	6
Turkmenistan						
	Iran	24	Russia	16	Iran	9
	Turkey	15	Iran	10	Uzbekistan	9
	Russia	11	Turkey	9	Turkey	7
	Pakistan	5	China	9	Afghanistan	6
	Ukraine	5	Ukraine	8	Pakistan	6
Uzbekistan						
	Russia	11	Russia	14	Russia	13
	Turkey	8	China	12	Kyrgyzstan	9
	Tajikistan	7	Afghanistan	5	China	9
	Kazakhstan	5	Ukraine	5	Turkmenistan	9
	Kyrgyzstan	5	South Korea	5	Kazakhstan	9

Second, due to its sizable Russian population (approximately 30%), Kazakhstan was the only Soviet successor state where the titular nationality made up less than half the population. To prevent a massive exodus of Russians, Kazakhstan remained on good terms with its northern neighbor. Third, Kazakhstan heavily depends on Russia for transportation of its massive crude oil reserves to the open seas.

Uzbekistan, too, interacted more with Russia than any other state in the post-Soviet period. Tashkent began the first years of independence Russia-oriented, with Moscow accounting for 11% of Uzbekistan's total visits. Russia gained more significance in the subsequent decades with its share increasing to 14 and 13% respectively.

For Turkmenistan, regional powers other than Russia (namely, Iran and to some degree Turkey) were more important for most of its post-Soviet existence. In the first time period, 24% of Turkmenistan's interactions occurred just across the border with Iran, compared to its 11% visits with Russia. While Russia does manage to topple Iran from its leading position by the turn of the century, its lead remains short-lived with the resurgence of Iran by the third decade. Russia by the third decade does not even make up the top five most interactive states in Turkmenistan's visits network. Both Iran and Turkmenistan have an economic reason to interact more with each other than other dyads. Landlocked Turkmenistan has large reserves of fossil fuels while Iran has the infrastructure to transport those resources to the world market more cost-effectively. It is therefore not surprising that Turkmenistan's relationship with Iran remained significant throughout the three periods.

In short, the visits data as summarized in Table 5.8 suggests that Russia was the most interactive partner for four out of five Central Asian states, dominating international relations in the region. Thus, we can conclude that the data provide strong support for the presence of model III.

5.6 Concluding Thoughts

Two objectives were pursued in this chapter. First, the delineation of the Central Asian subsystemic boundaries was treated as an empirical question. Rather than assuming that the Central Asian borders stop with the five Central Asian states, original data were collected over a 30-year period to identify the main actors involved in the region based on interstate interaction. As a result, 34 actors emerged and their intergovernmental visits were analyzed for the 1992–2021 period. Second, patterns of visit distribution were examined in relation to the three models with a focus on the degree of fit for each. The visit patterns revealed several insights about the post-Soviet Central Asian regional interaction.

Model I: Highly Interactive Subsystem: Based on the visits data and drawing on the definitional components of the regional subsystem model, we can reasonably conclude that 30 years after gaining independence from the Soviet Union, the five Central Asian states have not yet evolved into a highly interactive regional subsystem. A semblance of a regional subsystem emerges only when intra-Central Asian visits are viewed in conjunction with the visits to and from their influential neighbors. A substantial portion of the interaction took place between the five Central Asian states and their geographically proximate neighbors. Four major powers in the region, Russia, China, Iran, and Turkey continue to exert significant influence in

the Central Asian states' international relations. Since more than half of the total intergovernmental visits took place between the five Central Asian states and their largest neighbors, any attempt to delineate subsystemic boundaries of Central Asia has to include at the very minimum Russia and China. While no analyses of regional delineations of Central Asian can ignore Russia and China, the existence of the two major powers in the region is arguably the reason for the lack of high interaction among the five Central Asian states.

Model II: Fragmented Subsystem: The visits data also revealed that several pockets of smaller subsystems do not accurately characterize the Central Asian region. In the post-Soviet period, except for Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the CA states are not dealing with immediate neighbors as much as model II might expect. While local issues continue to dominate the foreign policies of the Central Asian states they have consistently sought relatively distant actors with whom to interact. In the cases of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, it is more likely they are operating in the Russian and Iranian subsystems, respectively. However, since the data are limited to the Central Asian perspective as either visitor or visited, this conclusion remains less than robust.

Model III: Russia-Centered Subsystem: Of the three models, the visits data provided the most support for the Moscow-centric model. While this finding ends up reaffirming what most of the Central Asianists probably already intuitively knew–that a Moscow-centric system of interactions still obtains in the region[20] - this study's contribution to the existing knowledge on the subject is its attempt to quantify this phenomenon. However, the findings reveal one important caveat: not all five Central Asian states were equally Russia-oriented during the period examined. Turkmenistan was the only state that turned toward Iran that Russia. Curiously, the states that initially tried to move away from Russian hegemony appear to be unevenly moving back to that model. Is this a triumph of geography or destiny of neighborhood? Much seems to depend on the location of the Central Asian states at the cockpit of geopolitical struggle among the larger regional neighbors, and who can offer them the most political security and economic benefits. As long as Moscow continues to intervene in the international affairs of the Central Asian states through economic and military aid in a manner consistent with its perceived interests, these states are not likely to evolve into an autonomous region capable of sustaining itself in the near future. The decision by the Kyrgyz government to evict US forces from its Manas air base—a key post for the reinforcement and supply of the US military in its war in Afghanistan—is an example of how Russia's influence over Kyrgyzstan can shape the latter's relations with the outside world.

[20] Moscow-centrism is particularly evident in the type of television channels people are watching in the region. It is often the Russian channels such as ORT, RTR and NTV, that people are watching, not Iranian or Indian television.

In short, on the basis of the visits data, the international relations of the Central Asian states seem to have consolidated over the past thirty years. It is important to note that while conclusions provided by visits data alone are likely to be preliminary, they have provided an initial look at the structure of international relations in Central Asia. Combining the visits data with more research tracking and quantifying non-governmental patterns of interaction (such as economic interactions between non-governmental sectors) will surely give us a richer tableau of interstate interactions. For example, even though Uzbekistan has, for all intents and purposes, closed itself off to many of its neighbors, there is still vibrant trade—both legal and illegal—along its borders with almost all of its neighbors (Turkmenistan being the exception). However, such interactions are notoriously difficult to quantify due to the secrecy surrounding such transactions. And until we find a way to measure such informal interactions with reliable data, we can at least look at formal interactions as an initial step to identifying regional boundaries with adequate empirical justifications. Without such justifications, we are left with findings that are not comparable across studies and our knowledge of regional politics remains non-cumulative. Finally, without a concrete grasp of the general patterns of interstate interaction we are unlikely to be able to predict, let alone prevent, sources of future conflict in this volatile yet strategically significant region of the world.

Is Central Asia's emerging structure likely to be reproduced in other regions, one might ask? That remains an empirical question. We really do not know all that much about regional structures. Based on the data examined, there is likely to be considerable uniqueness to each subsystem, as opposed to a standard model. And that we do not know enough about how much distinctiveness there is to be able to proceed with comparison. Yet how many neighborhoods have emerged from relatively recent imperial melt-down in which the imperial center has retained or revived a respectable proportion of its former strength? Two come to mind: eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The latter shares some of the attributes of Central Asia and may also share some of the same type of subsystemic structure. Eastern Europe, on the other hand, is a different kind of neighborhood with a longer past, less subordination, and stronger pulls from the West that are absent in either Central Asia or the Caucasus. Of the two, our guess is that only the Caucasus might correspond to Central Asia's structure. But, as we have noted, that remains an empirical question.

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Chapter 6
The Strength of Nations: Constrained Indicators and the Salience of Asymmetry in Conflict Relationships

6.1 Introduction

Like a tsunami, the four years of the Trump administration caused incredible disruptions both in domestic and international politics. And unsurprisingly, it had challenged IR scholars to rethink their approaches to studying the relationships between states. Although the administration focused on "America first" and emphasized strengthening the state in its external relationships, between extensive personnel turnover and through the weakening of critical institutions in the name of "draining the swamp", it had sapped American power substantially as state institutions frayed from incessant meddling by political operatives.[1] For IR scholars the Trump administration's actions should serve as a compelling reminder that beyond the size of a state's economy and the amount it spends on its military, the competence of its government is equally important for determining state strength and power. In this sense the lessons of the last administration cut to the heart of much of IR scholarship that centers on the utilization of state strength and power as explanations regarding interstate relations.

At the heart of international politics are varying conceptions of power and power relationships between states. Realists, structural realists, power transition theorists, hegemonic theorists, theorists of hierarchy and students of global leadership have all identified power relationship as crucial to an understanding of global politics (Kadera and Sorokin 2004, Beckley 2018), although how these relationships matter have been the subject of considerable, unresolved controversy. For example, the debate over whether or not a relative balance of power between two states is more conducive to peaceful relations than a preponderance of power on the part of one of them is still unresolved (e.g. see Bremer 1992, Gortza, Haftel, and Sweeney 1997, Gartzke 1998, Geller 2000, Lemke 2002, Lemke and Werner 1996, Moul 2003, Reed

[1] For example, see Diamond, Rein and Eilperin (2021). While the assault on American institutions was extensive, highly evident were attacks on intelligence agencies, the State Department, and the upper echelons within the Department of Defense. See McFaul (2020) for the decline in diplomatic capabilities during and before the Trump administration.

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_6

et al. 2008, Geller and Travlos 2019). The literature on rivalries has also generated unresolved issues about whether it is power equivalence or power predominance that facilitates rivalries (e.g. Vasquez 1996; Klein et al. 2006; Thompson 2001). For that matter, a perennial question of the US-USSR Cold War was which side had more power and therefore on "first base" in the rivalry. Something very similar is emerging in the ongoing US-China rivalry. At the system level, the corollary to the dyadic power preponderance question is over whether multipolar, bipolar, or unipolar power systems are more conducive for a peaceful and stable global political system.

Underlying all of these controversies are difficult questions regarding the conceptualization and measurement of power. In the quantitative literature, power is typically assessed as state capabilities (instead of the more nuanced conception of power) and typically measured in one of three ways: as economic size, as coercive capabilities, or, some combination of the two, as illustrated by the extensive and reflexive usage of the Correlates of War (COW) CINC scores.[2]

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that an appropriate assessment of state capability (what we refer to as state strength) needs to go beyond what we describe as "raw capabilities" and take into account factors that may limit or enhance the actual use of those capabilities. Doing so may then shed additional light on whether or not asymmetric power relationships are more conducive to limiting conflicts than balanced power relationships between states.

Imagine a contest between two warriors. One is very large and the other is small. Knowing nothing else we would expect the very large combatant to triumph. But what if the small combatant is more skilled in martial arts, more clever in general, or simply has access to better technology? What if the larger individual is ill, injured, or obese? The point is that we often need to look beyond raw capabilities and condition those base capabilities according to pertinent advantages and disadvantages in their employment. Toward that end, our work is organized in the following way: first, we discuss what we consider to be appropriate modifications to state capabilities; second, we apply these modifications and provide illustrations of how they change estimates of the relative strength of states and rivals, arguing that these modifications are more valid than raw capabilities; third we apply these modified measures to several aspects of conflict processes and outcomes in order to determine if using these measures creates better predictions. In fact they do appear to work better than relying on non-qualified capability information. This finding opens up a variety of possible applications, some of which are pursued in this paper, albeit briefly. We repeatedly find substantially stronger relationships between relative capability and conflict behavior when modified capability measures are employed instead of unmodified capability indices. The main implication is that if we think relative capabilities are important considerations in world politics, modified measures seem to provide more

[2] There are of course several exceptions to this generalization. One is Lee and Thompson (2018) who use a complex measure of global reach in order to differentiate between global versus regional powers. See also Beckley (2018), Carroll and Kenkel (2019), Markowitz and Fariss (2018), and Moyer et al. (2019).

and better information on their comparative significance than the "raw" indicators do. Whether that claim holds up will have to await many more applications.

6.2 State Capabilities and State Strength

State capabilities[3] are typically assessed in the literature one of three ways. One method is to calculate economic size as a measure of state capability. Typically, power transition theorists use this approach. A second approach calculates military assets, usually in the form of military spending by the state, although some calculate the size of armed forces or certain weapons capabilities (e.g. nuclear weapons or missiles). Realists and structural realists typically rely on this approach.

A third method and one that is the most often utilized in the quantitative literature[4] generates a composite CINC score, based on six dimensions of capabilities that include total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditures.[5] CINC scores seek to integrate various aspects of national economies with military capacity to generate a composite measure of state capabilities. While this is a more comprehensive approach to state capacity than either of the first two, it suffers from a serious flaw: intended to measure state capabilities across a long time frame (1816–2012), it privileges certain dimensions of state capabilities that may have been historically important, but may no longer be so in the post-World War II era.[6] As a result, CINC scores create substantial distortions from what scholars commonly believe to be extant state strength. For example, using CINC scores, China's strength surpasses that of the U.S. by 1995 (see Fig. 6.1). We know of no IR scholars who would accept this claim; in fact most scholars would argue that China remains far behind the U.S. today in terms of military capabilities, the sophistication of its economy, its ability to govern, or its technological capabilities.[7]

Nevertheless, aspects of the CINC approach do make conceptual sense for assessing state strength. We recognize that a state's economy is crucial to its strength.

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[3] We avoid the use of the term "power" in what follows; we recognize that power is far more complex a concept than either state capabilities or state strength.

[4] For example, Carroll and Kenkel (2019, p. 579) note that the overwhelming empirical international relations research in "top five journals" use CINC scores to measure capability ratios between states.

[5] See The Correlates of War Project, at: http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities.

[6] In particular, giving equal weight to the size of the population or the armed forces without qualification bestows great capability scores on states that have large populations in which most of the people engage in subsistence agrarian strategies for survival or military forces that possess a large number of under-armed and poorly trained personnel. Carroll and Kenkel (2019, p. 583) find that the best predictor of the outcome of conflicts among these dimensions is primary energy consumption, a finding which we discuss below.

[7] Even more perplexing, as Fig. 6.1 shows, the use of CINC scores would indicate that China nearly demonstrates as much strength as the US in 1982, at a time of very limited Chinese capabilities. For one critique and a possible remedy for issues with CINC scores, see Kadera and Sorokin (2004).

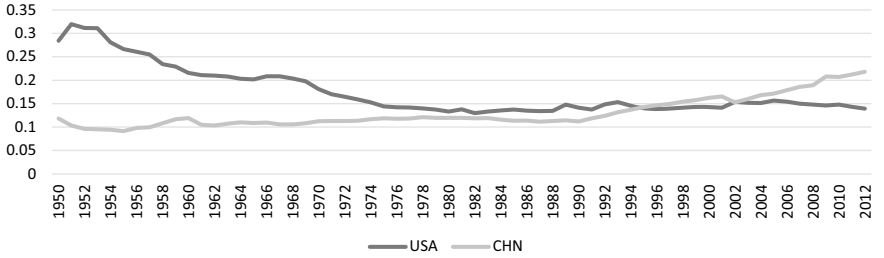

Fig. 6.1 Annual CINC scores for the U.S. and China, 1950–2012. *Source* Correlates of War

Weak economies typically do not allow policy makers to develop a strong military, a complex foreign policy infrastructure (which is quite costly),[8] or the range of non-military tools that afford policy makers a broad set of non-coercive options (such as foreign aid) with which to pursue their objectives. However, focusing only on the size of a state's economy, measured as its GDP, is also problematic as a stand-alone indicator of state strength. We believe this to be the case for two reasons. First, it represents only the bulk size of a state's economy (often reflecting the size of a state's population as well), and not the actual capabilities *available* for the state to apply to its foreign (or its domestic) policy interests and activities. Second, to measure state strength, analysts should require more extensive information about how such a raw capability might be employed or is being utilized.

In this sense our concept of state strength differs from simple state capability, such as the size of a state's economy or its military spending. Both of those involve "bulk" measures of capacity. State strength, for us, is a more complex concept. It refers to three dimensions: one is the potential availability of resources for a state to use for policy purposes. This dimension is consistent with the idea of "bulk" capacity or resources. However, state strength requires two more considerations. The second is the actual *extraction* of some of those bulk resources from the economy for policy purposes; without such extraction policy makers cannot utilize those resources for the pursuit of their policy objectives. Third, the path from extraction to utilization raises the question of waste: strength is increased by the effective and efficient utilization of resources that have been extracted from a state's economy. If substantial amounts of extracted resources are wasted or are inadequately deployed to policy objectives, state strength is diminished.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the linkages we propose between base resources and state strength. The figure also illustrates the general theoretical framework at the core of our approach. While we do not deny that dynamics external to the state (e.g., its

[8] For example, as both India and Brazil sought to dramatically increase their presence on the African continent as part of the strategy toward manifesting their "rising power" status, both states encountered major difficulties as the small size of their diplomatic infrastructure was unable to accommodate the number of ambassadorial personnel needed for the task (e.g. see Volgy and Gordell 2019). As of 2011, India's foreign ambassadorial corps was smaller than that of Singapore or New Zealand (The Economist 2011).

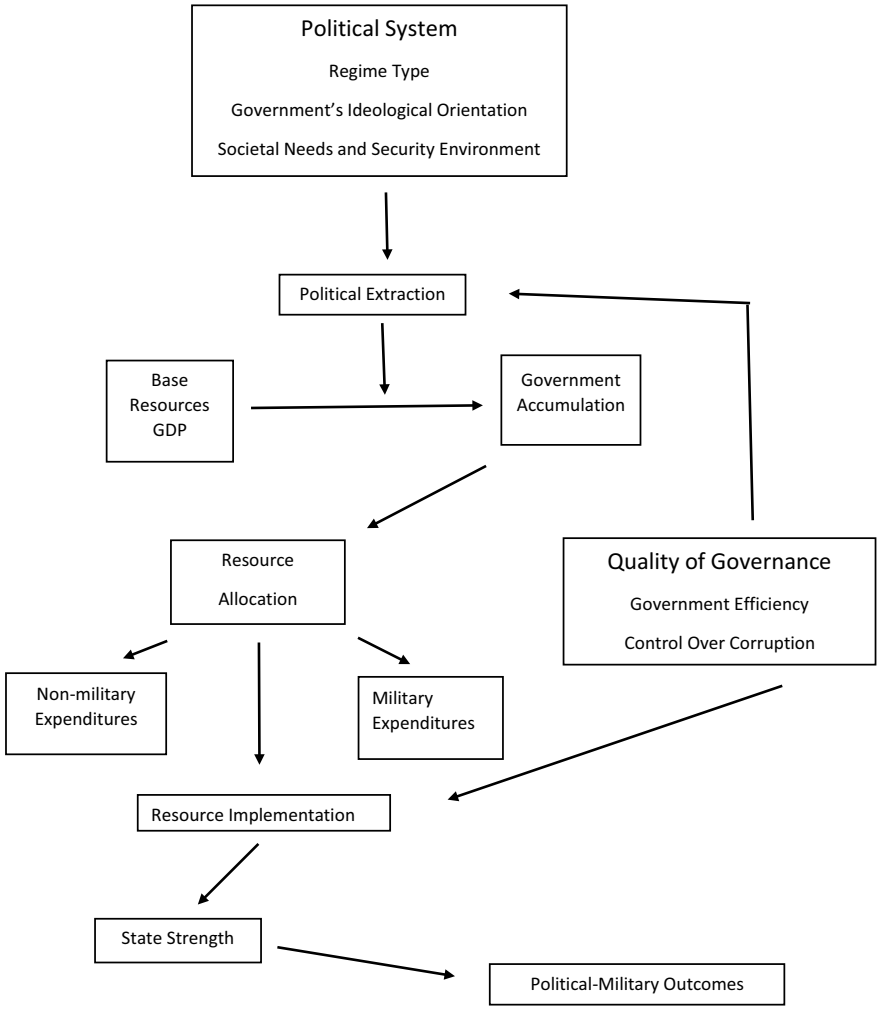

Fig. 6.2 From political system to political-military outcomes

external security environment) may impact on the willingness of state policy makers to extract resources from its economy, we suggest that the factors associated with both extraction and efficiency are critically dependent on its domestic political environment. Thus, we point to two domestic political factors[9] that need to be incorporated

[9] We are not suggesting that state strength is solely determined by factors within the state. State strength can also be enhanced externally, for example through territorial expansion (e.g. Russian take-over of Crimea, or the Chinese build-up of islands in the South China Sea), the infusion of massive amounts of military and economic aid, or alliance relationships. For a discussion of third party involvement in disputes and alliance commitments, see Joyce, Ghosn and Bayer (2013). Nevertheless, the primary sources of state strength typically lie inside the state.

into any analysis that seeks to translate state capabilities into state strength. The first is the ability and willingness of the state to ***extract*** from its base capabilities the resources needed to advance its policy interests.[10] Second, states vary extensively in their abilities to ***effectively and efficiently*** utilize the resources they extract for their policy objectives. These two factors constitute highly salient constraints or modifications on the raw capabilities indicated by the size of a state's economy.

As Fig. 6.2 illustrates, the extent to which a state is willing to extract resources from its economy depends on a variety of conditions, although a large part of the extraction process is a function of the nature of the regime, the ideological orientation of the government in power, societal demands, and the nature of competition between elites in society. In both democratic and non-democratic political systems such extraction (and tax policy in general) is a basic political process that will vary with elite political beliefs regarding resistance to extraction by citizens and powerful interest groups, elite perceptions regarding the range of issues (including security challenges) needing to be addressed by the political system,[11] and elite assumptions about the effects of extraction on future economic growth and development. The extent to which resources should be extracted from the economy has been a key source of difference between Republican[12] and Democratic administrations in the United States; similar concerns have occupied policy makers in China, Brazil, India, and the Russian Federation. As such**,** concerns about extraction vary over time across most states; a state's approach to extraction should be part of the calculus in assessing its strength.

However, even after taking into account how states differ in terms of resource extraction, the ability to efficiently and effectively utilize extracted resources should also vary substantially across states and across time. State bureaucracies (both domestic and foreign) differ from one another in terms of their efficiency in implementing policies and employing the resources at their disposal. Additionally, the extent to which a state's political system experiences substantial corruption should impact negatively on the efficient use of resources available to policy makers as they pursue their policy objectives. While we find that conventional measures[13] of bureaucratic efficiency and control over corruption are fairly highly correlated, there

[10] For this reason, some scholars use revenues rather than GDP values to assess state capacity. However valid general revenue comparisons across states are difficult to obtain over time and suffer from difficulties in estimating the extent to which centralized versus decentralized political systems are comparable on this dimension.

[11] Our analysis of the data on political extraction created by Kugler and colleagues indicates that political extraction within democracies varies by whether or not there are left-wing or right-wing governments in power, while the extent of fluctuation in extraction is also correlated with democratic versus non-democratic regimes (the extraction "band" for democracies is substantially smaller than for non-democracies; the latter operate across a far greater range of resource extraction).

[12] We note for instance that even the initially popular U.S. invasion of Iraq after 9/11 was not accompanied by the Republican U.S. administration's decision to extract substantial additional taxes from the American economy.

[13] This point is based on our analysis of the relationship between the World Bank's indices of "government effectiveness" and "control over corruption". See https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/.

is often a sufficient difference in the two measures to suggest that both of them should be included in any effort to gauge overall state strength.[14]

But why should we care about political extraction and quality of governance in assessing a state's economic strength if we have decent measures of military expenditures for states? We suggest two reasons. First, the economic strength of a state is critical for its ability to spend on its military. While numerous states may make efforts to increase their military capabilities above and beyond levels of spending that may be warranted by their economies, depending on their perceptions of security threat in their external environment, ultimately such spending is dependent on a state's economic strength, and "overspending" may have disastrous consequences, as Soviet spending in the 1980s suggests. In this sense economically strong states can also act quickly to reprioritize resources toward military objectives should the need arise. However, such reprioritization is likely also dependent on efficiency and effectiveness of the state's political system.

Second, economic strength remains important, separate from military strength since a state's strength is more than its military capacity. As Fig. 6.2 illustrates, there are a large variety of non-military objectives pursued by states, needing substantial capabilities, and those capabilities are not reflected only in military spending. For example, even though the U.S. has been the richest of states in international politics, and its military budget has dwarfed that of any other state in the international system, it has found it increasingly difficult to provide sufficient funds to guarantee the safety of its embassies around the world. More recently, since the advent of the Trump administration, it has decreased spending on a range of activities outside of the military, including its diplomatic infrastructure.[15]

Regarding military capabilities, researchers typically use military spending as the appropriate measure. This indicator, by definition, already represents the political extraction of some resources from base economic capabilities and applied for military purposes. However, what it does not reflect are issues about its efficient use by state actors. Two states may spend the same amount on their militaries, but the one with a more efficient bureaucracy (both civilian and military) is likely to generate a bigger bang for its resources, both in the production of hardware[16] and in the training of its military.

Likewise, depending on the level of corruption tolerated by the state, military spending may be wasted on non-military purposes, or, on outdated and ineffective equipment when there is substantial corruption. At its most extreme, high levels of corruption among civilian elites may even lead to the hollowing out of the military

[14] Thus, we are also assuming that quality of governance issues will impact both domestic and foreign policy in similar ways. We have found no valid and reliable longitudinal measures that address governance issues solely in the foreign policy arena.

[15] Even former U.S. Defense Secretary Gates (2020) has argued that the U.S. has lost substantial power by cutting back on its diplomatic capabilities during the Trump administration, although this pattern had started prior to that administration.

[16] As one example, Beckley (2018: 29) notes that in the conflict between Japan and China, while the Chinese may have had a sufficient number of hand grenades, 80% of them failed to explode…clearly an issue about the efficiency and effectiveness of military production in China versus Japan.

to prevent it from interfering with civilian authority,[17] including the delivery of large amounts of personal benefits to military elites who support the government, all bundled within the state's military spending. Consequently, we suggest that a fiscal spending measure of military capabilities should be integrated with measures of bureaucratic effectiveness and control over corruption in order to reflect more realistically a state's military strength.

6.3 Comparing Indicators

Our approach to state strength calculates raw capabilities and modifies them with measures of political extraction and a state's quality of governance. We modify economic bulk (GDP) with both political extraction and quality of governance and modify military spending with measures of government efficiency and control over corruption.[18] Do we generate better information about a state's strength through these manipulations? Applying these modifications (as we show below) results in assessments of state strength that produce substantially different results when comparing them to the original indicators.

We look first at measures of economic bulk (GDP) and military spending and compare them with the alternative, modified indicators. For GDP we modify the base indicator in the following manner:[19]

$$\text{Economic Strength} = \text{GDP} * \text{RPE} * (\text{Efficiency} + \text{Corruption})/2$$

RPE[20] is the difference between expected versus actual extraction of economic resources from a society's economy by the state. Efficiency is measured by the World Bank index of Government Effectiveness. Corruption is measured by the World Bank's Control over Corruption index.[21] Since military spending represents

[17] We are not the first to note these effects; see for example Chayes (2015). For an example of how states can use corruption opportunities in other states to pursue their objectives, see Zelikow et al. (2020).

[18] Note that we don't need to modify military spending with political extraction since military spending already represents one part of what the state has already extracted from its economy.

[19] Both here and for military strength we add together the two measures of Efficiency and Corruption and divide the result by two in order to obtain an average value for governmental performance, so that neither index weighs more than the other. We have no theoretical reason to weigh one dimension more so than the other.

[20] Relative political extraction refers to the extraction of resources from the economy by government, based on the difference between "expected" and actual extraction, controlling for level of development. For a discussion of the concept, measurement, and sources, see Kugler and Tammen (2012). RPE data are available at: http://transresearchconsortium.com/data For an extensive discussion and use of RPE, see Arbetman and Kugler (2018).

[21] The World Bank's index of Government Effectiveness is designed to capture perceptions of the "quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the

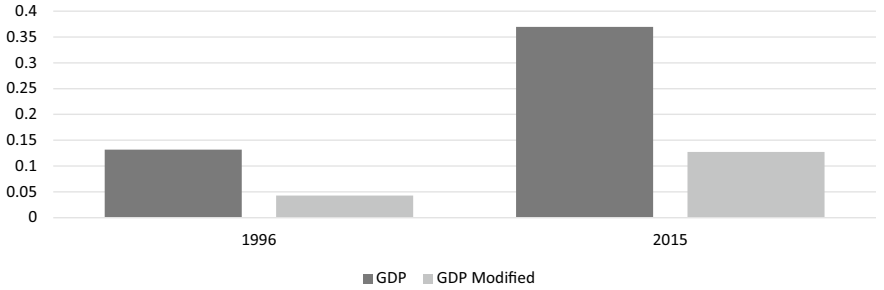

Fig. 6.3 Chinese share of China-US Dyad's GDP (in Constant US$s, and GDP modified, 1996, 2015). *Source* World Bank

resources already extracted from society, we only modify the measure by Efficiency and Corruption:

$$\text{Military Strength} = \text{Milspend} * (\text{Efficiency} + \text{Corruption})/2$$

Data are restricted to the time-frame starting in 1996 since the World Bank measures are not available for earlier periods.

In order to illustrate the different outcomes using these alternative measures, Fig. 6.3 shows the relative strength of the U.S. and China across two points in time, using base resources and the modifications placed on those resources. The base resource measure (GDP in constant 2010 dollars) indicates that Chinese GDP within the dyad grew from a bit over a 10% share in 1996 to a 37% share by 2015.[22] The modified GDP measure reflects a dramatically different picture: this indicator shows the Chinese share at around 5% in 1996, and at around 12% by 2015, or roughly only one third of the share indicated by the base resource measure.

The difference between the military expenditures indicator and the modified version shows an equally dramatic difference between the two approaches.[23] As Fig. 6.4 illustrates, US military expenditures dwarfed those of China in 1996; by 2015, the Chinese share of the dyad's military spending was at around 25%. The modified version of military spending (taking into account government efficiency and control over corruption) however, suggests a much smaller Chinese share of the dyad at around a twelve percent in 2015.

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government's commitment to such policies." Its measure of control of corruption is designed to capture "perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests." See https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Documents. For a discussion and defense of the validity of these indices, see Kaufmann et al. (2010). The World Bank data are available at: https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/.

[22] We use 2015 for these comparisons since the available RPE component of the measures cover states only through 2015.

[23] Military expenditures data are from SIPRI.

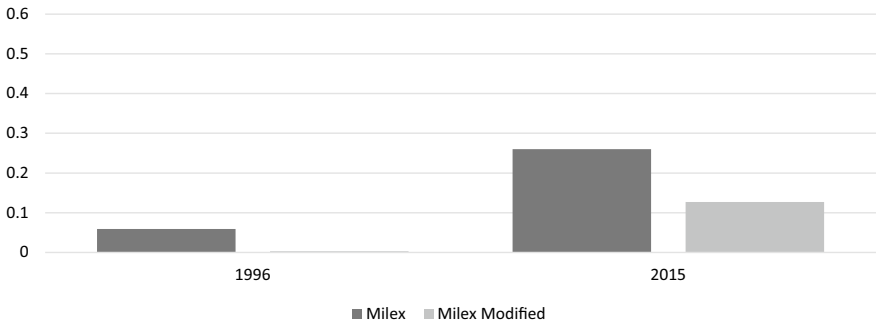

Fig. 6.4 Chinese share of China-US Dyad's military expenditures, and modified military expenditures, 1996, 2015

Does the modified version of our capabilities indicators constitute a more valid assessment of the relative strength in the Chinese-U.S. dyad? That jury is still out, although there is substantial evidence that China is both weaker and more fragile than it seems (e.g. Stephens 2019).[24] The list of concerns over China's strength include: (a) the difficulty of moving out of the "middle income trap" (World Bank 2012), reflected in its slowest growth in over a quarter century (da Costa 2019); (b) the departure of over $1.2 trillion in capital over the past decade (Harada and Manabe 2019); (c) the souring of foreign investors (Bird 2019); (d) extensive corruption especially among the elite (Barboza 2012; Jennings 2018); (e) its high profile Belt and Road Initiative mired in what Stephens describes as a "swamp of corruption, malinvestment, and bad debt" (see also Standish 2019); and (f) a ruling elite that may be substantially out of its prime.[25]

These different estimates resulting from modifications to the base measures are not restricted to major powers. We provide a second example from the ongoing rivalry in the Iranian-Israeli dyad. Figure 6.5 focuses on these states' relative economic capabilities. As the figure illustrates, raw GDP data suggests that the Iranian economy was substantially larger than that of Israel, both in 1996 and 2015 (67 and 63% shares of the dyad, respectively). However, the modified GDP measure indicates that Iranian GDP was roughly the equivalent of Israel's in 1996, and by 2015 was only 40% of the dyad's.

Figure 6.6 indicates shares of Iranian military capabilities in the dyad. A simple measure of relative military spending for 1996 shows an Iranian share of less than 30%, with the share increasing to nearly forty percent by 2015, and beginning to edge toward a rough parity between the two states. The modified military strength measure

[24] An unobtrusive indicator of government effectiveness is hinted at by problems that have been encountered in measuring the size of China's GDP in the first place. Wildau (2019; Chen et al. 2019) attribute a 12% exaggeration of GDP size and a 2% overstatement of GDP growth to a lack of capacity to correct for local, inflated figures.

[25] Note Stephens' (2019) description: "[the formal celebrations of] the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic looked like something out of the late Brezhnev era: endless military pomp and gray old men.".

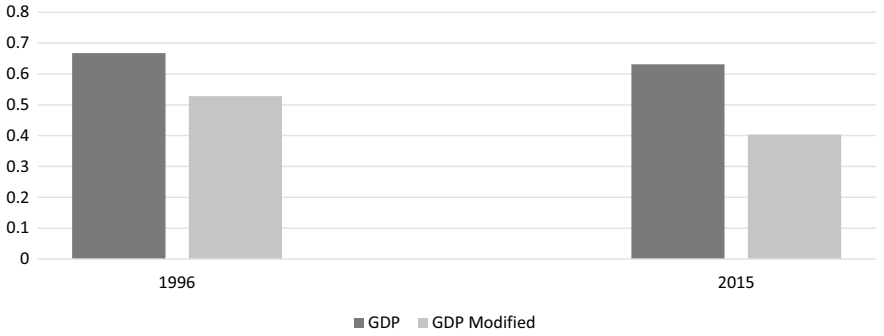

Fig. 6.5 Iranian share of Iran–Israel Dyad's GDP, and modified GDP, 1996, 2015. *Source* World Bank

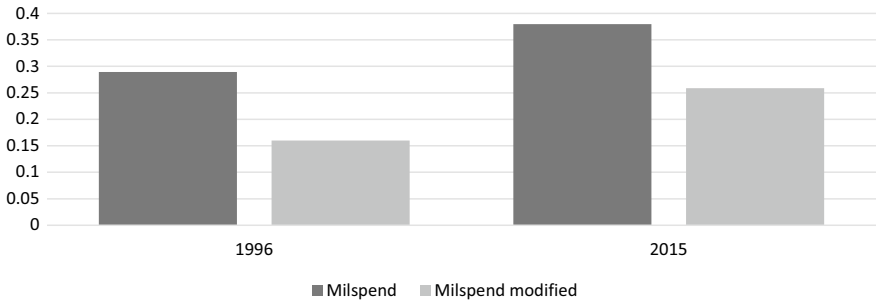

Fig. 6.6 Iranian share of Iran–Israel Dyad's military spending, and modified spending, 1996, 2015. *Source* SIPRI

however shows an even more imbalanced picture favoring Israel: it indicates Iranian capacity at roughly 15% in 1996 (showing dominant Israeli military strength) and while this measure also shows increasing Iranian capabilities, they barely exceed 25% in 2015 (still showing dominant Israeli military strength). These data are consistent with the nature of Iranian-Israeli interactions; despite deep expressions of Iranian hostility towards Israel, Iran's military activities toward Israel have been manifested almost exclusively by proxy, while Israel has directly attacked Iranian capabilities in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and inside Iran[26] without a reciprocal, direct response from Iran.

As these cases indicate, relative state strength appears to be dramatically different, depending on whether or not basic or modified capabilities are utilized to assess these relationships. We have not listed here some two dozen other cases of dyads—both within and outside of rivalries—that had led us to a similar conclusion. All too frequently and unsurprisingly, dynamics associated with political extraction, government efficiency, and control over corruption appear to qualify capabilities

[26] For a most recent case, see Fassihi, Perez-Pena, and Bergman (2020).

when assessing state strength. It would appear to be the case that these modifications create indicators that are more valid measures of state strength than the unmodified measures of GDP and military spending.

6.4 In Search of a Proxy for Government Effectiveness and Control of Corruption

There is, however, a problem with our measurement strategy: while we suggest that the information provided on government effectiveness and system-wide corruption are essential to the identification of state strength, their use is restricted by data availability. The World Bank measurements are available only for years starting in 1996. This is a severe limitation since these measures cannot be used to compare interstate relationships across a larger time horizon, and consequently do not allow researchers to compare between Cold War and post-Cold War eras.

Therefore, we have searched for a measure that (a) would be more broadly available, and (b) is highly correlated with the dynamics involving both effectiveness and corruption. This search was manifested in an inductive exercise seeking to yield a high empirical correlation between those variables and a theoretically appropriate proxy. The proxy candidate we propose is GDP per capita.[27]

GDP per capita (GDP/capita) is typically used as an indicator of wealth within a state. While it is a measure of economic performance, it is nevertheless linked to quality of governance. Higher levels of wealth are correlated with a state's ability to provide public policies and the implementation of public goods efficiently, while control over corruption creates substantial amounts of predictability for economic activity that, in turn, leads to greater wealth. In these contexts, there should be a strong theoretical link between the measures we used to modify our base resource variables and GDP/capita.[28]

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[27] For similar conceptualizations of state strength using GDP/capita, see Bairoch (1976), Beckley (2018), Miller (2017), and Fearon and Laitin 2003. We recognize that apart from using GDP/capita as a measure of wealth, it has also been used as a proxy for a state's development (e.g. see Souva and Prins 2006). Thus, its multiple usage should be taken into account for any complex analysis of interstate conflicts.

[28] It is tempting to argue that GDP/capita also becomes a proxy for resources available for foreign policy pursuits: as a state's wealth increases, there could be substantially more funding available for policies other than those involved with socio-economic welfare functions. For example, Anders et al (2020) argue for modifying base resources by a "surplus domestic product" that is net of the level of poverty in society. While controlling for such societal needs is important, we avoid this approach for two reasons. First, and even in democracies, there is considerable variation in the extent to which policy makers are willing to address societal socio-economic needs. This variation is likely to be further exacerbated in non-democratic regimes. Second, even in wealthy and democratic polities, there appears to be substantial variation in both economic inequality and the extent to which such inequalities are being addressed by policy makers. Simply focusing on levels of poverty or even levels of inequality within a state will not necessarily reflect the preferences of policy makers to shift substantial resources to these issues.

Does it work empirically as well? It appears to be the case. In order to make that assessment we performed the following experiment. Recall that we modified base capabilities with the following formulas:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Economic strength} &= \text{GDP} * \text{RPE} * (\text{Government effectiveness} \\ &\quad + \text{Control over corruption})/2 \\ &\quad \text{and} \\ \text{Military strength} &= \text{Milspend} * (\text{Government effectiveness} \\ &\quad + \text{Control over corruption})/2\end{aligned}$$

We next substitute the variable GDP/capita for government effectiveness and control over corruption and compare results for the 1996–2018 time-frame (consistent with available World Bank data).[29] While the relationship between the proxy measures and the World Bank indicators is less than perfect, it does appear to be extremely high. Comparing across dyads and across time the analysis yields a correlation in excess of 0.9; when focusing only on dyads that are identified as being engaged in rivalries (e.g. Colaresi, Rasler and Thompson 2007, Sakuwa and Thompson 2019), the correlation between the proxy-based indicators and the unmodified measures when we aggregate both military and economic capabilities is also in excess of 0.9. Such high correlations between these alternative measures gives us confidence that we can use GDP/capita to substitute[30] this proxy variable for the World Bank indices. Thus, we utilize the proxy measure to analyze a broader sampling of time that would include interstate interactions prior to the post-Cold War era.

The Iranian-Israeli dyad provides an illustration of the utility of the proxy measure. Figure 6.7 compares alternative measures of Iranian economic strength in the Iran-Israel dyad for 1996 (the start of the World Bank data series) and 2015. As the figure illustrates, removing the World Bank governance indices and replacing them with the GDP/capita proxy results in nearly identical scores for Iran's share of the dyad's economic strength, and both show similar dramatic decreases from the base measure of GDP size.

Figure 6.8 compares Iranian shares of military strength in the dyad across the three types of measures for 1996 and 2015. Note that the GDP/capita proxy version of the measure is—as in the previous figure—virtually identical to the measure that

[29] By multiplying GDP by GDP per capita, we inadvertently duplicate Beckley's (2018) proposed improvement for relying on GDP as a stand alone capability measure. This was not intentional because Beckley's argument is predicated on a both a different theory and a different focus. He argues that the gross resources encompassed by GDP imply production, welfare, and security costs that are necessary to assemble and maintain gross resources. What is critical in international politics are the net resources (gross resources minus costs) which he claims to capture by multiplying GDP by GDP per capita. Whether this operational assertion is defensible is an interesting question but not really germane to what we are attempting to do. His GDP per capita proxy is intended to represent different processes than the quality of governance that we have in mind.

[30] One exception may be proxying GDP/capita for states that are primarily dependent on oil production and oil exports. This exception is discussed below. The correlation between these measures for OPEC members is approximately 0.72, lower than for the larger sample of "all states".

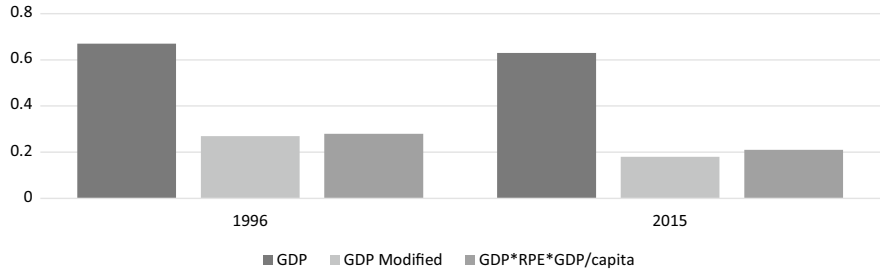

Fig. 6.7 Alternative measures of economic strength in Iran–Israel Dyad, Iranian share, 1996, 2015

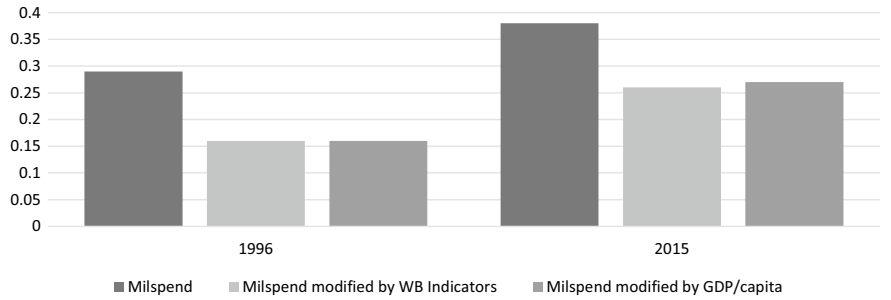

Fig. 6.8 Alternative measures of military strength in the Iran–Israel Dyad, Iran's share of Dyad capabilities, 1996, 2015

uses the World Bank indicators, providing some confidence that it is measuring a highly similar phenomenon.

These patterns are consistent with the high correlations we find between the proxy-based indicator and the indicator that includes estimates for quality of governance and control over corruption. However, we note that the correlation is not perfect and that there may be indeed outliers that fail to reflect this close relationship between the World Bank measures and GDP/capita. We list one case in Appendix A (the Saudi Arabian-Iranian dyad) where the proxy measure shows significantly smaller relative strength than the measure it is meant to proxy. We expect such distortions to be minimal, yet researchers should exercise caution in simply assuming that the proxy will perfectly capture government performance across all states.[31]

[31] We assumed that this distortion in the Saudi Arabian-Iranian dyad may have been due to the GDP/capita-based proxy measure inadequately reflecting governance issues for states that are heavily dependent on oil resources for their economy. Note that the correlation between the World Bank based modified measure of state strength and the version using GDP/capita is .72 for oil producing OPEC states. Certainly, as Figs. 6.7 and 6.8 illustrate, the proxy does well in the Iranian-Israeli dyad. It is plausible that Appendix A, focused on the Iranian-Saudi dyad, indicates a distortion between the original modifications and the proxy due to the fact that the Saudi economy is the most dependent one on oil resources among all of the OPEC states. For a similar argument and evidence

6.5 Do These Modifications Matter? Does Quality of Governance Matter?

One way to try to assess the salience of quality of governance issues for evaluating state strength is to focus on a variety of conflict processes and outcomes that are typically associated with relative state strength. We can then assess the extent to which our modified measures do better than the base measures in predicting to salient dependent variables associated with conflict processes and/or outcomes.

In order to do so, we first recalibrate both sets of measures so that state strength is the combined product of both economic and military capabilities. For the base measures, focusing on dyads, we create a relative strength measure that identifies the share of dyad member (a), according to the following formula:

$$\text{Base Strength} = \frac{\text{GDPa} + \text{Milexa}}{(\text{GDPa} + \text{Milexa}) + (\text{GDPb} + \text{Milexb})}$$

We then contrast the prediction of the base strength measure to the dependent variable with our modified measure of state strength:

$$\text{Modified Strength} = \frac{\text{GDPa} * \text{RPEa} * \text{GDP/CAPITAa} + \text{Milexa} * \text{GPD/CAPITAa}}{(\text{GDPa} * \text{RPEa} * \text{GDP/CAPITAa} + \text{Milexa} * \text{GPD/CAPITAa}) + (\text{GDPb} * \text{RPEb} * \text{GDP/CAPITAb} + \text{Milexb} * \text{GPD/CAPITAb})}$$

In order to gauge the relative salience of the modified measure, we look at a number of conflict processes and outcomes, focused on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)[32] between politically relevant dyads. We observe the performance of our modified measures using both simple descriptive graphs and more complex regression models.

We first focus on the *outcomes* of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) between states.[33] In this part of the analysis we differentiate between dyads that have asymmetrical capabilities (where one member of the dyad has at least 80% of the dyadic strength) versus those that are more balanced. We assume that states in dyads with

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regarding state capacity and oil rich states, see Savioa and Sen (2015). For an expansion of this argument to states dependent on land rent extraction for their economies, see Markovitz et al. (2020).

[32] The latest version of the militarized interstate dispute database is discussed in Maoz et al. (2019). For recent critiques of the MIDs database, see Fordham and Sarver (2001), Gibler et al. (2016), and Palmer et al. (2020).

[33] The Correlates of War project initially codes MIDs according to nine different possible outcomes (excluding -9 for missing data). They differentiate between victories for either side in a MID (1 & 2), yields by either side in a MID (3 & 4), stalemates (5), compromises (6), released (7), unclear (8), and joins ongoing war (9). For our purposes, we focus on less ambiguous outcomes. To do this, we created three possible outcomes: Stronger State Victories, Weaker State Victories, and Stalemates. Stronger State Victories includes those MIDs that ended in a victory for the stronger state of the dyad and yields by the weaker state; Weaker State Victories includes those MIDs that ended in a victory for the weaker state and yields by the stronger state; and Stalemates include those MIDs that ended in Stalemates and Compromises. We exclude all other MID outcomes from our assessment.

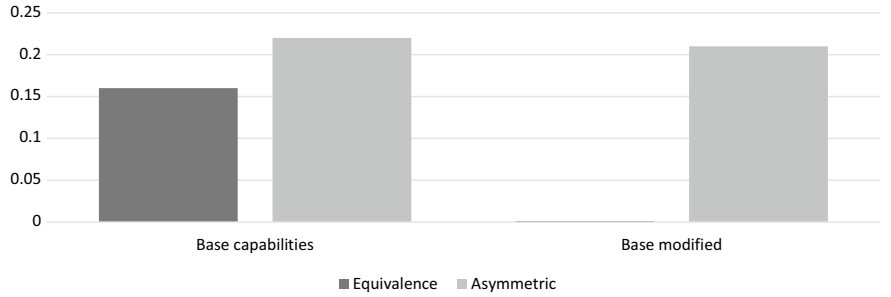

Fig. 6.9 Percent of All MID outcomes resulting in victory, alternative measures compared

roughly equivalent capabilities or similar degrees of state strength, all else being equal, would more likely yield a stalemated outcome for their MIDs than for asymmetrical dyads. Those states with asymmetrical strength should have a much higher rate of generating a positive outcome from their MIDs. If our state strength measure is a more valid indicator of strength than the base measures then we should find fewer outcomes contrary to our expectations than when we use the unmodified measures.

The harsh reality is that most MIDs end in stalemate; relative strength may only make a difference on the margins. Figure 6.9 reflects our findings. Using the base measure (combining the GDP and Milex indicators) the difference between roughly balanced and asymmetrical dyad outcomes is in the predicted direction with approximately 16% of MIDs leading to a winning outcome for one side over the other in roughly balanced dyads, compared to about 21% for asymmetrical dyads. However, our modified state strength measure indicates that these differences are far more dramatic and more consistent with the idea that relative equivalence in strength creates stalemate. Using the modified measure, and other things being equal, we find no victories for roughly equivalent dyads while asymmetric dyads conclude their MIDs with one side victorious about one in five times.

Of course, other things are rarely equal. We should not expect state strength alone to be an outstanding predictor of conflict outcomes.[34] This is precisely the reason why we differentiate between state strength and state power. The latter is about constraining or changing the behavior of the "other". Strength is an important ingredient for power, but it is only one, important component. Therefore, we should not expect that even a nuanced measure of state strength would predict by itself to conflict outcomes between states. Still, strength matters and our qualified measure produces a more theoretically interesting outcome than the non-qualified version does.

[34] The literature on conflict has underscored the limited predictive capability of state strength, regardless of how it is measured. Sullivan (2007) identifies several critical components driving success and failure between stronger and weaker states, noting that major powers since 1945 had failed to attain their political objectives in nearly 40% of cases where they used military intervention. Bueno de Mesquita (2000) reports that over the last 200 years weaker states prevailed in wars over 40% of time.

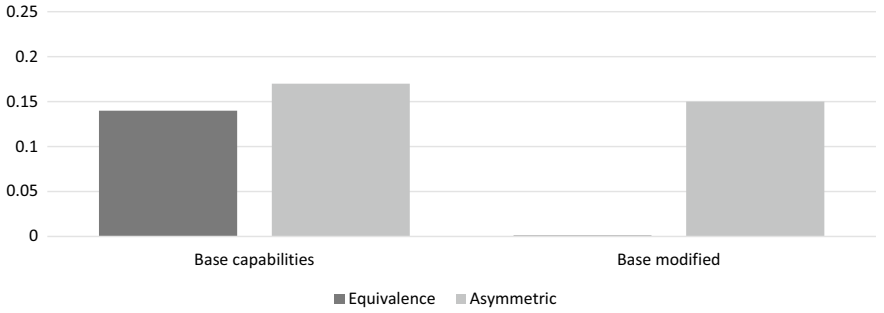

Fig. 6.10 Percent of severe MID outcomes resulting in victory, alternative measures compared

The results described above do not change substantially if we refocus the analysis to observing just those dyads that engage in severe (categories of 4 and 5) MIDs. Figure 6.10 illustrates that applying our comparison to this subset of MIDs yields outcomes that are highly similar to those in Fig. 6.9. The only significant difference between the two figures is around the success rate of asymmetrical dyads, which in the case of severe MIDs is reduced from approximately 20% to a more modest 15%.

Next, we focus on the *frequency* with which MIDs occur within dyads. Since most MIDs end in stalemate, it is not a stretch to assume that a dyad will engage in more than one MID.[35] However, given that non-asymmetric dyads seldom (according our base indicators) or virtually never (according to our modified measures) succeed when engaging in MIDs, we would expect that repeated numbers of MIDs would occur primarily among dyads with asymmetrical state strength.[36] This should be even more the case with severe MIDs since those carry the greatest risks of escalation to even larger conflicts in the form of wars.

Figure 6.11 shows the mean rate of severe MID occurrence for dyads with rough equivalence in state strength, and the frequency with which asymmetrical strength dyads engage in severe MIDs, comparing the base measure with the modified measure. As the figure indicates, using the base measures, roughly equivalent strength dyads average approximately 1.6 MIDs per dyad compared to a rate of 2.12 MIDs for asymmetric dyads. Our modified measure, however, indicates a starker contrast: now roughly equivalent dyads engage in an average of around only one (1.12) MID versus 2.5 MIDs for dyads that contain asymmetrical state strength. Thus, the modified measure is associated with a dramatic decline for cases of multiple severe MIDs for roughly equivalent dyads, along with a substantially greater frequency of severe MIDs within asymmetrical dyads, consistent with our argument.

These findings may seem puzzling to rivalry analysts who argue that rivalries either involve states with roughly equal capabilities or at least persist longer if capabilities

[35] In fact, Goertz and Diehl (1993), and Klein et al. (2006) include repeated MIDs as part of their definition of dyads in rivalries.

[36] Although we would expect that dyads engaged in rivalries would likely generate more MIDs than dyads not in rivalries.

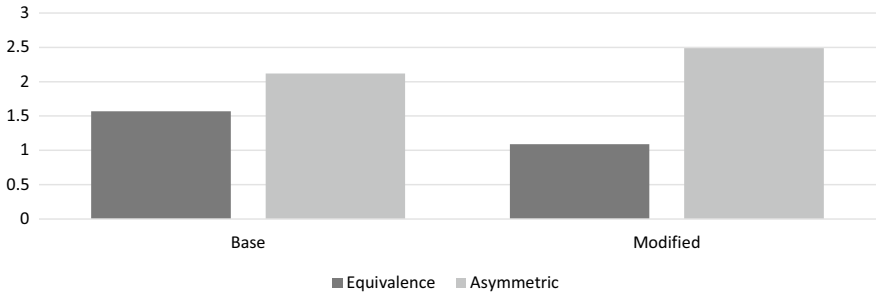

Fig. 6.11 Frequency of severe MIDs within Dyads, base and modified measures compared

are roughly symmetrical. Rivalries do not generate all MIDs but they are responsible for a disproportionate number. How is it that then that more asymmetrical dyads account for many more MIDs, on average, than symmetrical dyads?

To pursue this question farther we conducted a partial replication of a recent research effort that probes the relationships between territorial disputes, rivalries and MIDs, and we specifically focused on the models the authors utilized for exploring MID initiation by dyads (Sakuwa and Thompson 2019, Table 10, p. 217). We choose this work to replicate for several reasons, including: (a) it is the most recent publication to report the most utilized base model for predicting MID initiation within dyads; (b) it highlights alternative models focusing on the two strongest predictors in the literature regarding interstate conflicts (territorial disputes and rivalries); and (c) we find the work to be relatively straightforward for replication.

Sakuwa and Thompson first create what they appropriately label the "industry standard" for predicting MID initiation (the base model). Then they refine the model by inserting a variable reflecting whether or not dyads are in rivalry ("including rivalry"). Finally, they offer a third model which disaggregates the variables of dispute and rivalry to reflect various dispute type-rivalry relationship ("including dispute categories").[37]

We make two changes to their work. First, Sakuwa and Thompson utilize the entire 1816–2001 time-frame; our data cover primarily the period beginning with 1960, and so we restrict our replication effort to the 1960–2001 period. Second, in order to weigh relative capabilities, we restructure their capability variable so that it becomes a percentage measure of the stronger state's spending divided by total spending in the dyad. We structure our modified capability variable in the same manner.[38] Note that unlike the analysis above, instead of bifurcating dyads based on whether or not they have asymmetrical capabilities, our measure of relative strength

[37] In the original article there is a fourth model which in effect explores predictors of MID initiation for only a small subset of dyads that are engaged in rivalries; we do not replicate that model since (a) they find virtually no predictor variables of interest and (b) the resulting small sample makes comparison with the other three models difficult.

[38] We also add AIC and BIC scores to the table in order to identify whether our modified version or the original version produces a better fit with the dependent variable of interest.

now uses a more specific range of relative strength in the dyad, ranging from perfect balance (0.5) to a near perfect imbalance (0.9).

If our assertions are correct with respect to the need to modify capabilities with quality of governance concerns, we should witness two outcomes in our regression equation. First, we should expect our modified measure of state strength will perform better in predicting MID initiation than just the relative capability scores within a particular dyad. Second, if such relative strength is important for predicting conflicts within dyads, the improved predictive capability of the modified measure should also impact on the two variables most often identified in the literature as being associated with conflicts in dyads: territorial disputes and rivalries. Specifically, we should expect that our modified capability measure should, compared to the capability variable in the Sakuwa and Thompson models, yield substantially higher coefficients. At the same time, to the extent that AIC[39] scores reflect relative goodness of fit between competing empirical models, our versions of the three models should demonstrate *consistently* lower AIC scores across all three models, demonstrating a better fit through the use of our modified measures. Additionally, the salience of our modified measure should be demonstrated also through a diminished impact of disputes and rivalries on the dependent variable.

Table 6.1 shows the results from the replication of Sakuwa and Thompson's three primary models of MID initiation and offers a comparison with our modified strength variable. We have added both AIC and BIC values for each model. The models are presented in terms of three panels, with each panel containing the alternative specification for relative state strength in the dyad. As per our previous arguments, our modified alternative in these panels uses military expenditures modified by GDP/capita as the proxy for quality of governance constraints.

The comparison between alternative specifications of military strength across all three types of models consistently reflect our initial expectations. In every one of the three comparisons our modified strength measure demonstrates substantially higher coefficients than the basic military expenditure measure. Furthermore, the second panel of each model, as we expected, yields AIC values that are substantially smaller than in the initial model, suggesting a consistently better "fit" is created by using our modified measure of military capabilities.[40]

Are these differences between the basic versus the modified measures of military strength of substantive significance? We offer a set of predicted probabilities, based on Table 6.1, that compare first the predictions between the two approaches for measuring the relative strength in the dyads sampled on MID initiation; and second, the dampening effect of these measures on territorial disputes and rivalries.

Figure 6.12 demonstrates the predicted probabilities on MID initiation by the two different measures of state strength. As the asymmetry in the dyad increases,

[39] And/or BIC scores.

[40] As a robustness test, we reran the logit regressions using the SIPRI-based measure of military spending instead of COW military expenditure measure used in the initial study. The results are shown in Appendix B; our constrained capability version of relative strength continues to create stronger predictions to the dependent variable and both AIC and BIC scores continue to suggest a better fit than for the unmodified measure.

Table 6.1 Comparison of unmodified and modified military expenditure variables for Predicting MID initiation, logit regressions

Variables	Base model		Including rivalry		Including dispute categories	
	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained
Dispute	1.261**	1.207**	0.676**	0.675**		
	(0.091)	(0.113)	(0.102)	(0.125)		
Rivalry			1.526**	1.483**		
			(0.105)	(0.128)		
Disputing-not rivalry					1.373**	1.388**
					(0.126)	(0.150)
Not disputing-rivalry					2.388**	2.520**
					(0.139)	(0.176)
Disputing-rivalry					2.237**	2.181**
					(0.119)	(0.149)
Contiguity	2.884**	2.704**	2.634**	2.470**	2.413**	2.217**
	(0.088)	(0.110)	(0.093)	(0.115)	(0.099)	(0.124)
Milspend	**−1.885****		**−1.408****		**−1.449****	
	(0.226)		**(0.238)**		**(0.237)**	
Milspend modified		**−3.924****		**−3.528****		**−3.531****
		(0.610)		**(0.627)**		**(0.625)**
Alliance	0.0929	0.0601	0.235	0.185	0.181	0.146
	(0.120)	(0.134)	(0.121)	(0.137)	(0.121)	(0.137)
Joint democracy	−0.031**	−0.025**	−0.023**	−0.019**	−0.021**	−0.018*
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Variables	Base model		Including rivalry		Including dispute categories	
	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained
Major power	1.885**	1.394**	1.998**	1.554**	1.927**	1.515**
	(0.091)	(0.105)	(0.091)	(0.106)	(0.091)	(0.106)
Peace years	−0.331**	−0.362**	−0.294**	−0.325**	−0.290**	−0.322**
	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.023)
Spline1	−0.001**	−0.002**	−0.001**	−0.001**	−0.001**	−0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Spline2	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Spline3	−0.000	−0.000*	−0.000	−0.000	−0.000	−0.000*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	−3.576**	−2.482**	−4.150**	−2.902**	−4.157**	−2.956**
	(0.205)	(0.377)	(0.218)	(0.390)	(0.217)	(0.389)
N	377,899	259,609	377,899	259,609	377,899	259,609
AIC	**9333.9**	**6294.4**	**9125.3**	**6162.8**	**9059.9**	**6109.1**
BIC	9453.2	6409.5	9255.4	6288.5	9200.8	6245.2
χ^2	4850.69**	3087.55**	5061.31**	3221.09**	5128.70**	3276.85**

Source Sakuwa and Thompson (2019)
Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Bold values highlight key comparisons in the text

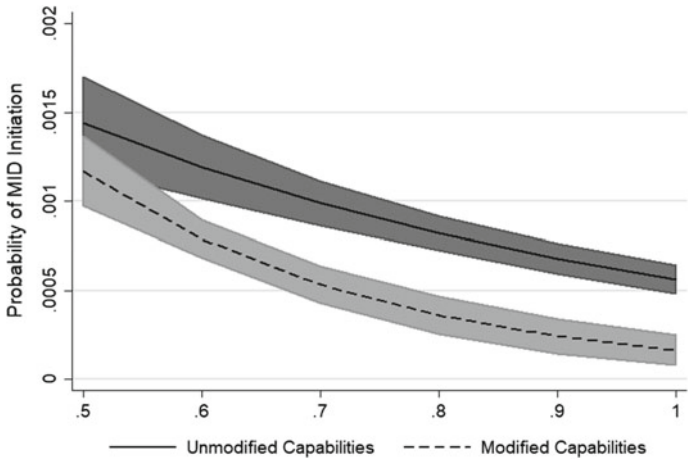

Fig. 6.12 Predicted probabilities of unmodified versus modified relative strength measures on MID initiation

the modified relative strength variable diminishes the probability of the dyad experiencing a MID initiation substantially more than the simpler measure of military spending. For example, in near-perfect balance the modified relative strength measure reduces the probability of MID initiation by roughly 19% compared to the base measure. This difference rises to 64% difference between the two measures at high asymmetry.

Figures 6.13 and 6.14 show the relative effects of the two strength measures when territorial dispute or rivalry occurs in the dyad. In both instances, the effect

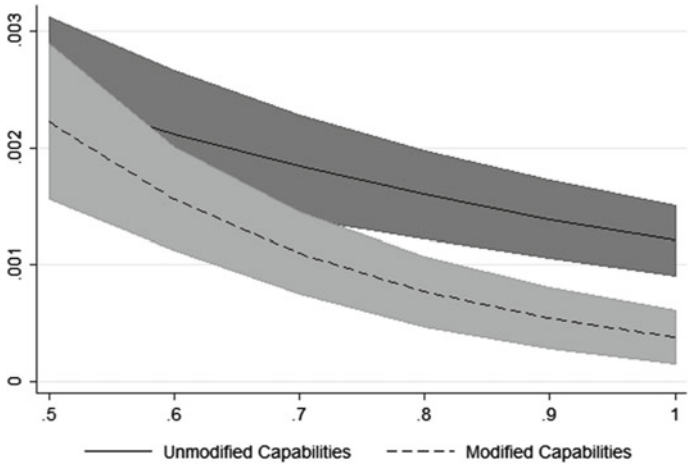

Fig. 6.13 Predicted probabilities of territorial disputes on MID initiation across unmodified and modified measures of relative state strength

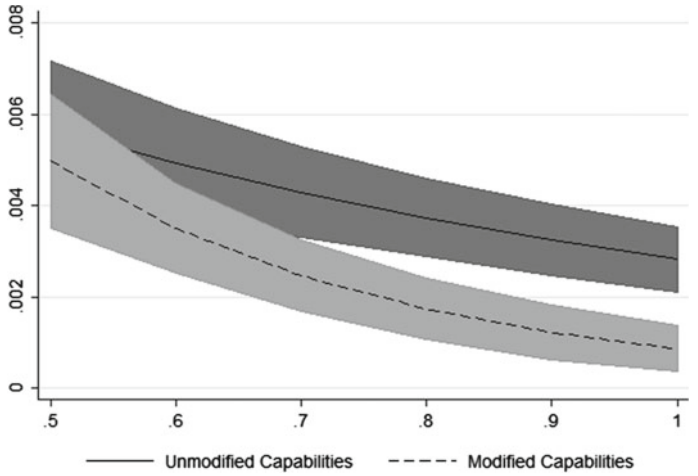

Fig. 6.14 Predicted probabilities of rivalries on MID initiation across unmodified and modified measures of state strength

of disputes and rivalries are substantially more diminished by the modified state strength measure than by the unmodified state strength measure. For example, the probability of experiencing a MID in the dyad when there is a territorial dispute is 61% lower at high asymmetry using the modified strength measure compared to the original measure. This difference is roughly similar when observing dyads in rivalry. As these figures also show, the differences between the two strength measures become more significant as asymmetry in the dyad increases.

More substantively, though, none of these findings clarify the puzzle about asymmetric dyads being more likely to engage in serious MIDs than symmetric dyads. It turns out that the tendency is applicable to both dyads involved in rivalries and ones that do not involve rivalries. However, there is a difference. The tendency (using the modified military expenditure indicator) to engage in MIDs is even more pronounced in asymmetrical rivalry dyads (75%) than in asymmetrical non-rivalry dyads (67%). This finding does not seem to violate the intuitive expectation that symmetrical dyads are less likely to clash in MIDs. If neither side has a perceived advantage, why risk escalated conflict? Yet it also suggests that asymmetry hardly precludes rivalry and that asymmetry may be a good clue as to who is most likely to fight whom.

6.6 Conclusion

The persistent struggle to measure power differences reflects, among other things, our inability to operationalize influence success easily and the corresponding tendency to fall back on raw material differences to predict who is likely to prevail in international

political contests. We offer no antidotes for the former problem. The later problem, however, can be addressed by developing better formulations of state strength. In this analysis, we qualify economic (GDP) and military expenditure information in terms of extraction performance and state capacity indexes. It makes some discernible difference in comparing members of dyads. It also helps explain why apparent asymmetries in dyadic relationships are not always what they seem. Even so, asymmetry may be a more interesting characteristic than is often assumed.

We note as well some caveats regarding the use of our approach to measuring state strength. First, the most obvious: while GDP/capita appears to be a good proxy for tempering economic and military capabilities by quality of governance, it has some obvious limitations. One is that it cannot be used in models that also rely on other independent variables that highlight the explanatory roles of economic development and/or wealth as conditioning factors effecting conflict (or cooperative) processes. In such instances, researchers would need to find another proxy for conditioning state strength.

A second caveat is that GDP/capita, while functioning as a good proxy for quality of governance in general, may not function well for states where it is not an actual correlate of economic development and therefore, of quality of governance. We have in mind especially states with heavy reliance on oil production and oil exports as a large part of their economy. However, other states that depend heavily on a single resource extraction or land-based extraction for their economic well-being would fit into the same category (Markowitz et al. 2020).

Third, we recognize that for certain time periods, and especially during the Cold War, estimates of basic resources (GDP), the wealth of states (GDP/capita) and even military spending for communist states with closed economies have been highly unreliable. This problem is not unique to our approach; researchers who had estimated the economic and military capabilities of these states have struggled with the same problem. For these states, an alternative specification besides wealth and economic size would be warranted (e.g. energy consumption), assuming that such alternative specifications would be more reliable indicators of basic resources and their application. Alternatives to military spending are more difficult to uncover for these states. Regardless, researchers need to be wary of the estimates created for this critical subsample of states.

Fourth, we don't wish to discourage the search for other proxies for estimating quality of state governance and control over corruption. One plausible alternative, as our reading of Carroll and Kenkel's (2019, p. 583) work suggests, is energy consumption by states as a plausible proxy for quality of governance. Another possibility for military strength would be proxying quality of governance by dividing military spending by the size of a state's military forces; this "per capita" measure may tap quality of governance issues (including technological investments in the military) as well as our proxy measure. The general point here is that while we are satisfied

with our proxy measure, we are aware that alternative proxies (both theoretically meaningful and empirically feasible) can be utilized to gauge quality of governance issues.

Finally, we suggest that substantially more work needs to be done to estimate the overall strength of states. Our approach has been to treat economic and military strength equally. We recognize that this is a somewhat arbitrary decision and future research needs to assess whether either of these capabilities should be weighed more heavily than the other, and especially so dependent upon the issue of concern.[41]

Even with these caveats in mind, we suggest that approaches to assessing state strength as a salient explanation of conflict processes and even conflict outcomes are well served by refocusing their measurement strategies on variables that also address concerns about both political extraction and quality of governance as part of the measurement process. Scholars who continue to work with CINC scores need not abandon them but should seek modifications that would condition those scores with quality of governance and extraction measures. Scholars who work more directly with GDP values or military expenditures as measures of state strength are encouraged to utilize our proxy measure or another viable alternative as long as they can control for the mediating effects of political extraction and quality of governance.

We acknowledge as well that developing qualified measures of raw capabilities is only a starting point. The next question is what difference the application of such measures might make to enduring issues about who competes with whom and/or who wins or loses conflicts in international politics. There is no reason to assume that material differences will be shown to be either more or less significant than what is recorded in previous analyses. But we might find ourselves in a better position than was the case earlier to assess the significance of symmetry and asymmetry in clashes between actors. At the same time, our probes so far indicate that qualified measures of state strength do make a significant difference to empirical outcomes. More work along these lines appears justified.

[41] Note Sullivan's (2007) findings, showing that more powerful states vary in their relative success depending on the objectives motivating their use of coercive power.

Appendix A: Comparison of Unmodified and Two Modified Indicators of State Strength, Saudi-Iranian Dyad

See Figs. 6.15 and 6.16.

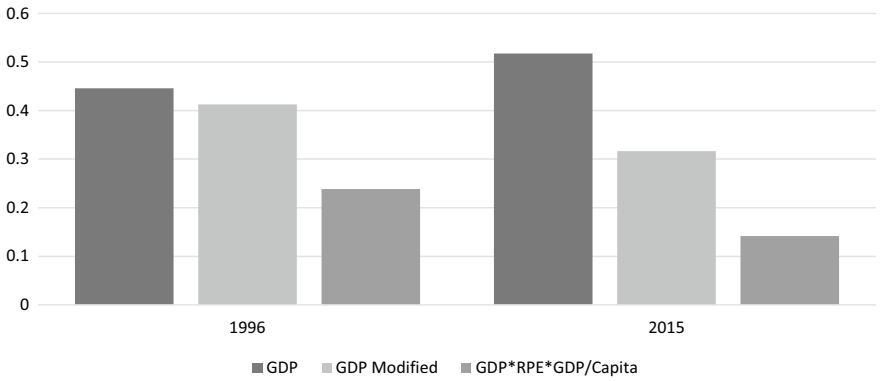

Fig. 6.15 Alternative measures of economic strength in Iran–Saudi Arabia Dyad, Iranian share, 1996, 2015

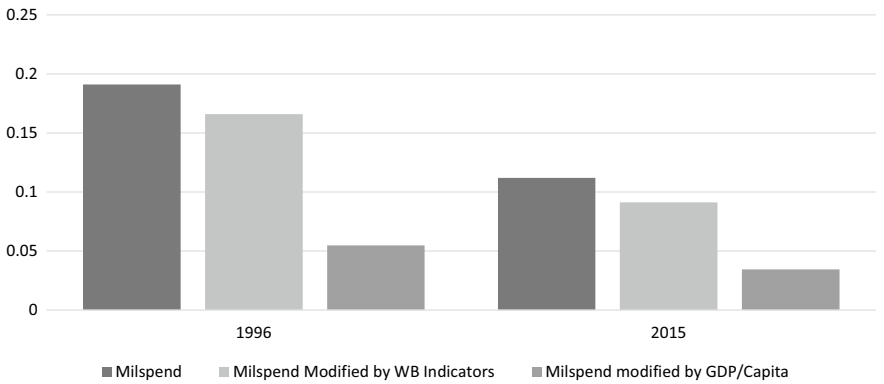

Figure 6.16 Alternative measures of military strength in the Iran-Saudi Arabia Dyad, Iran's Share of Dyad Capabilities, 1996, 2015

Appendix B: Comparison of Unconstrained and Constrained Military Expenditure Variables for Predicting MID initiation, Logit Regressions, Using SIPRI as Military Expenditure Source

Variables	Base model		Including rivalry		Including dispute categories	
	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained
Dispute	1.255**	1.322**	0.686**	0.799**		
	(0.123)	(0.138)	(0.139)	(0.154)		
Rivalry			1.464**	1.403**		
			(0.145)	(0.158)		
Disputing-not rivalry					1.374**	1.412**
					(0.169)	(0.183)
Not disputing-rivalry					2.400**	2.444**
					(0.198)	(0.232)
Disputing-rivalry					2.207**	2.280**
					(0.162)	(0.180)
Contiguity	2.789**	2.690**	2.543**	2.468**	2.323**	2.226**
	(0.120)	(0.137)	(0.127)	(0.144)	(0.136)	(0.155)
Milspend	**-1.988****		**-1.675****		**-1.732****	
	(0.301)		**(0.312)**		**(0.310)**	
Milspend constrained		**-2.345****		**-2.401****		**-2.623****
		(0.921)		**(0.927)**		**(0.915)**
Alliance	− 0.103	− 0.002	0.046	0.0921	0.008	0.058
	(0.147)	(0.150)	(0.149)	(0.152)	(0.149)	(0.152)
Joint democracy	− 0.028**	− 0.021*	− 0.020*	− 0.0155	− 0.0187*	− 0.014
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Major power	1.664**	1.275**	1.861**	1.541**	1.782**	1.498**
	(0.123)	(0.127)	(0.122)	(0.129)	(0.124)	(0.130)
Peace years	− 0.357**	− 0.351**	− 0.316**	− 0.315**	− 0.310**	− 0.311**
	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Spline1	− 0.001**	− 0.001**	− 0.001**	− 0.001**	− 0.001**	− 0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Spline2	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**	0.001**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Spline3	− 0.000	− 0.000	− 0.000	− 0.000	− 0.000	− 0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	− 3.173**	− 3.400**	− 3.661**	− 3.594**	− 3.676**	− 3.522**
	(0.267)	(0.550)	(0.282)	(0.552)	(0.280)	(0.544)

(continued)

(continued)

Variables	Base model		Including rivalry		Including dispute categories	
	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained	Unconstrained	Constrained
χ^2	2740.89**	2173.97**	2843.68**	2253.78**	2881.49**	2283.49**
N	226,061	191,930	226,061	191,930	226,061	191,930
AIC	5144.5	**4330.0**	5043.6	**4252.1**	5007.8	**4224.5**
BIC	5258.1	4441.8	5167.6	4374.1	5142.1	4356.6

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Bold values highlight the key comparisons in the text

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Chapter 7
Differences in Strength Across Regions

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we identified a strategy for measuring the strength of states by modifying basic state capabilities with two political phenomena: the extent to which a government engages in the political extraction of societal resources, and the degree to which its bureaucratic effectiveness and control over corruption are likely to enhance on constrain its strength. In this chapter we apply this framework to assess the comparative strength of regions in international politics.

Why would we care about comparative regional strength? We suggest five reasons for doing so (Fig. 7.1). First, the extent to which regions can construct their own orders—viable institutions for cooperation or collaboration between region members, and the development and acceptance of rules and norms of conduct within the region—are to a significant degree likely to be a function of the relative strength of a region.[1] Very weak regions are unlikely to have enough strength to forge such outcomes. Stronger regions may not choose to engage in much regional order construction either, if they are (a) relative satisfied with the global status quo, and (b) if the global status quo addresses well the issues faced in the region. However, their strength provides for them the opportunity to do so if they wish to supplement global orders, or to try to create alternate arrangements if they are in opposition to the global order. In this sense the extent of regional strength may be a necessary albeit insufficient condition for effective regional order creation on the part of region members.[2]

[1] For a discussion of the viability of regional orders in the context of global orders, see Buzan and Waever (2003), Acharya (2007); for the development of regional order and norms without a dominant power in the region, see Acharya (2021).

[2] An alternative possibility is that regional strength may matter less than the presence of a dominant, strong state in the region, capable of constructing a regional order even if the rest of the region is very weak. While we expect that a hierarchical relationship of this type matters, as we discuss later in Chap. 9, we suspect that having a "dominant" power with enough strength to construct a stable regional order in a weak region is unlikely. This issue we explore below.

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_7

Region Type			Regional Characteristics		
	Economic Strength	Military Strength	Political Extraction	Quality of Governance	Regional Autonomy
Strong	High	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Weak	Low	Low	Low or High	Low	Low or High
			Regional Strength Consequences		
	International Presence	Terrorist penetration	External power penetration	Inter-regional collaboration	Regional Order creation
Strong	High	Low	Low	Effective	Effective
Weak	Low	High	Low to High	Ineffective	Ineffective

Fig. 7.1 Strong versus weak regions and potential consequences

Whether or not a region is capable of building its own economic and/or security order, a second reason for evaluating its relative strength is to determine if it is strong enough to resist negative world order effects, should it choose to do so. Later in Chap. 12 we delineate the extent to which regions in international politics support or oppose what has been termed the liberal world order. Here, we simply seek to identify the degree to which regions are strong enough to create a significant presence globally to resist those aspects of the global order to which they are opposed, or to support the status quo if they are supportive. We assume that dissatisfaction with the global status quo is insufficient for regional opposition; sufficient strength is also required. We explore this issue further in Chap. 12.

Third, regional strength should matter for explaining penetration into the region by both outside powers and disruptive non-state actors, such as transnational terrorist organizations. Penetration into regions by powerful external states is strongly associated with increased regional conflict, depending on regional circumstances (see Chap. 9) and as well whether such penetration constitutes a contractual relationship (Lake 2009) with weaker states (and presumably weaker regions).

At the other end of this spectrum is the propensity of violent non-state actors (international terrorist organizations) to set up business in regions where they are welcomed (increasingly less so) or when regions are too weak to combat their presence. That presence in turn not only functions to destabilize host states, but as well invites into the region external, powerful actors seeking to minimize or destroy terrorist activity and to prevent it from spreading into other regions. This at least was the partial justification for the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, which in turn prompted further destabilization in both the Middle East and South Asia and may

have been partially responsible for the upsurge of terrorist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. We assume that whether the issue is penetration by strong states or disruptive non-state actors, the relative strength of regions matters in constraining both phenomena.

Fourth, regions often seek and pursue collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships with other regions. How successful they are in such endeavors likely will depend in large part on their relative strength in bargaining over the shape of institutional relationships and over the types of substantive agreements that would provide mutual benefit. As an example, there has been a persistent effort on the part of the European Union to develop ongoing, stable relationships with other regions around the Mediterranean. However, it has been a bargaining process between a very strong region (Western Europe) and much weaker ones (the Maghreb, the Middle East, and states in the Balkan part of Eastern Europe), with the stronger pushing for institutional arrangements privileging itself and leading to little progress across the decades of continued attempts at region building (Fenko 2012, 2015, Rhamey, Thompson and Volgy 2014).

Finally, we are interested in the strength of regions as constituting one set of clues about the emergence of new regional and/or major powers in international affairs. The academic literature has been increasingly preoccupied with the concept of rising powers, and especially since the end of the Cold War.[3] There are typically two pathways for rising powers: seeking to join the club of major powers or seeking to join the club of regional powers. Both clubs are quite small[4]; whether regional powers can increase their abilities to move into the major power club in part depends on the nature of their regions, including whether the home region is strong or weak. Regional powers such as Nigeria or South Africa may not rise into the major power club even if they appear to be dominant regional powers since their status as dominant regional powers exists in a context relative to the very weak regions in which they exist. In this sense the strengths of these regional powers do not compare well with dominant powers from other regions that are substantially stronger. Regional powers may rise to major power status, all else equal, if they are emerging from strong regions where they had already established regional orders and have been tested by relatively strong states. Thus, the strength of regions can provide some clues about which states may be successfully "rising" as major powers.

For these reasons we consider it valuable to map out the relative strength of regions and some of the consequences of such mapping both for regions and for international politics. To do so, we begin with a brief recap of how we apply the method used in the previous chapter to a comparative analysis of regional strength, and then apply the method to all regions. Then we address some of the consequences for effective

[3] There is even a journal devoted to rising powers, initially named *Rising Powers Quarterly*, and now known as *The Journal of Rising Power and Global Governance.*

[4] Today, the major powers club includes the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, France and the UK (Volgy et al. 2011); depending on conceptual and measurement choices, the regional power club includes Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, Germany, India, and Australia in their respective regions (Cline et al. 2011; see also Chap. 9).

regional order formation, penetration by terrorist organizations into regions, and the interface between regional strength and "rising" powers from those regions.

7.2 Measuring Regional Strength

Consistent with the previous chapter, we measure the strength of regions across two dimensions: economic and military strength.[5] We do so by first taking base economic regional capabilities (GDP) and modify them with two political dynamics we had utilized in the previous chapter: political extraction (RPE) and quality of governance (Q of G).[6] Then we generate a measure of military spending within each region and modify it with the Q of G measure, similar to the previous chapter. As an additional step, we also measure military strength as a function of military spending modified as per capita of military personnel. Showing military spending in this manner provides an indicator of the quality of a state's military, including its commitment to quality equipment and technology.

However, and unlike the previous chapter, we also measure separately the extent of political extraction and the quality of governance within each region, with an eye towards assessing whether regional patterns we uncover are likely to change in the near future. We observe RPE patterns to evaluate the degree to which regions are capable of increasing their strength. Similarly, we measure the relative quality of governance in each region for the purpose of assessing whether regional strength could likely increase with an increased emphasis on regional members' bureaucratic effectiveness and control over corruption. In addition, we assess the extent to which each region has substantial autonomy from global politics, at least in the economic realm. We assume that as autonomy increases, the region increases its capacity to resist penetration from outside actors and from potential dependence on other regions. Except where specified otherwise, we use the same data sources for our analysis as we had in Chap. 7.

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[5] There is a third dimension we would have like to have pursued: the "soft power" of states and regions (Nye 2004). Unfortunately, there is no well-established measure of soft power available. Of the four sources of soft power measurement available, three of them are produced for purposes other than academic analysis (Brandfinance, Monocle, and Portland's Soft Power Index) while the more extensive and publicly available fourth one (The Elcano Royal Institute's Global Presence Index) contains a potentially useful measure of soft power but it is correlated with its index of economic presence at .98, suggesting that our economic strength measure will very closely dovetail with its measure of soft power. The index is at: https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/. For a discussion of alternative soft power measures and validity issues, see Yun (2018). For one comprehensive effort to systematically measure soft power, see McClory (2019).

[6] We measure quality of governance directly through indexes of control over corruption and bureaucratic efficiency produced by the World Bank. However, as we note in the previous chapter, GDP per capita becomes a proxy when the World Bank measures (available annually from 2002) are not available, or when evaluating regions where member states are not heavily dependent on single resource economies.

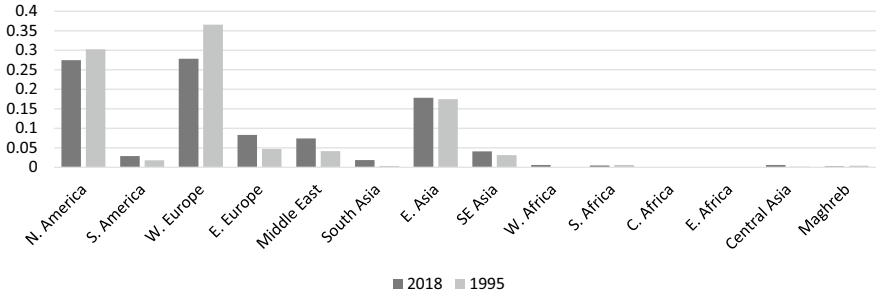

Fig. 7.2 Regional economic strength as a share of all regions, 2018 and 1995 compared

7.2.1 Economic Strength

As a first cut, we compare the economic strength of regions. Regional economic strength in this formulation consists of the combined economic resources (GDP) of all states in the region, modified by each state's political extraction (RPE) and its quality of governance (measured with the proxy of GDP/capita). Figure 7.2 captures differences between regions by creating a percentage for each region of the total combined values for all regions and compares those percentages between 1995 and 2018.[7]

Four clear observations emerge from this type of comparison. First, in terms of an economic dimension there are four groups of regions. In the first grouping there are three regions in international politics that area the strongest on the economic dimension: North America, Western Europe, and East Asia. Of the three, North America and Western Europe are virtually identical on this dimension in 2018, and between them, as the staunchest supporters of the liberal world order, they share just over 55% of the cumulative strength of all regions. East Asia, despite the spectacular rise of China, has only 65% of the economic strength of either North America or Western Europe.

The next group of regions in economic strength are those of East Europe and the Middle East, both contributing over five percent of the cumulative regional total. Trailing behind are a third group of regions, composed of SE Asia, South Asia, and South America, ranging between two and four percent of the total. The fourth group, highlighting the extent of inequality between regions, includes six regions across Africa and Central Asia that barely register in Fig. 7.2, with each adding less than one percent to the cumulative strength of regions.

Second, Fig. 7.2 also illustrates that there have been significant changes in regional economic strength between 1995 and 2018. The two strongest regions demonstrate a significant decline in relative strength (losing approximately 12% of their share

[7] 2018 is the last year for which RPE values are available for all states; 1995 is chosen as the base year of comparison in order to include the Central Asia region, which reports values starting that year.

of all regions), while South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and SE Asia all increase their relative shares.

Third, not much change occurs over time in the fortunes of the weakest regions. All six remain relatively the same over time (only Central Asia demonstrates a very limited increase in its economic strength).

Fourth, it is clear that there are substantial differences across regions in terms of political extraction from state economies (Fig. 7.3). Of the six poorest regions, three (Southern Africa, Central Asia and the Maghreb) stand out as substantially exceeding their expected levels of extraction, while the other three (West Africa, Central Africa, and East Africa) are significantly below their expected levels. The very low levels of economic strength for the first three is not due to a lack of will in extracting resources from their societies, while there is a glimmer of hope that the latter three can increase their economic strength by increasing their levels of extraction.

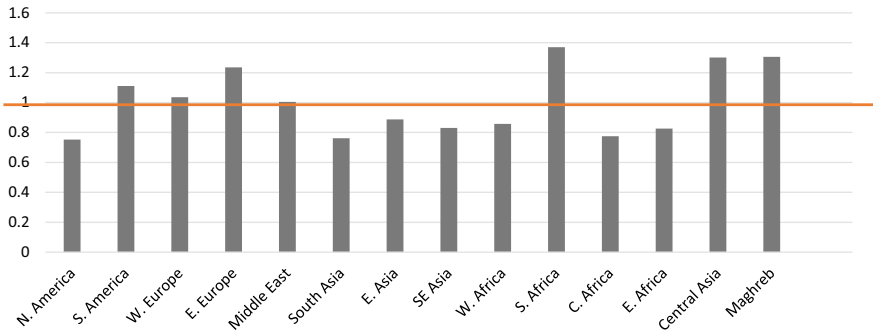

Fig. 7.3 Mean RPE values by region, 1995–2018

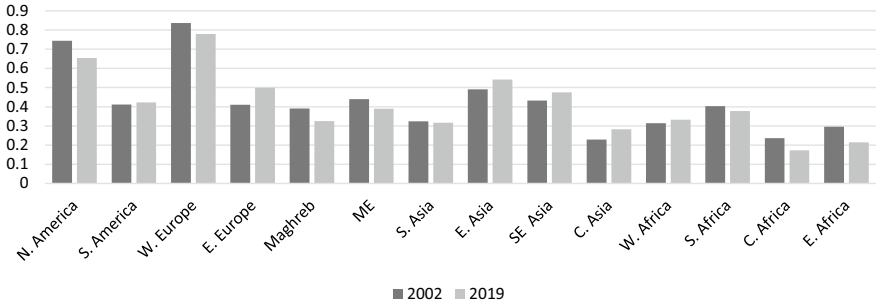

Fig. 7.4 Quality of governance for regions, 2002, 2019. *Source* World Bank

That hope is dimmed however once we focus on the quality of governance in those regions. Figure 7.4 displays the performance of all regions on the World Bank's Quality of Governance dimensions (effectiveness of bureaucracy and control over corruption).[8] Two obvious conclusion are evident from the data. First, the six weakest regions in terms of their economic strength contain the lowest quality of governance scores. These outcomes indicate that regardless of whether these regions over-extract or under-extract from their economies, there is not likely to be much improvement in their respective economic strengths as long as national governments in those regions remain ineffective and corruption is relatively uncontrolled.

The second conclusion is about change over time: of the fourteen regions considered, only four (East Asia, SE Asia, Central Asia, and East Europe) regions improved their quality of governance scores between 2002 and 2019. The rest either barely kept pace with itself (South America, West Africa, and S. Asia) or decreased its quality of governance.

One last issue about economic strength is worth considering: the extent to which regions are relatively autonomous or dependent on the global economy. The greater a region's dependence on the global economy the less it is able to create a regional economic order, and particularly so if it wishes to create a regional order at variance with the global order.[9]

As a first step we measure the extent to which a region's economic strength is in part a function of its global trade (Fig. 7.5). We do so by measuring a region's mean total trade divided by its mean GDP; we measure the average trade dependence for

[8] Here we switch from the GDP per capita proxy to relying on the World Bank's measure; we do so since the proxy tends to distort quality of governance for regions that rely on one major resource base (as we had noted in the previous chapter) and the six poorest regions often fit that category.

[9] Even a very strong state with a very powerful economy is subject to global economic fluctuations the more it is dependent on the global economy for its own economic health. For example, the United States., along with a number of other strong states and due to a variety of issues, has been experiencing increasing difficulties during the Covid pandemic as the global supply chain cracked (see Lynch 2021).

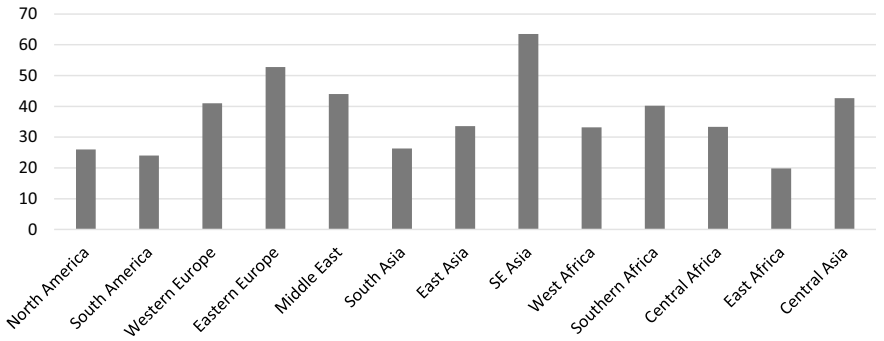

Fig. 7.5 Mean levels of trade as percent of region GDP, all regions, 2000–2020

each region across the 2000–2020 timeframe.[10] As the figure illustrates, there is a broad range of trade dependency across regions, with South East Asia demonstrating the highest at over sixty percent, while East Asia, North America and South America show the lowest levels of trade dependence.

This measure of trade dependency reflects a gross aggregate; more insight can be gained by separating a region's trade as being of two types: intra-regional versus inter-regional trade. A region that appears to be highly dependent on global trade may only look so because its members may be trading primarily intra-regionally and thus the region may be relatively autonomous with respect to the global economy. For instance, North America appears to exhibit around 26% of its collective GDP in terms of overall trade. However, its actual intra-regional trade is roughly 30%,[11] which reduces the region's dependence on inter-regional trade to around 17%, indicating substantial relative independence from global economic conditions. In a region such as Western Europe, with very strong regional economic institutions of cooperation and high levels of trade interdependencies, we would expect regional autonomy to be even higher than in North America.

To measure intra-regional trade, we compute all trade between members of a region, divided by the total trade of the region with all states outside of the region for 2019.[12] The results are shown in Fig. 7.6. As expected, Western Europe displays the highest level of intra-regional trade compared to all other regions, while the Middle East is lowest.[13] The level of economic interdependence in five of the seven regions

[10] We use the formula (exports + imports/GDP)/2 so that both imports and exports have a similar impact on a region's global trade dependence.

[11] For the year 2019, the last year of trade prior to the global Covid pandemic. The data are obtained through the World Integrated Trade Solution Software (WITS), made available through the World Bank, retrieved at: https://wits.worldbank.org/.

[12] The last year prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.

[13] The graph does not show the regions of Africa or Central Asia due to their very low levels of regional economic strength.

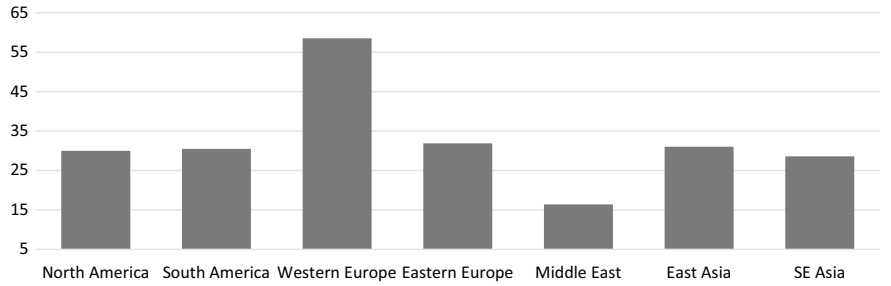

Fig. 7.6 Intra-regional trade as a percent of all trade, selected regions, 2019. *Source* WITS

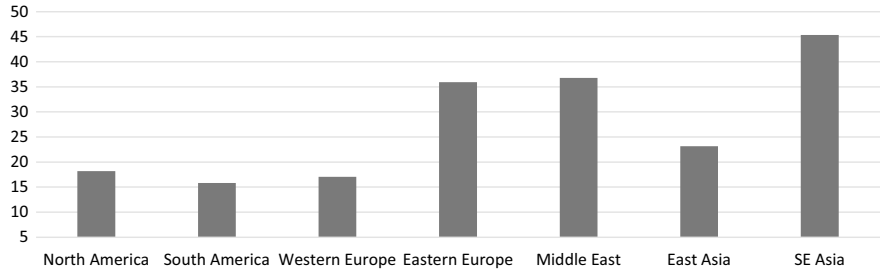

Fig. 7.7 Inter-regional trade as a percent of regional GDP, 2019. *Source* WITS and World Bank

(North America, South America, Eastern Europe, East Asia,[14] and South East Asia) appears to be similar (Fig. 7.7).

We note elsewhere in this manuscript that Eastern Europe appears to be constructed from two neighborhoods, varying both in terms of support for the liberal world order, and as well in terms of closeness to either Western Europe or to the Russian Federation. Thus, we take a closer look at this region, by separating the western neighborhood, and observing its economic relationship with Western Europe (Fig. 7.8). Comparing the results with Fig. 7.6, it is clear that the western neighborhood is strongly intertwined with West Europe, and to a far greater degree than it is involved with the eastern neighborhood of the East European region. These data would suggest that Russian aspirations to reclaim a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe are likely to be difficult to achieve given the structural economic relationships that have developed between its western neighborhood and Western Europe.

The disaggregation of the East European region into western and eastern neighborhoods also highlights the nature of economic interdependence in the eastern neighborhood (Fig. 7.9). Once the western neighborhood is removed from consideration,

[14] The WITS software does not provide formal trade data for Taiwan; its share for the region is estimated from a variety of other sources, including the U.S. Department of Commerce, the World Bank, and Trading Economics.

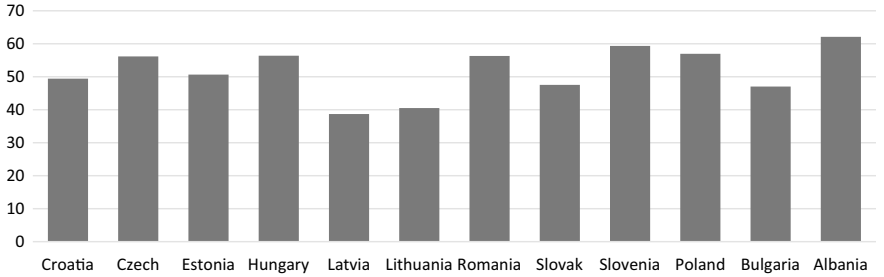

Fig. 7.8 East European region's western neighborhood's trade with Western Europe, 2019

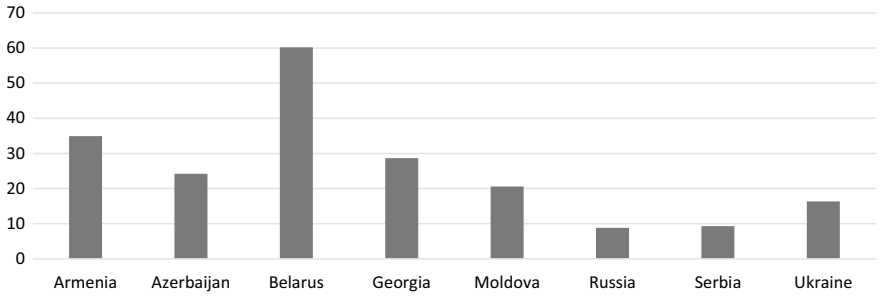

Fig. 7.9 East European region's eastern neighborhood's intra-neighborhood trade

it appears that with one exception (Belarus), there is not high economic interdependency within the neighborhood. One potential consequence is that the Russian Federation's influence over the neighborhood may be more fragile than we would have anticipated.

7.2.2 Military Strength

Figure 7.10 repeats the economic approach above, but the regional comparisons now are focused on a military strength dimension. The figure uses military spending in constant 2019 US dollars, modified by the combined two indexes on quality of governance, and compares regions in 2019 with 2002.[15]

The results reflect military strength imbalances across regions similar to the economic strength measure, although unsurprisingly and consistent with the military status of the United States, the imbalance is even more skewed towards North America and Western Europe. As of 2019, those two regions together held over two thirds of the combined military strength of all regions. At the same time, between 2002 and 2019 the North American share declined by 12% and that of Western

[15] When data from the World Bank on quality of governance becomes available on an annual basis.

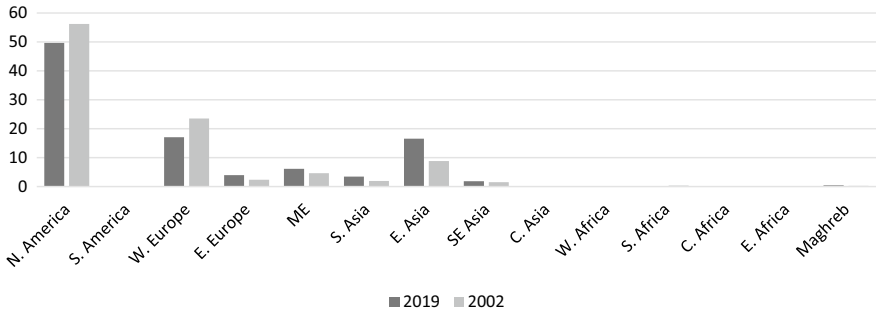

Fig. 7.10 Military spending. Modified by quality of governance, as percent of all regions, 2019, 2002

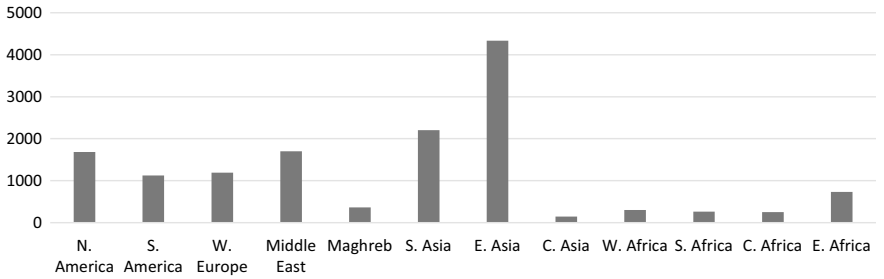

Fig. 7.11 Active duty military by region, 2020. *Source* The military balance

Europe by 27% from their 2002 shares of regional military strength. Meanwhile, East Asia's share increased by approximately 46% between 2002 and 2019. While those three regions contain the dominant share of regions' military strength, those of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and SE Asia range from two to six percent of the combined share of all regions. The remaining regions demonstrate very minimal military strength.

A somewhat different outcome is illustrated in Fig. 7.11, which contains data on the size of active armed forces across regions. Now East Asia dominates in size of personnel, followed by South Asia, the Middle East and SE Asia. All four of these regions reflect high intra-regional conflict zones.[16]

The size of armed forces however does not necessarily reflect fighting capabilities, nor military sophistication in terms of training, technology, or equipment. We thus add a measure of military spending divided by the size of active military forces as a shorthand for integrating military capacity to fight with the actual size of the military

[16] In East Asia a substantial number of active armed forces surround the two defining conflicts within the region: between N. Korea and S. Korea, and China vs. Taiwan; South Asia is dominated by the central rivalry between India and Pakistan; the Middle East is home to more rivalries per country than any other region; and SE Asia, while less contentious a region, is skewed by two countries engaged in large-scale domestic conflicts: Indonesia and Myanmar.

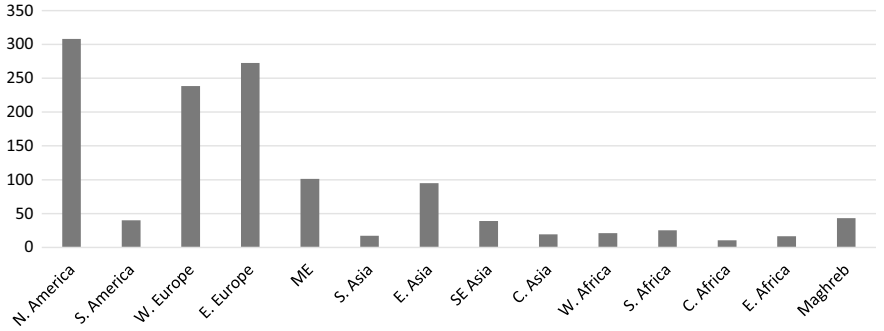

Fig. 7.12 Military spending divided by active military personnel, all regions, 2019

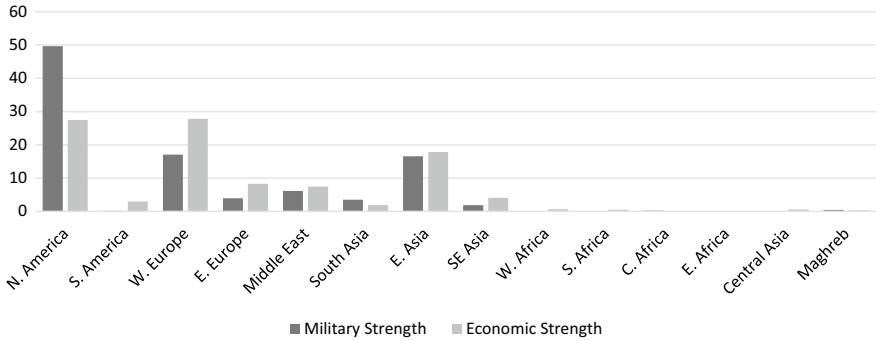

Fig. 7.13 Regional shares of economic and military strength, 2018

(Fig. 7.12). Doing so generates a completely different assessment of regional military capability: now North America, Eastern Europe and Western Europe appear as the strongest, with the Middle East and East Asia registering at less than half the values of the first three regions. Nine regions, including all those on the African continent along with Central Asia, SE Asia, and South America reflect negligible spending per capita on their militaries.

The combination of economic and military strength for each region is demonstrated in Fig. 7.13. Comparing the two dimensions, the data indicate that only one region (North America) substantially outperforms its economic strength with its military strength, albeit South Asia also overperforms on the military dimension. The two dimensions are roughly similar for East Asia and the Middle East, while South America, Western Europe,[17] Eastern Europe[18] and South East Asia substantially underperform in the military realm. As noted earlier the remaining regions exhibit substantial weakness on both dimension and barely show on the graph.

[17] Consistent with the arguments of the last three U.S. administrations that West Europe is failing to meet sufficiently its security obligations.

[18] Note that here both the eastern and western neighborhoods in East Europe are combined.

7.3 Regional Strength Implications

A summary of both economic and military strength considerations, along with key subcomponents are delineated in Table 7.1. We use the data from the table to address three of the concerns raised at the beginning of this chapter regarding the salience of regional strength.

7.3.1 Regional Order Construction

To what extent does the relative strength of regions tell us about the ability of regions to construct their own regional orders? We lack a yardstick with which to measure the extent of regional order development across all the regions in international politics, making a response to this question difficult to produce. At best, we can observe developments in the strongest and weakest regions and assess the development of their regional orders. In terms of regional economic order, the two strongest regions are clearly West Europe and North America. West Europe leads in the creation of an extensive economic regional order through the complex institutions of the European Union, and its degree of regional interdependence is by far the highest of any region (Fig. 7.6). This appears to be the case even with Brexit.

In North America, regional economic institutions are thinner, albeit highly salient: NAFTA and its most recent successor (USMCA) have continued to bind the region's members, despite the turbulence created by the Trump administration's dissatisfaction with the institutional mechanisms at play, broad unease in U.S. domestic politics about economic inequality and the loss of quality jobs, and the upsurge of animosities with Mexico and Canada over immigration and economic sanctions.

At the other end of the spectrum, the three weakest regions (East Africa, Central Africa, and the Maghreb, Table 7.1) lack virtually any regional infrastructure for economic cooperation. Central Africa has none, East Africa and the Maghreb have regional institutional capacities that have failed to function.[19]

In between these two extremes are regions and institutional structures of cooperation that illustrate the contextual relationship between regional strength, the role of a dominant state in the region, and/or the involvement of strong external actors, creating substantial complexity mitigating the salience of state strength. For example, the Southern African region's institutional architecture (Southern African Development Community and the Southern African Customs Union) exists in our tenth weakest region, and has had some impact on intra-regional relationships, but the region is dominated by a regional power (South Africa) that has used the infrastructure for its own purposes and perhaps at the cost to other regional members (Arnold and Roberts 2018).

[19] The Arab Maghreb Union has been labeled as the worst performing regional arrangement (Hamza 2017) while the East African Community has fared just as poorly (Himbara 2020).

Table 7.1 Summary of regional strength characteristics

Region	Economic strength	Ranking	RPE	Ranking	Q of G	Ranking	Region interdependence	Autonomy[20]	Military strength	Rank	Armed forces size/rank	Quality
North America	High	2	Low	14	High	2	Medium	High	High	1	**6**	**1**
South America	Low	7	High	5	Medium	7	Medium	High	Low	10	8	7
West Europe	High	1	High	6	High	1	High	High	Medium	2	7	3
East Europe	Low	4	High	4	Medium	4	Low[21]	Low	Low	5	5	2
Maghreb	Very low	12	High	2	Low	10	NA	NA	Low	8	10	6
Middle East	Low	5	Medium	7	Medium	6	Low	Low	Low	4	3	4
South Asia	Low	8	Low	13	Low	9	Low	Moderate	Low	6	2	12
East Asia	Medium	3	Medium	8	Medium	3	Medium	Moderate	Medium	3	1	5
Central Asia	Very low	11	High	3	Low	13	NA	NA[22]	Low	12	14	11
SE Asia	Low	8	Medium	10	Medium	5	Medium	Low	Low	7	4	8

(continued)

[20] Regional autonomy is considered as: (a) high if inter-regional trade is below 20% of the region's GDP; (b) moderate between 20 and 30%; and (c) low between 31 and 4%. South East Asia has registered the lowest level of autonomy at 45%.

[21] The western neighborhood is increasingly linked in its economic relations to the West European region; the eastern neighborhood demonstrates little in the way of intra-regional economic interdependence.

[22] NA designation indicates that the region has very limited economic strength.

Table 7.1 (continued)

Region	Economic strength	Ranking	RPE	Ranking	Q of G	Ranking	Region interdependence	Autonomy	Military strength	Rank	Armed forces size/rank	Quality
West Africa	Very low	9	Medium	9	Low	12	NA	NA	Low	13	11	10
Southern Africa	Very low	10	High	1	Medium	8	NA	NA	Low	11	12	9
Central Africa	Very low	13	Low	12	Low	11	NA	NA	Low	9	13	14
East Africa	Very low	14	Medium	11	Low	14	NA	NA	Low	14	9	13

This combination of regional weakness and dominant regional power is similarly underscored in South Asia in the creation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The region has low economic strength, but with a dominant regional power (India) and substantial intra-regional conflicts and rivalries. While SAARC exists, it has made little headway in increasing cooperation between its members or towards increasing regional integration. The combination of a dominant power but low regional economic strength leading to minimal institutionalized regional cooperation, even in the absence of major regional conflicts and rivalries, is also suggested in South America where the creation of MERCOSUR and UNASUR have bogged down over ideological differences, the surge of populism among member states, and the unilateral actions of the region's dominant power (Merke et al. 2021).

The East European region combines low economic strength, a dominant power (Russia) and deep divisions between its eastern and western neighborhoods. Despite Russian presence as a major power, no region-wide institution of cooperation exists in the region, although some "cooperative forums" (Jancosekova 2017) have been created in the western neighborhood, including the Visegrad[23] 4 (V4) and the Three Seas Initiative (TSI).[24] Neither of these informal institutions facilitate region-wide cooperation: its membership consists of the stronger economies in the region while the Visegrad 4 is meant to produce a common response among the V4 towards the EU; the primary purpose of the TSI is to withstand Russian and Chinese economic pressures (Wemer 2019).

The Middle East region combines low economic strength, a large variety of rivalries, and the absence of a dominant power. Unsurprisingly, it contains no effective regional organizations. What does exist are either sub-regional organizations (the Gulf Cooperation Council) or inter-regional organizations that are not specific to the Middle East (OPEC and the Arab League), resulting in what some observers have labeled the "mirage of regionalism" (Del Sarto and Soler i Lecha 2018) in the region.

Overall then, it appears that economic strength, even in combination with the presence of a dominant power in the region, are necessary but insufficient conditions for the creation of effective region-wide institutions of cooperation. Low economic regional strength alone predicts well to either no effective institutional creation or very ineffective ones; low economic strength plus the presence of a dominant power is more likely to create somewhat stronger institutional arrangements, albeit not much more effective ones than regions without a dominant power.

One major exception should be noted to this trend. South East Asia through ASEAN has developed an increasingly effective institutional context for intra-regional cooperation (Acharya 2021) even though the region is relatively low on economic strength and houses no dominant power. The region, however, is bordered by two major powers (China and Japan) and a regional power (India), and carries a long legacy of external major power involvement in the region (the U.S., especially

[23] Includes the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

[24] Including Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia…all in the western neighborhood.

during the Cold War). It is plausible that such pressures from outside powers have stimulated members of the region to gradually develop cooperative practices even in the context of economic weakness.[25]

7.3.2 Regional Strength And Regional Penetration

Here we are concerned with the extent to which weak regions become porous and open to penetration by terrorist organizations. We assume that they are more likely to operate in regions where, all else equal, both regional military strength and quality of governance are low. According to Table 7.1, the following regions qualify as having the lowest combination of overall military strength, the quality of their armed forces, and low levels of quality of governance: East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, and Central Asia. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the three African regions have recorded the largest increases in terrorist activity globally,[26] despite massive efforts by outside major powers to curb their activities (Marc 2021).[27]

All else, of course, is seldom equal: the outlier appears to be Central Asia, which, according to Table 7.1, ranks very low on quality of governance (13th among 14 regions), and low on the quality of the region's armed forces (12th on overall military strength and 11th in the quality of its military among 14 regions). Yet, apart from increasing violence on the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Central Asia has managed to avoid significant terrorist activity in its region (Lemon 2018).

7.3.3 Rising Powers and Regional Strength

What can regional strength tell us about rising powers? There are two types of potential rising powers. Those that are already the dominant powers in their region

[25] There may be an interesting parallel here with the Central Asian region. It has developed several institutions of cooperation although all of them encompass states far beyond its region. These institutions include the Commonwealth of Independent States, The Eurasian Economic Community, the Eurasian Economic Union (now defunct), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. All of them contain outside powers with substantial interests in Central Asia. Some have argued that the Central Asian region is seeking to emulate ASEAN (Lee et al. 2020; Starr 2019); a key difference with South East Asia appears to be however that until now the outside powers in Central Asia have been inside these arrangements (and often were vital to their creation) and seek to bend them to their own policy preferences. A recent announcement by Central Asian policymakers, an action that took 28 years since independence, indicates a willingness to forge new institutions that would exclude outside powers and would try to use new institutional mechanisms for both intra-regional cooperation and to balance against outside powers interested in the region (Starr 2019).

[26] The Global Terrorism index is accessed at: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/.

[27] A global risk consultancy (Verisk Maplecroft) reports that seven of the ten highest countries at risk of terrorist attacks are now in Sub-Saharan Africa (Raymakers 2020).

Table 7.2 Regional powers and the strength of their regions

Regional power	Region	Economic strength	Rank among regions	Military strength	Rank among regions
Germany	W. Europe	High	1	High	2
Brazil	S. America	Low	7	Low	10
India	S. Asia	Very low	8	Low	6
South Africa	S. Africa	Very low	10	Low	11
Nigeria	W. Africa	Very low	9	Low	13

Source Table 7.1

(regional powers) that may be seeking to enter the major power club, and those within regions that seek to become regional powers. While the second type of rise is salient for uncovering potential conflicts within regions, here we focus on the first type of "rise": regional powers that may seek to become major powers.

Typically, much of the academic literature has focused on the following states that are regional powers but may be "rising" to major power status: Brazil in South America, South Africa in Southern Africa, Nigeria in West Africa, India in South Asia, and Germany in Western Europe. We suggest a simple, two-fold approach to ascertaining whether these regional powers are likely to achieve major power status in the near future: opportunity and willingness. Opportunity is about having sufficient strength to engage actively in international politics beyond their own region. Some of these regionally dominant states appear to be regional powers only because their relative strength and status as dominant regional powers exists in very weak regions. Willingness requires that these states engage extensively in global relations beyond their own regions, generate additional strength to engage the global political system, and generate recognition and status from the global community for doing so (Volgy et al. 2011).[28]

With respect to opportunity, we first classify these five regional powers in terms of the regional context that they inhabit. Germany is the only one that "lives" within a strong region (Table 7.2); Western Europe ranks first in economic strength and second in military strength.[29] Two of the other four regional powers (Nigeria and South Africa) inhabit regions that are extremely weak both on economic and military dimensions. Brazil's situation is more complex; the South American region is not nearly as weak as the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, on either dimension, but the region is still not very strong. Meanwhile India inhabits a region that is very weak on the economic dimension but stronger on the military dimension. It would seem

[28] For Brazilian, South African and Turkish engagement with the global community versus their own regions, see Mesquita and Chien (2021).

[29] Germany has possessed sufficient capabilities, since the integration of West and East Germany, to be able to enter the major power club. In fact in had demonstrated sufficient willingness (and received sufficient status) to do so during the 1990s, only to change its orientation and to become the regional power in Western Europe as the EU experienced increasing difficulties (see Volgy et al. 2011; Speck 2014; Gaskarth and Oppermann 2021; for a somewhat alternative perspective, see Steinmeier 2016).

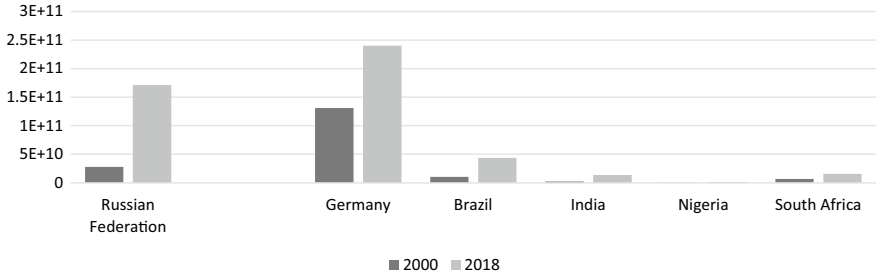

Fig. 7.14 Economic strength, regional powers compared to Russian Federation, 2000, 2018

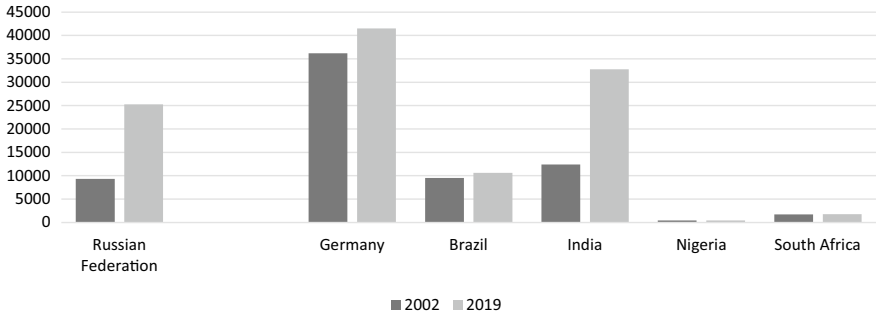

Fig. 7.15 Military strength of regional powers compared, 2002, 2018

that Brazilian and Indian prospects for "rising" into the major power club appear to be somewhat better on the opportunity dimension than those of Nigeria and South Africa.

How far are these states behind those that are already in the major power club? We set the threshold for opportunity to be a major power at the level exhibited by the member of the major power club with the lowest economic strength: the Russian Federation. Figure 7.14 compares the modified economic strength (controlling for political extraction and quality of governance) of these states for 2000 and 2018.[30] Germany clearly exceeds the economic strength of the Russian Federation, and on this dimension it demonstrates the opportunity to join the major power club. At the other extreme, India, Nigeria, and South Africa lag far behind. Brazil appears to have increased its economic strength substantially over the span of eighteen years, yet its strength is roughly 25% of Russia's (Fig. 7.15).[31]

[30] 2018 is the last year available for the political extraction part of the economic strength measure.

[31] Additionally, according to our economic strength index, Brazil reached its peak in 2011 and then began a decline; by 2018 its value on the index was 34% lower than in 2011.

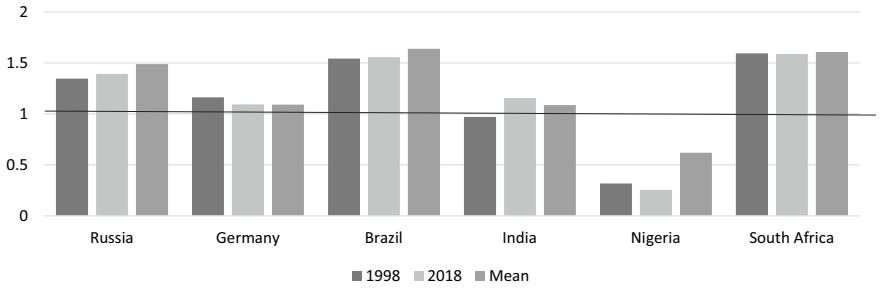

Fig. 7.16 Performance of selected states on relative political extraction index, 1998–2018

Turning to the index of military strength, we again assess these regional powers compared to the Russian Federation[32] (Fig. 7.17). Once more, South Africa and Nigeria are very far from the threshold of entry into the major power club, and their military strength has not increased since 2002. Brazil appears to be in somewhat of a better position, but its strength is approximately 58% lower than that of the Russian Federation. India shows substantial improvement in strength between 2002 and 2019, and by that date it, along with Germany, exceeds the minimum threshold for major club membership on the military strength dimension.

Finally, we offer a couple of indirect measures for the "willingness" dimension for these regional powers. First, we assess the extent to which they are willing to extract societal resources, measured through their RPE scores. For "rising powers" that have substantial economic strength, such extraction is not critical; for states that are low on economic strength but wish to become major powers, their RPE scores should show unusually high political extraction. Again, we use the Russian Federation as a comparison: it is not only the weakest member of the major power club, but as well, after the end of the Cold War it had to engage in very extensive political extraction in order to compensate for its collapsing economy (Fig. 7.16).

As a point of reference, the mean level of Russian political extraction from its economy between 1998 and 2018 was 1.5, or roughly fifty percent higher than what would be typically expected. Germany's, with a much more robust economy, was barely above the norm, yet its extraction was sufficient to substantially surpass Russia

[32] The values associated with the Russian Federation appear to be counterintuitive, especially since it is has extensive nuclear capabilities, although the emphasis on its nuclear arsenal is meant to offset its conventional military weakness (Ven Bruusgaard 2021). Its military strength is significantly constrained by its quality of governance, both in terms of the efficiency of its bureaucracy and control over corruption. It is also constrained by its relatively low economic strength (Lockie 2018). Anecdotally, two engagements underscore its questionable military strength. During the 1990s it fought two wars against Chechen rebels inside the Russian Federation and was initially beaten by ill-equipped Chechen rebels. In the Syrian civil war, it deployed cruise missiles for the first time; watching from the Kremlin, Putin and his advisors appeared to be overjoyed when the missiles actually hit their targets. Four of the missiles crashed in Iran.

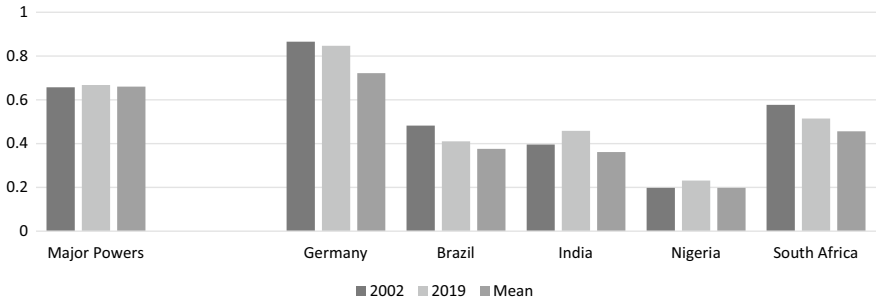

Fig. 7.17 Regional powers, performance on quality of governance index, 2002–2019

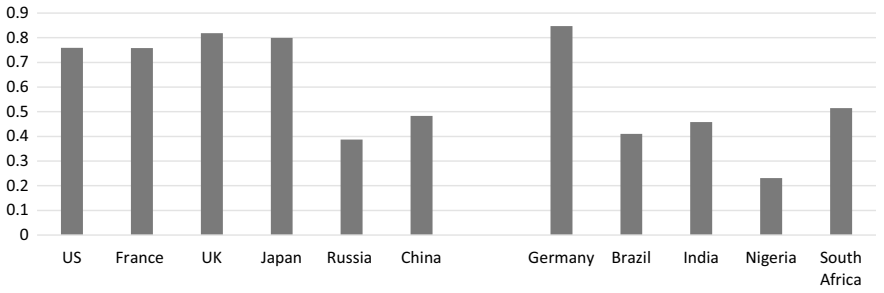

Fig. 7.18 Major and regional power scores on quality of governance, 2019

in economic strength. Brazil, although substantially weaker than those states, demonstrates the highest level of political extraction in the group, plausibly indicating a willingness to generate sufficient capabilities to perform as a major power.[33] A similar pattern appears for South Africa, although its economic strength is substantially below that of Brazil. Badly trailing is Nigeria, which substantially under-extracts from its economy and is not likely, under these conditions to advance out of its regional power status.

A different approach to willingness is addressed by the quality of governance index. Major powers need high levels of governmental efficiency and control over corruption in order to maximize their resources and the application of those resources for global level foreign policy pursuits. Figure 7.17 illustrates the degree of quality of governance demonstrated by the group of major powers and by potentially rising regional powers. Of the latter group, only Germany exceeds the average for major powers. Nigeria does the worst among regional powers, with its governance index at about a third of those of the major powers and declining somewhat over time.

A more nuanced point of comparison is provided in Fig. 7.18, comparing quality of governance scores of each major power with each regional power. It is clear that a state

[33] For the argument and evidence of Brazilian inter-regional involvement and very high costs leading to eventual retrenchment see Schenoni (2019).

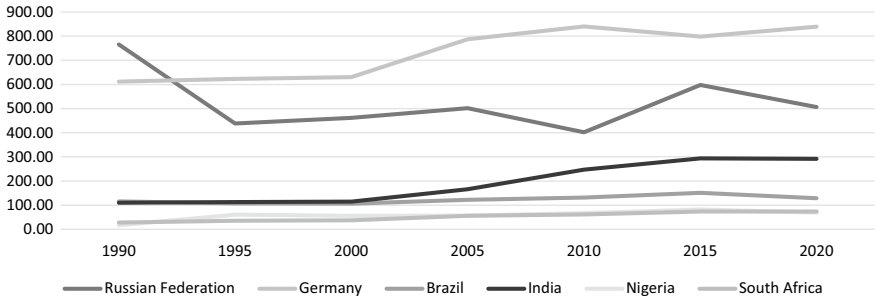

Fig. 7.19 Regional powers and their international presence,1990–2020. *Source* Elcano Royal Institute

can become a major power, given sufficient economic and military resources, even with low quality of governance scores, as demonstrated by the Russian Federation and China. Apropos the latter, it is also clear that improvement in quality of governance is a Herculean task: after nearly ten years of a concerted attack on corruption, China's quality of governance score has risen from 0.43 to 0.48, still far behind all but the Russian Federation among the major powers.

Regional powers, except for Nigeria, outperform the Russian Federation on quality of governance, although only Germany appears to significantly outperform China's standing (Fig. 7.18). Furthermore, over the 2002–2019 period, both Brazil and South Africa demonstrate a gradual but consistent *decline* in their scores.[34]

While we assume that quality of governance and political extraction reflect to some extent the willingness of regional powers to try to increase their capabilities if they aspire to become major powers, an alternative measure of willingness revolves around their levels of active presence in the international system. There is one measure that has been developed for gauging such presence: it is the Elcano Global Presence Index,[35] based on three dimensions of involvement in international affairs.[36]

To assess how regional powers' global presence compares to those of major powers, we set again the Russian Federation as the lowest threshold for major powers,[37] and compare regional powers' global presence with Russia (Fig. 7.19). The pattern appears to roughly approximate our discussion above regarding the gap between most of these regional powers and the major power club: Germany exceeds the Russian Federation while the other states are substantially below that threshold. India stands out as the one regional power that has somewhat closed the gap, although it appears not to have moved towards a greater international presence after 2015. The

[34] Data not shown but available from the authors.

[35] The index can be located at: https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/download.

[36] The three dimensions are in turn based on sixteen variables that create an overall index of global presence for 140 countries in international politics. The variables are noted at: https://www.globalpresence.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/home.

[37] A comparison between major powers on the overall index of global presence shows Russia as demonstrating the least amount of presence in global affairs among major powers.

decline in Brazil's global presence is consistent with analyses by academic observers (e.g., Farias and Alves 2020), lending some validity to the index.

Can regional powers come out of weak regions and rise into the major power club? We don't find a single regional power from weak regions that is presently on that trajectory, although a tenuous argument (along with some contradictory evidence) can be made for India's potential rise. While it may be plausible for a regional power from a weak region to emerge and claim the status of a major power, the evidence for such a prospect, at least in the short-term, does not seem to suggest so.

7.4 Conclusion

There is very substantial variation across regions regarding both the dimensions of economic and military strength. Three regions—Western Europe, North America, and East Asia—stand out as having very substantial economic and military capabilities. At the other end of the spectrum six regions—including all five regions on the African continent along with Central Asia—appear to be extraordinarily weak on both dimensions. Finally, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South East Asia and South Asia are somewhere between these two extremes, although trailing far behind the strongest regions. There also appear to be some significant differences between regions' economic versus their military strength. North America, and to a far smaller extent, South Asia substantially overperform on the military strength dimension compared to their relative economic strength; Western Europe first, but also East Asia and South America substantially underperform on military strength compared to their economic capabilities.

There also appears to be substantial variation in the extent to which regions are relatively autonomous from global economic processes, and especially regarding trade dependencies. The three strongest regions are also the least dependent on inter-regional trade for their economic well-being; the highest levels of inter-regional trade dependencies are evident for Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia.[38]

There are also major differences across regions when it comes to quality of governance issues, with the two strongest regions also ranking highest on this dimension and nearly all the weakest regions the lowest on quality of governance considerations. This outcome suggests that quality of governance likely acts as a major anchor weighing down those regions that engage in high political extraction but don't appear to significantly improve their economic well-being.[39]

[38] The emphasis here is on *relative* trade dependence. For example, North American trade as a percentage of its collective GDP in 2019 is about 26%, and 17% once its trade within the region is eliminated from calculation. That makes its inter-regional dependency score nearly tied with South America as the lowest among all regions. However, thirty years earlier its total trade dependency was only 19% compared to 26% in 2019, an increase of 34%. At the same time trade dependency for all nations increased by 50% through those 30 years.

[39] Including the Maghreb and Central Asian regions.

At the beginning we identified five potential consequences resulting from the relative strength of regions and explored three of those in this chapter. We find it reasonably plausible that regional strength matters for the creation and development of effective regional institutions of cooperation, typically accompanied by the existence of at least one dominant power in the region. We also find the weakest of regions to be especially susceptible to penetration by outside forces such as international terrorist organizations. Finally, we find a linkage between potential powers rising to major power status and the strength of their regions: only India appears to have gathered any traction in coming out of a weak region, and even for India, the record of its rise is a mixed one.

We noted two other plausible consequences that were not explored in this chapter: the relationship between penetration by external powers into regions and the degree to which regions with different levels of strength are able to bargain with other regions over economic and security relationships. While we assume that regional strength appears to matter in both of these contexts, further research is needed to explore these relationships.

We conclude this chapter with three caveats. First, for reasons elaborated above, we chose to "freeze" membership in regions rather than allowing membership to vary over time, which is antithetical to the ROW approach taken in Chap. 9. While this is appropriate for the type of research questions pursued here, it does create some conceptual difficulties. For one example, Turkey is treated as a member of the Middle East over time, even when it flirts with Europe far more than when it is interacting with the Middle East. A second one is Eastern Europe, which could have been, along with Western Europe, folded into one large region. However, that would have made it exceedingly difficult to demonstrate the pattern of changes between Cold War and post-Cold War eras, and to demonstrate the difficulties the Russian Federation would face in increasing its influence over what is now called Central and Eastern Europe.

A second caveat pertains to the homogeneity of regions. Clearly many of them are not homogeneous, and several of them contain critical "neighborhoods" that are often in conflict with each other. We demonstrated the differences between two neighborhoods in Eastern Europe as an illustration. However, we have not explicitly focused on such neighborhoods in other regions, such as the Middle East or South America. Further work should specify the existence of such neighborhoods and the consequences for their regions, including the extent to which such competing neighborhoods impact negatively on regional strength.

Finally, we have not focused on the extent to which intra-regional arrangements function to further strengthen (or, weaken) regions, whether such institutional developments occur in the realm of economic or security relationships, or both. We suspect that both South East Asia and Western Europe are actually stronger than our analysis suggests because both regions have developed somewhat effective (ASEAN) to very effective (EU) regional institutions of cooperation. Are there other regions where such institutional arrangements have increased a region's strength? This question

also requires further research, including the variety of conditions under which such regional institutions increase or decrease the collective strength of a region.[40]

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[40] One interesting candidate would be West Africa and ECOWAS, which started as an institution for economic cooperation but had also developed a strong security component (Powers 2004). How much stronger West Africa has become as a result is difficult to ascertain, and especially in the context of the range of issues facing the region (Malangwa 2017).

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Chapter 8
Conflict, Regions, and Regional Hierarchies

8.1 Introduction

Why are some regions in international politics more conflictual than others? Why have some regions developed complex mechanisms for collaboration over intra-regional security or economic relationships while other regions have failed to do so? Rigorous, comparative, large-N analyses of these questions at the region-level are difficult to find in the literature despite decades of scholarly attention to conflict and cooperation processes in international politics.

Clearly regions differ substantially from one another in terms of their conflict propensities. Appendix 2 illustrates such inter-regional variation of severe militarized interstate disputes (MIDs),[1] controlling for number of states in the region and across five decades that span the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Table 8.1 identifies the two most extreme cases of high and low conflict regions across the five decades and compares their per-state MID scores to the global mean for each decade. Some regions consistently exhibit extremely high conflict propensity over time (Middle East).[2] Some regions move from being highly conflictual to less so (East Asia, Southern Africa). Meanwhile, other regions are still substantially pacific, consistently "underperforming" the global average on MIDs (Europe, North America) during and after the Cold War.

[1] The regions and number of states per region are given in Appendix 1, excluding mini-regions containing fewer than four states.

[2] It is only in the last decade that the Middle East does not register as one of two extreme cases, although its number of severe MIDs during the 2000s (31 severe MIDs across 12 regional states) are the highest of any region. South Asia and Central Africa, with fewer regional states (six and eight respectively), produce nearly the same number of MIDs.

An earlier version of this work was published as Volgy, Thomas J., Kelly Marie Gordell, Paul Bezerra, and J. Patrick Rhamey. 2018. "Conflict, Regions, and Regional Hierarchies," in W.R. Thompson, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_8

Table 8.1 Most and least conflictual regions, by severe MIDs, 1950s through 2000s

Time frame	Region	Severe MIDs/capita	Region mean minus global mean
1950s	Middle East	4.40	2.30
	East Asia	4.00	1.90
	South Central America	0.50	−1.60
	North America	0.40	−1.70
1960s	East Asia	4.33	2.56
	Middle East	3.93	2.16
	Central Savannah	0.25	−1.52
	Western Europe	0.58	−1.19
1970s	Middle East	2.79	1.52
	East Asia	2.18	0.91
	Europe	0.48	−0.79
	Southeast Asia	0.50	−0.77
1990s	Middle East	2.69	1.72
	Central Africa	2.11	1.14
	Southern Africa	0.11	−0.86
	Europe	0.48	−0.49
2000s	South Asia	4.67	3.79
	Central Africa	2.88	2.00
	Southern Africa	0.11	−0.77
	North America	0.25	−0.63

We suspect that in the quantitative literature, the absence of a substantial focus on the region as an appropriate level of analysis in accounting for conflict and cooperation dynamics is due to three reasons. First, virtually no consensus exists on the proper definition of a region. Consequently, little agreement on an appropriate method of delineating regions and state membership within regions exists. This lack of consensus existed more than four decades ago (Thompson 1973), and it remains so today (e.g., see Chap. 2). This struggle also characterizes matters of national security policy as it does academia. Notably, the U.S. Department of Defense divides the land-based globe into six geographic regions, known as combatant commands,[3] that do not match the U.S. Department of State's six geographic bureaus.[4]

[3] Including Africa Command, Central Command (i.e., the Middle East), European Command, Indo-Pacific Command, Northern Command (i.e., North America, including Mexico), and Southern Command (i.e., Latin and South America). Space Command was established as the seventh geographic combatant command in 2019.

[4] Including African Affairs, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, European and Eurasian Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs, South and Central Asian Affairs, and Western Hemisphere Affairs. The State Department and the Department of Defense notably categorize India, Mexico, Canada, and northern Africa differently.

Second, a substantial disconnect exists between scholars who engage in large-N studies of conflict and those who focus primarily on regions with different methodological and theoretical lenses. For instance, scholars who integrate regional variables into empirical models seldom address or cite the rich literature on regionalism and regional powers. Third, the move from focusing on states or dyads to regions as the appropriate unit of analysis dramatically reduces the number of observations available to quantitative researchers. This reduction creates vexing issues for testing hypotheses at the regional level. Thus, scholars seldom evaluate explanations and robust findings from the state and dyadic levels of analysis at the regional level.[5]

We are not the first to note this lack of attention in the literature or seek a solution to it (e.g., Fawn 2009, Hurrell 2007, Nolte 2010, Lemke 2002, 2010, Acharya 2007). Where we do differ from previous systematic, large-N analyses, however, is in offering a detailed, comparative analysis at the regional level. As a part of this effort, we pursue two objectives. First, we integrate extant findings from other levels of analysis intending to stipulate conditions under which some regions are likely to be more conflict-prone than others. Second, we explain regional conflict patterns based on the presence or absence of regional hierarchies that may manage conflicts.[6]

In what follows, we offer, first, a theoretical framework designed for a comparative analysis of regions for explaining variation in intra-regional conflicts between states. Second, we highlight the Regional Opportunity and Willingness (ROW) approach to regional delineation that allows for changes in regional composition over time. Third, we test two central hypotheses derived from our theoretical framework. Lastly, we conclude with a discussion of results and additional thoughts regarding the plausible causal mechanisms between hierarchy and conflict mitigation at the regional level.

8.2 Theoretical Framework

Our central argument is that regions can be differentiated by whether they contain one or more dominant states—major powers and/or regional powers—that can mitigate conflict within their regions.[7] At the global level, the literature acknowledges the centrality of major powers (and less so regional powers) in influencing international politics. Long cycle theorists, hegemonic stability theorists, power transition theorists, hierarchical theorists, and neorealists have all pointed to the salience of major powers in creating order and stability in international politics. The same theorists also indicate the salience of major powers for generating system-wide conflict when they contest for global leadership.

At the global level, two sets of causal factors appear to link major powers to patterns of conflict in international politics. One is a deterrence function created

[5] One recent notable exception, see McCallister (2016).

[6] As Flemes and Lemke (2010) note, systematic comparisons between regions with and without hierarchies are likely to be the key to understanding regional dynamics.

[7] And plausibly make it costly as well for outside powers to interfere in regional affairs.

by their relative potential power over other states. To the extent that major powers possess distinctive capabilities with which to pursue their interests and the orders they may seek to create, their active role in international affairs functions as a deterrent for conflict initiation by others. Major powers' preponderant capabilities signal substantial costs to those opposing them and can dissuade less powerful states from directly challenging these powerful actors.[8]

A second, and a more dynamic causal agency, however, is suggested by the notion that major powers seek to create rules and norms in international politics—order building—that simultaneously assist them in pursuing their objectives while functioning to minimize conflict and disorder in the system. Power transition theory, hegemonic stability theory, hierarchical theory, and long cycle theory all suggest this dynamic of order creation by major powers. Of course, at the global level, conflicts may still arise under a number of circumstances, including when the distribution of power changes; the global hierarchy is weakened; or dissatisfaction with extant rules and norms, on the part of rising challengers, leads to leadership contestation and demands for changes to existing orders.

How does all this apply to an understanding of conflict propensity within regions? Major and regional powers do not exist in a vacuum. They reside in geopolitical spaces (regions) where their impacts should be even more salient than globally. Furthermore, the stability of the home region is vital to major powers seeking to pursue their interests in international politics as ordering relationships within the home region is essential to such endeavors. For regional powers (states that are dominant in their regions but lacking the capability, willingness, and/or status needed to engage outside of their regions actively), stable relationships within their home regions should be just as meaningful: the status of being a regional power conveys that such a state is capable and willing to exercise the leadership needed to create order within its neighborhood. At the same time, an inability to do so likely jeopardizes its status as a regional power. Additionally, for regional powers with global aspirations (e.g., Brazil, India), disordered regional politics requires finite resources to stabilize relationships in the home region rather than utilizing those resources for various global interests.

The two causal agents—deterrence and order building–noted earlier regarding global politics, should be just as applicable to regions, if not more so. The deterrence function, resulting from a dominant power within its region, should dampen potential conflicts emanating from less powerful states and should be more salient within regions than globally due to actors' proximity and the consequent possibility of such conflicts potentially impacting the dominant state directly.[9] The order-building explanation, a more thorough approach to explaining regional relationships, is easier to accomplish within a region than creating and enforcing the same globally. These

[8] For example, see McDonald (2015).

[9] For an excellent summary of the theoretical arguments including both power transition theory and bargaining theories, their role in the literature, and their applicability to regions, see Peterson and Lassi.

two plausible impacts at the region level correspond to two different "logics of hierarchy" in international politics.[10] Our approach suggests that not only can such logics co-exist where dominant powers reside, but in addition, a comparative assessment of regions suggests that hierarchical arrangements at the regional level are not constant but vary across regions and across time.[11]

We view dominant states—major powers and/or regional powers—as entailing more than substantial capabilities. Dominant powers have unique capabilities (both economic and military), are willing to act consistently with those capabilities, and they receive significant status as dominant powers from the community of states for doing so (Volgy et al. 2011; Cline et al. 2011). Additionally, several factors distinguish major powers from regional powers. Major powers have dominant capabilities compared to the entire international political system rather than simply their region. Their activities in international politics consistently span several regions beyond their own. Lastly, the global community of states attributes their status as a major power. Regional powers meet these requirements with reference to their regions of residence only.

By way of examples, before 1939, the U.S. may have had capabilities consistent with being a major power. Still, it was unwilling to act as one consistently and did not receive major power status. Japan in the 1980s could have qualified as a regional power in East Asia based on its capabilities and willingness to engage other states in the region but was not attributed regional power status by East Asian states (Cline et al. 2011). Likewise, Saudi Arabia had capabilities that allowed for regional power status in the Middle East in the first decade after the Cold War. Yet its more extensive engagement outside of the region did not qualify it as a regional power (Cline et al. 2011).

Our conceptualization of major and regional powers integrates a status attribution component to delineation.[12] The inclusion of status attribution to major and regional powers by other states should have two effects. First, status likely adds additional "soft power" to those states receiving it, allowing for additional capability in pursuing objectives, including bringing order to their regions. Second, as status theorists have argued (e.g., Bull 1977; Dafoe et al. 2014; Larsen and Shevchenko 2010; Sylvanetal. 1998; Ward 2020), status attribution involves both rights and obligations for the recipient and some deference to the recipient by those attributing it status (Ward

[10] Bially Mattern and Zarakol (2016) propose three "logics of hierarchy" that provide different causal mechanisms in hierarchies that may create stability and order in international politics. Of those, the deterrence function we note here approximates the logic of positionality; the order building explanation corresponds to the logic of trade-offs within hierarchies.

[11] Butt (2013) suggests, regarding South America, that hierarchical arrangements may ebb and flow within a single region over time, due to the interests of the dominant state. We are suggesting that the composition of regions also change over time, so that some regions may acquire or lose a dominant power, some consistently hold a dominant power in residence, and some regions never develop the conditions that allow a dominant power to arise. However, we are not seeking to explain the conditions that create hierarchies in some regions but not others. Our task here is limited to assessing the effects of hierarchies once they arise.

[12] For the salience of status considerations see Paul et al. (2014), Wohlforth et al. (2018).

2020). This status attribution component makes both the deterrence and the order-building arguments more credible on the part of these powers.

The existence of dominant states in regions (either major powers or regional powers) should critically differentiate regions' conflict propensities. The list of regions noted in Appendix 1 suggests four types of regions. One type contains neither a regional nor a major power. A second type contains a regional power only. A third type contains a single major power. The fourth type contains a combination of powers, either major powers living within the same region or a mix of regional and major powers in residence.[13]

Given our argument, we suggest that regions lacking a major or regional power presence are likely to be much more conflictual than otherwise irrespective of the causal agency involved and all else being equal. Regions with mixed hierarchies—where two or more powers co-exist—offer a category that, at first glance, suggests that potentially competing dominant powers within the same region are likely to exacerbate regional conflict. That certainly had been the case for centuries in Europe and intermittently in Asia as well. However, we propose that two factors dampen such conflicts and make such regions less conflict-prone than regions without any dominant powers. First, the co-existence of two or more major powers within the same region will not necessarily lead to major conflicts if such powers are relatively satisfied with the status quo in the region and create cooperation-facilitating conditions and institutions within the region. In fact, the cumulative capacity of more than one dominant power may be instrumental in creating substantial regional institutions both in the security and the economic spheres. This explanation may, in part, be the story of Western Europe and the rise of the European Union. Buttressed by dominant powers inside the region—the United Kingdom and France—and by American global power, cooperation took hold, and conflict dissipated. Less successfully, it may also be the story of the nascent cooperative architecture developed by the Russian Federation and China after the Cold War in Central Asia.

Second, we suggest that the introduction of thermonuclear military capabilities into the relationships between major powers through the Cold War and afterward has created a dramatic and, perhaps, an extraordinary amount of caution between major powers even when they contest global or regional leadership. No two major powers have directly fought a war with each other since 1945, and not since 1962 have two major powers escalated tensions vis-à-vis each other to a point verging on a serious outbreak of direct hostilities.[14] When major powers share a region, such extraordinary

[13] Given our measurement strategies, discussed below, it is plausible for two or more major powers to exist in one region since measures delineating major powers are on a global scale. Regional power designation, however, makes it virtually impossible for a region to contain more than one regional power. Thus, we have no cases of regions with more than one regional power.

[14] There have been, of course, actions that could have led to substantial consequences between major powers, including the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by NATO forces in 1999, the more recent "provocations" between Russian and NATO aircraft in Europe, incidents in the South China Sea, or Chinese and Russian cyber hacking of U.S. targets. None of these actions created security tensions reminiscent of the Cuban Missile Crisis, however, as the nuclear capable major powers involved were extraordinarily cautious not to escalate tensions further.

caution should be even more pronounced. Indeed, common living arrangements may lead to complementary security and economic institutions, as with the EEC and NATO in Western Europe and COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe during the Cold War creating stability and order within distinct spheres of influence. It may even be possible to create common cooperative institutions in regions when the preferences of the major powers coincide, as is the case with Western Europe and the evolution of the European Union. We would expect that regions containing two or more dominant states in conflict with each other would be unable to create a strong and substantial organizational infrastructure for the whole region, however.[15] Nevertheless, the creation of partial and even competing forms of infrastructure may function to mitigate some conflicts within parts of the region[16] and thus reduce the total amount of intra-regional conflicts. At the same time, the deterrence function of dominant powers would continue to exercise substantial impact in mitigating potential conflicts rising from other states in the region.[17]

Thus, we anticipate that since the 1960s, regions with one or more dominant powers, all else being equal, would also be more pacific than regions without any dominant power. Of course, all else is not equal, and we suggest at least three sets of factors condition the relationship between the presence—or absence—of such hierarchies in regions and regional conflict. First, we expect that regions will vary significantly in terms of what issues need mitigation. Consequently, where there are states at the top of the regional pyramid, regional powers will vary in terms of the range of problems confronting their home region. Plausibly, some regions require little conflict management since there may be minimal potential for conflict to emerge. Other regions may be rife with fault lines that potentially generate substantial conflicts between members, making the task of conflict mitigation highly challenging for the dominant power(s) in the region.[18] Regions are not automatically conflict-prone; depending upon the characteristics of states that compose them, regions should vary

[15] Note the creation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Not only did the USSR initiate the first conference, but it also joined the OSCE with its Warsaw Pact allies and remained as a member even as a focus on human rights issues emerged. Additionally, China and Japan are both members of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, ASEAN Plus 3, East Asia Summit, and Asian Defense Ministers Meeting Plus. While more than "talking shops," these institutional foundations of cooperation lack organizational autonomy and have been more focused on conflict management than conflict prevention or conflict resolution (Wacker 2015).

[16] McDonald (2015) examines all dyads during the Cold War and finds that states linked to the Soviet Union's "hierarchy" were more pacific in their interactions than states not linked to it militarily.

[17] The unwillingness of China to curb North Korean belligerence in East Asia appears to be an exception to this generalization. Yet, even in this instance, China agreed to support UN Security Council resolution 2270 in March 2016, sanctioning North Korea. Chinese authorities also indicated at the UN General Assembly in 2016 that they were willing to cooperate with the U.S. to restrict further North Korean access to nuclear technology (Mason et al. 2016).

[18] In this sense, we concur with Butt's (2013) argument that both the concepts of hierarchy and anarchy, rather than being constants, can be considered as varying across regions and within regions, over time.

substantially with respect to conditions already identified in the literature that stimulate or inhibit conflicts between states. At the aggregate, different regions bring to the analytical table substantial differences among them with respect to such conditions. We label these considerations "baseline conditions."

We suggest six such baseline conditions that should differentiate regions. The literature suggests the first three as potentially generating substantial conflicts between states. These include interstate rivalries (Rasler and Thompson 2005), unresolved territorial claims (Vasquez 2001; Gibler 2012), and severe domestic disturbances in the form of civil wars whose consequences may diffuse through the region in terms of combatants and refugees (Gleditsch et al. 2008; Salehyan 2008; Schultz 2010; Jenne 2015). Scholars empirically link these three conditions to severe militarized disputes and wars between states at the dyadic level. Thus, regions containing substantial fault lines are likely to generate numerous conflicts between the states populating them.

In contrast, the literature also suggests three conditions that appear to ameliorate substantial conflicts between states. These include regime similarity (and especially similar democratic polities),[19] extensive trade relationships,[20] and common membership in (regional) intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).[21] Members of regions rich in these three characteristics are likely to settle their policy differences short of militarized interstate disputes and wars.[22]

The baseline conditions suggest two important considerations regarding regional conflict propensity and its management by dominant states. First, we expect that regions will vary in conflict propensity depending on these baseline conditions and not solely due to the presence or absence of a dominant state in the region. For instance, the Middle East lacks both a regional or major power, and it also constitutes a region whose baseline conditions predict very high levels of conflict. Would the presence of a regional or major power residing in the Middle East ameliorate such conflicts? Our argument suggests a positive answer, but the baseline context in which we place the Middle East indicates that it is far from just the absence of a dominant state that is primarily responsible for its high levels of conflict.

Second, the baseline conditions suggest that ameliorating conflicts will require varying use of dominant states' capabilities since the severity of challenges posed by these conditions also varies. For example, consider Brazil in South America and India in South Asia. The baseline conditions in the South American region place

[19] For a recent review of findings, theoretical underpinnings, and theoretical contestations, see Hegre (2014). For the interrelationship between territorial peace and democratic peace arguments, see Owsiak. For the influence of democracies within a region, see McCallister (2016).

[20] For a discussion of competing findings and caveats regarding trade impacts on conflict, see Bell and Long (2016).

[21] For example, see Russett and Oneal. (2001). Boehmeret al. (2004) qualify the argument to suggest that it is primarily structured organizations that carry this impact on conflict.

[22] We avoid here a discussion about what creates these conditions. For example, it is plausible that there are important interconnections between major powers' influence on their regions in creating democratic regime change, resolution of territorial claims, structural changes encouraging intra-regional trade, etc. (see Rasler and Thompson 2005; McDonald 2015).

fewer demands on the regional power to manage conflicts (no extant rivalries, mostly democratic regimes) than they do in South Asia (ongoing inter-state rivalries, few democratic regimes, limited economic interdependencies).[23]

The last point underscores a second qualification. As regions are not homogeneous with respect to baseline conflict conditions, neither are major and regional powers with respect to their abilities to use their capabilities and the extent to which they may seek to influence relationships in their regions (Nolte 2010; Prys 2010). Concerning major or regional powers' abilities to influence their regions, dominant states, by definition, have sufficient capabilities to do so. However, they may diverge in the relative competence with which they can translate their extensive resources into effective conflict mitigation strategies. By way of illustration, one can compare Brazil in South America to Nigeria in West Africa. Both enjoy dominant resource capabilities in their respective regions. However, according to World Bank rankings,[24] Brazil's governmental effectiveness is consistently at least three times higher than that of Nigeria. This ranking suggests that, should they confront similar challenges within their respective regions, Nigeria's ability to translate its substantial resources to govern its region effectively[25] is far lower than Brazil's ability to do so.

Major powers and regional powers may also differ in how much and what types of control they wish to exercise over their regions of residence. For example, Prys (2010) suggests that regional powers vary from acting relatively detached to being regional "dominators," depending on how they prioritize domestic,[26] regional, or global concerns as well as the extent to which their regions become permeable to global dynamics and the intrusions of outside powers.

The relative permeability of regions leads to the third qualification to the central argument: the literature on regions broadly acknowledges that regions, with or without dominant powers, are far from being closed sub-systems (e.g., Buzan and Waever 2003). Instead, they vary substantially over the extent to which they are open to global dynamics and penetration by major powers from outside the region. To some degree, nearly all regions are influenced by major powers' efforts to create system-wide norms and rules and global contestation (along with efforts to enforce) over those rules and institutions. However, some regions are more likely to contest

[23] For a similar argument, see Carranza (2017).

[24] http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators.

[25] Governmental effectiveness is a function of both ineffective bureaucracies and/or cultures of corruption. Policy makers who are rent seekers also try to minimize potential domestic opposition to their rent seeking behavior. In the case of Nigeria, this may yield a substantially hollowed out military that is incapable of revolting against civilian elites, and incapable of addressing substantial security concerns within Nigeria and in its region, despite the size of its military spending (Chayes 2015).

[26] Domestic politics may impact major powers as well. Consider the case of the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), designed to create an alternative set of rules and norms for economic relations between the U.S. and its Pacific Rim partners to mitigate Chinese influence. The net effect on the U.S. economy did not appear to be substantial (estimated at one percent of its GDP over a decade) but may have been a politically important counterweight to Chinese influence among Asian states. Yet, it was met with rejection from both the Republican and Democratic 2016 Presidential nominees as trade agreements became unpopular with key segments of the public.

systemic rules than others, with or without the support of major or regional powers that may be dissatisfied with the status quo (Acharya 2007). Likewise, regions will vary in the degree to which they are able and willing to resist or welcome external involvement by outside major powers in their security and economic affairs (Goh 2007, 2013; Katzenstein 2005).

We expect that the presence or absence of dominant powers in regions will significantly impact regional conflict propensity. However, we qualify these effects by the three conditions noted above: the baseline conditions extant within regions, the capabilities of dominant powers to develop mechanisms to mitigate conflict, and the extent of penetration into the region by global forces and outside major powers. Within this context, we forward two key hypotheses:

H_1: *All else being equal, the presence of one or more major powers in a region will mitigate levels of conflict within a region, compared to regions where there are no dominant powers.*

H_2: *All else being equal, the presence of a regional power will mitigate levels of conflict within a region, compared to regions where there are no dominant powers.*

These two hypotheses do not address the causal links we specified earlier regarding the effect dominant states would have on their regions; instead, they predict conflict outcomes based on the presence or absence of dominant powers. If we cannot show such effects, there is little use in searching for evidence regarding whether or not the causal link is a deterrence function and/or actual order building by dominant powers. However, if we find evidence that the presence of a dominant power within a region leads to less conflict therein, then it may become worthwhile to move beyond testing the relationship between regional hierarchies and conflict to probing the two causal linkages suggested by the literature.

8.3 Research Design Considerations

8.3.1 Delineating Regions and State Regional Membership

As we had noted earlier, there is neither consensus nor any emerging "gold standard" for delineating regions in international politics. Typically, the choices for delineating regions consist of identifying parts or all of meta-regions (Asia, Europe, etc.), using prior generic classifications (World Bank, United Nations, Correlates of War), or identifying a specific characteristic around which states may cluster in a geographical space (ideational similarity, membership in a security complex or regional organization, or falling under the dominance of a very strong state). The static nature of these regional classifications, however, does not match the dynamic nature of the states comprising them and, in some cases, creates a troublesome tautology.

To test our arguments regarding hierarchy and conflict propensity in regions, we need an approach to regional delineation that avoids tautological consequences and maximizes variation across both our dependent variable and our variables of interest. For example, Lemke (2002, 2010) delineates regions based on the existence of regional powers (hierarchy) residing within a region; we need to compare regions with and without hierarchies. Numerous other approaches use the existence of regional organizations (both security and economic organizations) to delineate the boundaries of regions; we need to compare regions with and without such structures of cooperation.

We opt for an approach that combines geographical proximity, opportunity by states to reach each other, and their willingness to do so, resulting in a clustering of states that constitute a region. We label this approach Regions of Opportunity and Willingness (ROW). The advantage of this classification scheme is that it creates regions that change over time: while geographical proximity is invariant, and opportunity (capability to interact) changes relatively slowly, willingness is much more variable. The delineation thus yields evolving regional clusters and allows for changes both to the numbers of regions in the system and the movement of states in and out of regions (within geographical limits), consistent with changes in geopolitical context (Fawcett 2004).

The methodology for delineating ROW regions is elaborated in Chap. 2; here we provide a brief summary. First, we measure the *opportunity* constraint for regional membership by calculating each state's ability to reach others in the international system. yielding a series of capability "bubbles" radiating outward from each state's capital that degrade across distance.

To estimate *willingness* to be part of the region, we aggregate the total number of scaled foreign policy actions flowing between actors that pass our threshold for opportunity annually. Those states that engage in an above average proportion of their total foreign policy activity directed toward another state within the region surpass the willingness threshold.

Next, we use network analysis (e.g. Hanneman and Riddle 2005) to identify unique clusters of interaction among three or more states; from this matrix of dyadic relationships, the clique algorithm determines patterns of connections between states, and the resulting endogram output[27] depicts groups of states organized according to the extent of correlation in their patterns of ties within the network.

Two additional actions are taken to ensure geographic relevance and stability in regional membership. First, we require clique members to be contiguous over land or less than 500 miles of water. Second, we place states in the region within which they most frequently identify across each decade. Thus, each region has a ten-year lifespan. The shifting dynamics reflecting stability and change are consistent with the "observable power and purpose" of states (Katzenstein 2005, 2), mirroring aspects of regional conceptions employed in comparative regionalism (Paul 2012, 4).

Our approach yields between 8 and 14 regions (Appendix 1) depending on the decade for three decades during the Cold War (1950s, 1960s, 1970s), and two decades

[27] For this portion of identifying ROW regions, we use UCINET.

after the end of the Cold War (1990s, 2000s).[28] At least 75% of all states in each decade are included in one of our regions; the states excluded for their failure to cluster are typically micro-states with very limited capabilities and interactions.

8.3.2 Delineating Regional and Major Powers, and Regions with and without Hierarchy

The next step revolves around the identification of regional and major powers and their placement within the ROW regions. We rely on two earlier efforts to identify major powers (Volgy et al. 2011) and regional powers (Cline et al. 2011).[29] The application of these procedures, excluding regions with fewer than four states, yields 18 regions without any hierarchy, 12 regions with a regional power, and 11 regions that contain at least one major power across the four decades.[30] We then create two binary hierarchical variables. In the first, we differentiate between regions with a regional power versus regions without any hierarchy—*Regional Power Presence*. In the second, we differentiate regions with one or more major powers versus regions without any hierarchy—*Major Power Presence*. These function as our central independent variables of interest in the empirical models. We employ region year as our unit of observation; across the four decades, accounting for lagging independent variables, utilizing region year as the unit of analysis yields an N of 369 observations in our base model.

[28] Consistent with dyadic and monadic analyses that may drop micro-states from their analyses, we exclude all regions from our analyses that include fewer than four states. The decade of the 1980s is not included since reliable events data are not available for the first half of the decade.

[29] Major powers are identified as such when their economic capabilities (GDP) and economic reach (trade/global trade), military capability (military spending) and military reach (military spending/military personnel), global activity, and status attribution (diplomatic missions received and staffed by high level diplomats) exceed at least two standard deviations from the mean for the global community. For regional powers, these variables are linked to the mean for the region. All variables are aggregated at five year intervals.

[30] See Appendix 1. The delineation of regional powers requires approximations of status attribution using diplomatic missions. Data on diplomatic missions prior to 1965 are problematic (failing to distinguish between mission in country and the head of mission), allowing us to estimate status attribution for major powers but not for regional powers during the 1950s. Thus, we drop from our analysis regions during the 1950s.

8.3.3 Dependent Variables: MID Frequency and State MID Involvement

We create two versions of the dependent variable, focused on severe MIDs[31] occurring within ROW regions. One version is simply the number of severe MIDs occurring in the region[32] annually, divided by the number of states in the region—*MID frequency*. The denominator controls for opportunity to engage in MIDs, making small regions and large regions comparable. Alternatively, it is plausible to gauge both the extent of regional conflict and its possible diffusion[33] by observing the number of states in the region engaged in severe conflicts, again controlling for region size—*state MID involvement*. This is the second version of our dependent variable; below we report results using both versions, and we expect similar results for both.

8.3.4 Independent and Control Variables

Corresponding to our baseline conditions, we develop three measures that are likely to exacerbate conflicts within regions. First, we identify the number of *inter-regional rivalries* ongoing for each year within the region. Second, we count the *number of civil wars* occurring annually within the region. Third, we count the *number of territorial claims* made annually within the region. Next, we develop three measures likely to create more pacific relationships within the region: the percent of *intra-regional trade*; the percent of *democracies* extant in the region; and the number of common memberships shared in *regional organizations*. All six variables are measured annually for the decade-long life cycle of regions and are lagged one year.

Additionally, we create two variables that seek to tap global dynamics and major power intrusion into regions. The first is a binary variable that identifies whether the observations are during the *Cold War* or afterwards. The second seeks to gauge long-term intrusion into the region by outside major powers and is measured by the number of defense pacts—*External Alliances*—between regional members and outside major powers.

Finally, we create a time counter to control for time effects during regional life cycles. Appendix 3 provides a list of all variables, their manipulation, and the sources utilized. Descriptive statistics for all variables are found in Appendix 4.

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[31] For all sources and manipulations, see Appendix 3.

[32] Accounting for the location of the MID is not an easy task. We undertook the following steps to ascertain MID location: established coding guidelines based on geographic onset location; dispute context; and member involvement. MIDs must have met at least one of three criteria; most MIDs met at least two. For detailed steps, see kellygordell.com/research.

[33] For a review of the diffusion literature and its implications for regions, see Solingen (2012).

Table 8.2 OLS regression models for major and regional powers and regional conflict, with number of severe MIDs/number of states in region

	Base model		Major power presence		Regional Power Presence	
Hierarchy	–	–	−0.167***	(0.030)	−0.116***	(0.028)
# intra-regional rivalries $_{t-1}$	0.024***	(0.004)	0.018***	(0.004)	0.020***	(0.004)
# civil wars $_{t-1}$	0.017*	(0.007)	0.004	(0.007)	0.042***	(0.010)
Territorial claims $_{t-1}$	0.156**	(0.053)	0.262***	(0.071)	0.183***	(0.050)
% regional trade $_{t-1}$	−0.033*	(0.013)	–	–	0.009	(0.019)
% regional democracies $_{t-1}$	−0.156***	(0.042)	−0.069	(0.053)	−0.166***	(0.039)
IGO membership $_{t-1}$	−0.142**	(0.044)	−0.180**	(0.056)	−0.159***	(0.048)
External alliances $_{t-1}$	0.082**	(0.026)	0.048	(0.029)	0.128***	(0.026)
Cold war	−0.072**	(0.023)	−0.061*	(0.025)	−0.104***	(0.028)
Time counter	−0.003	(0.004)	−0.004	(0.004)	−0.006	(0.004)
Constant	0.235***	(0.042)	0.217***	(0.048)	0.165***	(0.048)
Observations	366		261		267	
Adjusted R^2	0.316		0.408		0.451	
AIC	−154.6		−176.0		−121.1	
BIC	−115.6		−140.4		−81.62	

Robust standard errors reported in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

8.4 Empirical Analysis

We present the results of our analysis using OLS regressions[34] for two different dependent variables. Table 8.2 reflects the results using the number of severe MIDs—*MID frequency*; Table 8.3 utilizes the number of states involved in severe MIDs—*state MID involvement*.[35] In each table the first model notes the effects on the dependent variable without consideration of hierarchical conditions: showing the cumulative impact of baseline conditions; global conditions; and time effect controls. The second model in the table adds major power presence, a binary variable contrasting conditions between regions with one or more major power with regions without any dominant powers. The third model adds regional power presence to the base model,

[34] By relaxing some assumptions regarding the applicability of count models, we are also able to run negative binomial regressions for the two dependent variables. The results for our key independent hierarchy variables are quite similar. For the utility of using OLS regression for region year units of observation, see Lemke (2002). In all models we opt for random effects over fixed effects. Fixed effects would assume that our regions are stable over time; given that our regions are themselves dynamic, evolving in both number and composition, this assumption would be untenable.

[35] In the Major Power Presence models for both tables, we omit the regional trade variable as it correlates at more than 0.80 with the major power hierarchy indicator and introduces problematic collinearity. We return to this issue in the discussion section.

Table 8.3 OLS Regression models for major and regional powers and regional conflict with number of states in region involved in Severe MIDs/number of states in region

	Base model		Major power presence		Regional power presence	
Hierarchy	–	–	−0.287***	(0.052)	−0.133**	(0.048)
# Intra-regional rivalries $_{t-1}$	0.058***	(0.007)	0.051***	(0.008)	0.055***	(0.009)
# civil wars $_{t-1}$	0.023*	(0.012)	0.005	(0.010)	0.059***	(0.017)
Territorial claims $_{t-1}$	0.236**	(0.084)	0.317**	(0.112)	0.236**	(0.084)
% regional trade $_{t-1}$	−0.069**	(0.021)	–	–	0.001	(0.032)
% regional democracies $_{t-1}$	−0.161*	(0.071)	−0.032	(0.090)	−0.176*	(0.072)
IGO membership $_{t-1}$	−0.309***	(0.071)	−0.352***	(0.092)	−0.368***	(0.080)
External alliances $_{t-1}$	0.137**	(0.045)	0.081	(0.051)	0.214***	(0.046)
Cold war	−0.116**	(0.038)	−0.084*	(0.040)	−0.158***	(0.046)
Time counter	−0.009	(0.006)	−0.010	(0.007)	−0.016*	(0.008)
Constant	0.416***	(0.072)	0.345***	(0.079)	0.300***	(0.079)
Observations	366		261		267	
Adjusted R^2	0.368		0.449		0.469	
AIC	216.5		111.7		164.4	
BIC	255.5		147.4		203.9	

Robust standard errors reported in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

contrasting those regions with a regional power to regions without any dominant powers.

The results for the baseline model are generally as expected. Numbers of intra-regional rivalries, civil wars, and territorial claims are both significant and positively related to the frequency of MIDs and the number of states involved in MIDs in the two tables. As expected, IGO regional membership, percentage of regional trade, and percentage of democracies are all negative and significantly related to both dependent variables. Alliances in the form of defense pacts, reflecting external structural security involvement by outside major powers in the region, are related to higher levels of intra-regional conflict.

One counterintuitive result that appears in the baseline model: the negative relationship between Cold War and conflict, suggesting that more MIDs occur in regions after the Cold War. However, this result is consistent with empirical findings (McDonald 2015) linking MIDs to global hierarchies: both global hierarchies during the Cold War sought to minimize conflicts within their spheres of influence. With the collapse of one hierarchy (the Soviet Union), regions without dominant states in the post-Cold War era would likely be more conflictual than during the period of bipolar organization. The result is consistent with our previous argument that competing infrastructures may work to reduce conflict within their separate, partial spheres of influence leading to system or region-wide effects.

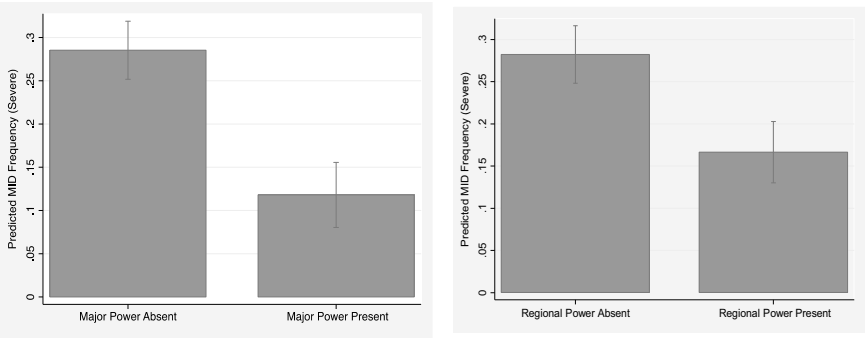

Fig. 8.1 Marginal effect of hierarchy on severe MID frequencies

Models 2 and 3 in both tables provide evidence for the central hypotheses forwarded earlier. The presence of a major power in a region, compared to regions lacking any dominant power, is associated with an approximately 59% reduction (Fig. 8.1, left column) in the predicted frequency of severe regional MIDs and an approximately 60% reduction (Fig. 2, left column) in the predicted numbers of regional states involved in severe MIDs.

Turning to the potential effects of regional hierarchies, the presence of a regional power in a region also generates conflict reduction effects compared to regions without dominant powers, albeit not as strongly: compared to regions lacking a dominant power, regions with a regional power are associated with a more than 41% reduction (Fig. 8.1, right column) in the predicted frequency of severe regional MIDs and a more than 29% reduction (Fig. 8.2, right column) in the predicted frequencies of regional state involvement in severe MIDs.

Several additional results are worthy of note. First, further differentiating regions according to types of dominant powers, substantially increases the cumulative effect of the models. For example, the adjusted-R^2 statistic for the major power presence models increases by 31% when the dependent variable is severe MID frequency and 23% when the dependent variable is state involvement in severe MIDs; for the

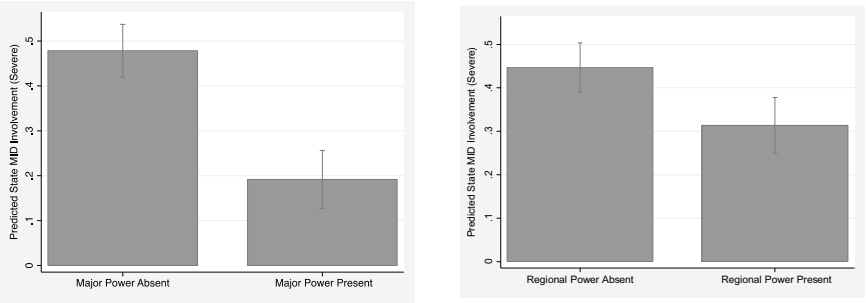

Fig. 8.2 Marginal effect of hierarchy on severe state MID involvement

regional power presence models, the corresponding increases are 44% and 28%. Despite the larger increases in adjusted-R^2, however, the AIC and BIC indicate a preference for the major power presence models throughout.

At the same time, neither the presence of a major power nor that of a regional power *eliminates* the conditions that may give rise to regional conflicts; this appears to be the case as well for the conditions associated with more pacific relationships. Most of the baseline conditions continue to be significant predictors in both major power and regional power models, and especially intra-regional rivalries and territorial claims, which continue to be highly significant predictors of conflict under all conditions. The pacifying effects of trade, IGO membership, and democracy appear to be more mixed, although regional IGO membership appears to limit diffusion of conflicts consistently.

The trade variable, acting as a pacifying influence in the baseline model, loses significance and changes direction in the regional power presence model, and is so highly correlated with major power presence that it was pulled from the major power hierarchy model. This led us to undertake a brief secondary investigation. Barbieri (1996) suggests a curvilinear relationship between conflict and trade, and when we included a quadratic term of percent regional trade in our baseline model (not shown), we found the relationship to be curvilinear. Contra Barbieri (1996), however, we find conflict increases at low to middle levels of trade before tailing off at higher values. That may help account for the insignificant findings for trade in the regional model.

Finally, there appear to be substantively interesting effects for external major power involvement in the region, measured as defense pacts between outside major powers and region members. There is a strong association with both the frequency of regional conflict and the number of states involved in regional conflict in the baseline model. However, when we differentiate regions according to dominant powers, its effect disappears when comparing major power regions to regions without any dominant powers. A separate analysis, regressing all independent variables on MIDs frequency but separated by type of region (no hierarchy, major power hierarchy, regional power hierarchy) indicates that the primary effect of external major power alliance commitment operates primarily on regions with a regional power. The effect of such intrusion disappears for regions with one or more major powers.

8.5 Discussion

Our analysis provides substantial evidence for our two central hypotheses: consistent with our theoretical arguments, the existence of dominant powers in regions is strongly associated with the reduction of both the frequency of regional conflict and the number of states engaged in regional conflicts. Regions differ from one another not only in terms of baseline conditions that stimulate conflict or create more pacifying effects, but also by the extent to which dominant states reside in these regions.

These results, however, fail to directly test the two causal arguments suggested earlier: whether dominant states in regions create pacifying effects due to their

preponderant capabilities (a deterrence function), or through a more complex set of order building mechanisms involved with the creation of economic and security arrangements for their regions, or possibly due to both causal mechanisms. Future efforts should concentrate on creating research designs that can provide systematic evidence of these causal linkages.

However, creating a strategy for assessing these dynamics at work will not be an easy task. Consider the problem of assessing the effect of regional security and economic institutions by dominant powers. Recall that our approach to regional identification allows both the number of regions to change over time and for the membership of each region to change. Indeed, both forms of change occur with some regularity across decades as states "move" from one region to another while several regions dissolve and others expand or shrink. Such changes are consistent with the social construction of regions, but they are inconsistent with the creation and adaptability of regional institutions. Few—if any—regional institutions are sufficiently flexible to accommodate changes to regional composition suggested by our approach to regional delineation. In practice, dominant states create "regional" institutions that involve both regional members and non-members that are in close proximity.

Neither is it clear that evidence of regional institutional creation can be separated as having an effect independent of the dominance in capabilities of major and regional powers. This is especially the case for regions with major powers. Is it such dominance that creates a pacifying effect, or is it the creation of economic and security arrangements, or plausibly the creation of institutional arrangements simply reinforces the dominance of the major power, but does not provide substantial, independent causal agency?

In principle, this distinction can be tested if there are enough observations involving cases where dominant powers in some regions fail to create such institutions but do so in other regions. We lack such a wealth of cases. Alternatively, where regional or major powers exist, it is plausible to examine the impact of regional institutions, in addition to major power dominance, by assessing the occurrence of conflicts prior to and after the creation of such institutions. To do so, we would want to examine cases of regions where sufficient baseline conditions exist to increase the probability of regional conflicts, and then to assess the amount of conflict occurring prior to and after the creation of regional institutions involving dominant powers. For instance, the number of conflicts in the North American region, given the dominance of the U.S., are highly limited, even prior to the creation of NAFTA and its successor the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Assessing either trade agreements' effects on conflict mitigation in the region is extremely difficult to estimate.

However, there is some limited, indirect evidence that the creation and maintenance of regional institutions does have a stronger pacifying effect in hierarchical regions. While in all three models there are substantial and significant relationships between state membership in such institutions and lower levels of regional conflict, in regions with major and regional powers this effect is more pronounced than in regions without such dominant powers.

There also appear to be substantial differences between hierarchical arrangements driven by major versus regional powers. The models suggest a consistently stronger

negative impact on conflict in regions dominated by major powers. Additionally, the creation and maintenance of economic relationships appear to function differently in the two types of regions. Note for instance that we dropped the trade interdependence variable from the major power hierarchy model due to extremely high collinearity between it and the hierarchy variable.[36] It is plausible that given the curvilinear relationship we note above between trade and conflict, it may be that major powers are more capable of minimizing the initial conflict-prone trading period and enabling higher levels of intra-regional trade to take hold. Regional powers may not be able to accomplish the same since they cannot deliver entrance into global markets to the same extent that a major power could. Thus, they cannot ultimately deliver the same level of benefits, leading regional members to continue to bicker amongst themselves over a smaller market.

An emphasis upon the region as a substantively interesting unit of analysis in international politics is long overdue; future research should include, and model appropriately, the nested reality of regional politics. In so doing it should recognize that regional effects co-occur with both internal and system level dynamics (Buzan and Waever 2003, Katzenstein 2005, Lemke 2002). Future research should fully engage the hierarchical, linkage politics dynamics of the regional unit of analysis by incorporating not only those variables that directly impact the region, such as alliances with external powers, but also contextual information about the system or internal politics broadly, such as the distribution of power at the system level, the concentration or distribution of power or economic integration internally, domestic characteristics of internal political systems, and the power projection of external major powers across geographic space. While the region as a unit presents added complexity given its position in between the most oft studied levels of analysis in international politics, integrating contextual dynamics across levels may provide a more complete understanding of how regions develop and evolve.

The inability to probe these causal dynamics further, given our empirical approach to regional delineation, suggests one of its limitations in the form we have presented here. Traditional methods of statistical inference may be less useful or applicable, given present demands on the data needed to carve the contours of regions. Since our approach here also utilizes decade long spells of events data—available only after World War II—we are limited to asking questions regarding regional formation, the delineation of regional powers, and assigning regional membership for only the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. This, in turn, restricts the number of region year observations quite substantially, limiting the empirical environment in which to make assessments of causal agency. This problem is not meant to be a condemnation of using region year as the appropriate unit of analysis, but it does suggest that the approach will require very creative and new strategies to expand the research domain

[36] We assessed multicollinearity in each of our four primary models by calculating the variance inflation factors (VIF) for each independent variable (Chatterjeeet al. (2000). One would suspect a very high correlation between rivalries and territorial disputes as well, but territorial disputes only account for less than 25% of extant regional rivalries.

and explore these relationships in eras (including prior to World War II) where events data are not available.

The inability to expand our observations has also meant that we have not been able to gauge certain other dynamics suggested by our theoretical approach. For instance, we recognize that the relative *competence* of regional powers and their *interest* in creating stable regional relationships—in addition to their capabilities—likely impact on how much regional conflict will occur. Future efforts will need to focus on these distinctions, likely involving case studies and process tracing strategies to indicate the effects of these considerations. This will be especially important in regions where regional powers change their role conceptions (Butt 2013), and/or in regions where the power's competence may change over time.

While much additional work is needed, hopefully we have provided sufficient empirical evidence to support our claims that we can differentiate between regions based on whether or not there are dominant powers residing in regions, and the effect of such hierarchical relationships on regional conflict. The results also indicate that using region-year as an appropriate unit of analysis to investigate regional conflict is a useful one. Future work on conflict and cooperation in international politics should integrate these regional considerations into empirical models, moving beyond statistical fixed effects concerns and toward more theoretically useful ways of treating differences between regions.

Appendix 1: List of ROW Regions, by Decade and Type of Hierarchy

Time frame	Region	Number of states in region[37]	Hierarchy[38]
1950s	North Central America	5	NA[39]
	Andes	7	NA
	South Central America	4	NA
	South America	4	NA
	Middle East	10	NA
	Core Europe	23	NA
	Northern Europe	5	NA
	East Asia	19	NA
1960s	North America	10	Major power

(continued)

[37] Regions with fewer than four states are not used in the analyses.

[38] Major power + designates that there is more than one major power residing in the region.

[39] While there are sufficient data to classify regions that contain major powers, the indicators used to gauge regional power status are only intermittently available for the 1950s, making hierarchical classification inappropriate for this decade.

(continued)

Time frame	Region	Number of states in region	Hierarchy
	Andes	7	No hierarchy
	South America	5	Regional power
	Middle East	14	No hierarchy
	Western Europe	12	Major power+
	Benelux	3	No hierarchy
	Scandinavia	4	No hierarchy
	East Europe	8	Major power
	West Africa	5	No hierarchy
	Central Savannah	4	Regional power
	Gold Coast	3	No hierarchy
	Central Africa	17	No hierarchy
	East Asia	9	No hierarchy
	Asia Pacific	10	No hierarchy
1970s	North America	22	Major power
	South America	6	Regional power
	Middle East	14	No hierarchy
	Europe	29	Major power+
	African West Coast	4	No hierarchy
	West Africa	13	Regional power
	South Africa	21	No hierarchy
	Northwest Asia	3	No hierarchy
	Southeast Asia	12	Regional power
	East Asia	11	No hierarchy
1990s	North America	6	Major power
	Southern Caribbean	3	No hierarchy
	South America	8	Regional power
	Middle East	13	No hierarchy
	Europe	27	Major power+
	East Europe	12	No hierarchy
	Baltics	3	No hierarchy
	Maghreb	6	No hierarchy
	West Africa	7	Regional power
	Central Africa	9	No hierarchy
	Southern Africa	9	Regional power
	East Asia	36	Major power+
	Central Asia	7	No hierarchy
2000s	North America	4	Major power

(continued)

(continued)

Time frame	Region	Number of states in region	Hierarchy
	South America	10	Regional power
	Middle East	12	No hierarchy
	Europe	46	Major power+
	Maghreb	3	No hierarchy
	West Africa	6	Regional power
	Central Africa	8	No hierarchy
	Southern Africa	9	Regional power
	Horn of Africa	3	No hierarchy
	East Asia	32	Major power+
	South Asia	6	Regional power

Appendix 2: Patterns of Conflict Across Regions

See Figs. 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6 and 8.7.

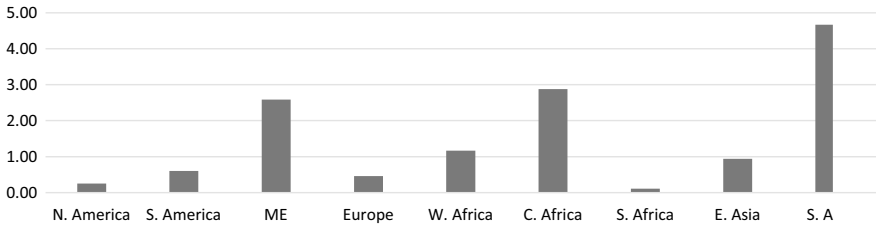

Fig. 8.3 Frequency of severe MIDs in regions, controlling for the number of states in regions, during the 2000s

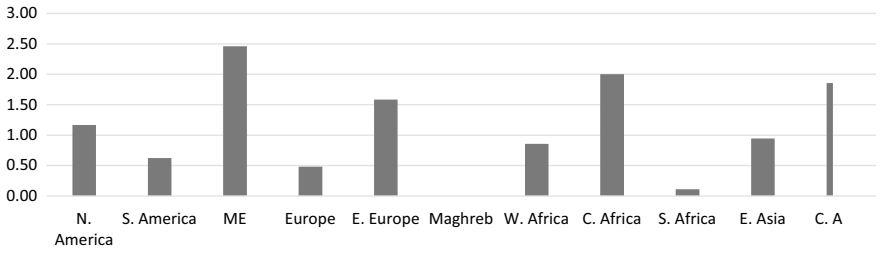

Fig. 8.4 Frequency of severe MIDs, controlling for number of states in region, by region, 1990s

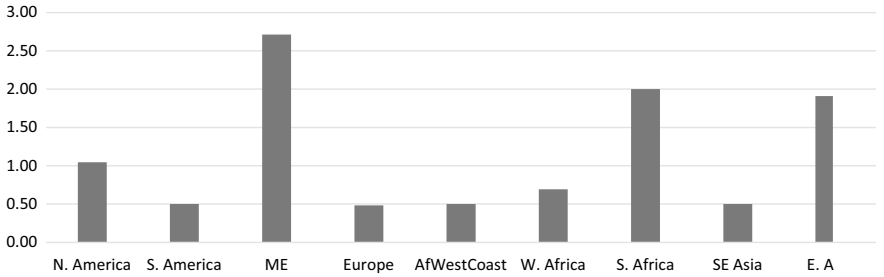

Fig. 8.5 Number of severe MIDs per region, controlling for size of region, for the 1970s

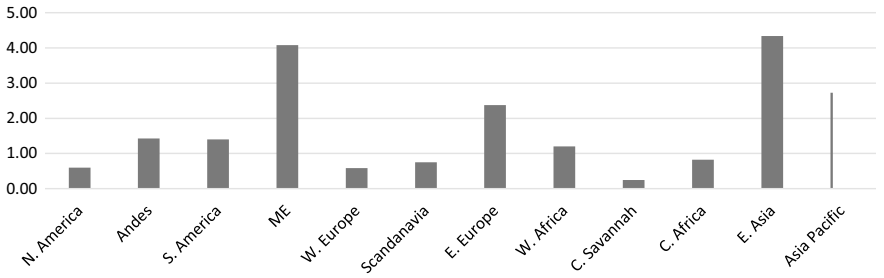

Fig. 8.6 Regions and severe MIDs per region, controlling for size of region, 1960s

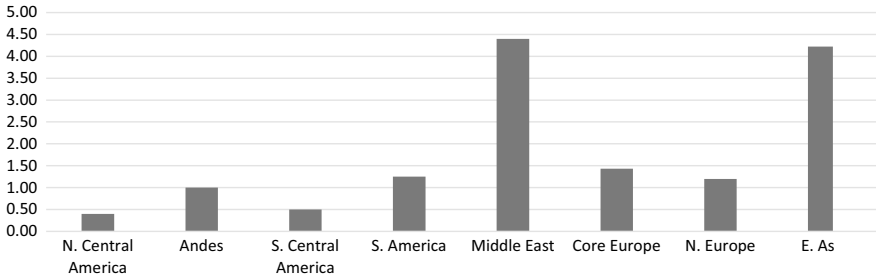

Fig. 8.7 Number of severe MIDs per region, controlling for size of region, 1950s

Appendix 3: List of Variables, Sources, and Manipulations

Variable	Source	Manipulation
State MID involvement	COW MID v.4[40]	Number of states involved in level four or five MIDs/total number of states in region
MID frequency	COW MID v.4	Number of level four or five MIDs/total number of states in region
Major power presence	Volgy et al. (2011)[41]	Dichotomous; 1 = presence, 0 = no hierarchy
Regional power presence	Cline et al. (2011)[42]	Dichotomous; 1 = presence, 0 = no hierarchy
# intra-regional rivalries	Handbook of international rivalries[43]	Number of states involved in rivalry with states of the same region; lagged one year
# civil wars	UCDP-PRIO v.4[44]	Number of states involved in internal conflict with cumulative intensity of 1000 battle-deaths or more; lagged one year
% regional trade	COW bilateral trade v.3,[45,46]	Amount of trade among states in a region/total trade of the region; logged and lagged one year
% regional democracies	Polity IV[47]	Percent of states with Polity IV score of 7 + states/total number of states with Polity IV scores in region; lagged one year
External alliances	COW formal alliances v.4.1[48]	Dichotomous; 1 = presence, 0 = no defense pact between a regional state and an external major power; lagged one year
Territorial claims	Gibler and Miller (2014)[49]	Number of territorial claims in a region/total number of states in region; lagged one year

(continued)

[40] Palmerl D'Oranzau et al. (2015).
[41] Volgyet al. (2011).
[42] Cline et al. , (2011.
[43] Thompson and Dreyer (2011)
[44] Pettersson et al. (2015)
[45] Barbieri and Keshk (2012).
[46] Barbieri et al. (2009).
[47] Marshall et al. (2019).
[48] Gibler (2009).
[49] Gibler and Miller (2014)

(continued)

Variable	Source	Manipulation
Regional IGO membership	COW IGO; FIGO[50]	Number of regional IGO memberships held by states in region/all possible regional IGO memberships; lagged one year
Cold war		Dichotomous; 1 = Cold War; 0 = post-Cold War
Time counter		Time counter for each decade

Appendix 4: Summary Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
State MID involvement	0.403	0	2.166667	0.330
MID frequency	0.231	0	1.333333	0.198
Major power presence	0.486	0	1	0.379
Regional power presence	0.489	0	1	0.39
# intra-regional rivalries $_{t-1}$	3.37	0	15	2.96
# civil wars $_{t-1}$	2.05	0	11	1.57
% regional trade $_{t-1}$	1.08	0	5.0119	3.21
% regional democracies $_{t-1}$	0.290	0	1	0.311
External alliances $_{t-1}$	0.455	0	1	0.708
Territorial claims $_{t-1}$	0.246	0	0.875	0.421
IGO membership $_{t-1}$	0.253	0	0.9166667	0.338
Cold war	0.500	0	1	0.517
Time counter	2.88	1	10	5.5

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Chapter 9
Sources of Regional Conflict and Peace in the Empirical International Relations Literature: States, Dyads, and Beyond

9.1 Introduction

There are regional variations in the way conflict and peace are enacted around the world. For instance, there may be differences in the extent to which any conflict is likely to occur and in whether a conflict is currently taking place. Such variations in regional patterns of war and peace have been explained in a variety of ways. For instance, the presence of peace within a region can be explained at either a monadic or dyadic level. The latter is more common in contemporary international relations. This level of analysis posits that peaceful relationships are likely to develop between two states if they are both democratic, economically dependent, not engaged in any territorial disputes, and have substantially different capabilities. Extending this to a consideration of wider regions, levels of peace can be assessed by summing the relative peacefulness of the dyadic relationships within the area. The more democracies there are, and the more interdependent countries are in economic terms, the more likely it is that the region will be at peace.

However, alternative approaches now exist that extend this analysis on micro-dyads. In theoretical terms, such explanations remain concerned with monadic or dyadic mechanisms, but contend that it is regional conditions with a historical foundation, such as the consistency of national borders, that explain the level of regional peace or conflict. An alternative set of explanations focus on what is known as spatial contagion, which refers to multiple ways in which the expansion of international and civil wars and domestic instability provide the basis for additional conflict in the region. It is through such spatial contagion and the joining up of wars that conflict spreads, creating a zone of conflict.

An earlier version of this work was first published as Kentaro Sakuwa, "Approaches to Explaining Regional Conflict and Peace," in W.R. Thompson, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Empirical International Relations Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

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A further set of explanations focuses more precisely on the level of interdependence that exists between states or dyads, often with reference to the wider neighborhood. For instance, a region may be peaceful if processes of "flying geese" socialization and learning serve to mollify international trade. For another example, conditions of international borders and international rivalries over territorial issues tend to shape regional proneness to conflict. Finally, research utilizing network analysis precisely models interdependence between dyads, which is considered a vital determinant of the level of conflict or peace.

Additive monadic or dyadic approaches and more sophisticated perspectives that assume interdependence between micro-units in space and the regional clustering of material conditions are considered in this essay in terms of the extent to which they explain regional differences in patterns of international conflict and peace. We begin by briefly illustrating important empirical trends that depict such regional variations. The second section then examines how regional levels of conflict and peace can be accounted for by traditional dyadic models of international conflict. Studies that adopt different perspectives on extra-dyadic conditions are presented in the third section. All these studies utilize systematic mechanisms through which spatial clusters of international conflict and peace can be identified. Some of these studies associate regional conflict and peace with the spatial dispersion of underlying conditions while others focus on the mechanisms underlying spatial dependence and diffusion. Finally, recommendations are made for future research, particularly from a regional standpoint.

9.2 Conflict and Peace Are Spatially Clustered

The system of international politics operates differently across the globe. Studies conducted recently assert that there are distinct zones of cooperation and conflict worldwide, demonstrating unambiguous evidence of spatial variation in peace and conflict. For instance, a notable feature of Western Europe is the existence of ongoing cooperation among key states and the notion that major conflicts are considered obsolete. By contrast, the Middle East and South Asia are characterized by continuing military conflicts and confrontations between major players in the region. A militarily focused form of power politics remains prevalent in East Asia, although there have been no recent wars between the significant players in the region.

Average values of dyadic variables for Cold War and post-Cold War periods are presented in Table 9.1 and clearly indicate the differences between regions in the features of dyads. When applied to the World Event/Interaction Survey (WEIS), the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB: Azar 1980), and the Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA: Bond et al. 2003), the Goldstein's cooperation-conflict scale is used to calculate a "hostility score". To generate scores, the aggregated weighted scores for "conflict" events (those with negative values) in those databases are averaged. Events data are utilized because they are superior to militarized disputes (MIDs) in capturing the full spectrum of conflict and peace. For other variables, the

Table 9.1 Mean values of dyadic variables in selected regions

	Western Europe	South America	Middle East	East Asia	East Europe
Cold War Period					
Hostility score	1.59	0.56	12.74	31.23	1.83
Trade as %GDP	1.00	0.06	0.11	0.23	0.33
Joint democracy	0.66	0.14	0.02	0.01	0.01
Power ratio (%)	0.36	0.04	0.11	0.36	0.44
Post-cold war period					
Hostility score	1.76	0.96	5.66	23.99	2.62
Trade as %GDP	1.59	0.11	0.10	0.65	0.28
Joint democracy	1.00	0.71	0.04	0.38	0.67
Power ratio (%)	0.28	0.07	0.15	1.00	0.11

Note The "Middle East" was originally labeled "Western Asia"

Penn World Table 6.1 Penn World Table 7.1 (Heston2012), Correlates of War trade data (Barbieri et al. 2009), National Material Capabilities Data (Dutka et al. 2005) and Polity IV (Marshall et al. 2016) are used. To ensure regions are delineated in a straightforward manner, they are defined according to the "sub-region" category used by the United Nations Statistics Division.

Since the end of the Second World War, the most democratic, peaceful and economically interdependent region has been that of Western Europe. However, although it has also been peaceful, there is less economic interdependence in South America. The most conflict-ridden regions have been the Middle East and East Asia. Although hostile events between states in the Middle East have declined relatively after the end of the Cold War, hostilities remain a constant feature of East Asia despite economic interdependence increasing almost threefold.

Regional trends in war, peace, and cooperation have been classified in diverse ways by scholars. An initial point of contention concerns how to define what is meant by a "region". Lemke (2002), for example, specifies the distance to which a state can effectively project its power along with estimates of how far in miles armies can travel each day to determine local hierarchies. Following a comprehensive review of diplomatic documents, Buzan and Waever (2003) define a region as a set of "densely connected" states and use this to identify the existence of regional security complexes. Based on data signifying the potential for political events between states, Cline et al. 2011) provide quantitative measures of likely state-to-state interactions as part of what they termed an opportunities and willingness approach. Typically, the precise way in which regions are conceptualized and operationalized will depend on the objectives of a particular research study. Factors common to all regions, however, are regional variations in the extent of conflict; and, depending on the extent to which states depend on material power to resolve conflicts, variations in levels of peace without military conflict. Table 9.2 summarizes frameworks that have been employed to categorize the spectrum of war and peace within each region. Inter-state

Table 9.2 Spectrum of regional war and peace

	Buzan-Waever (2003)	Morgan (1997)	Kacowicz (1998)	Miller (2007)	Diehl et al. (2021) (regional aggregation)
Integration	Security Community	Integration	Security community	High-level peace	Security community
Security community		Pluralistic security community			
Collective security	Security regime	Collective security	Stable peace	Normal peace	Warm peace
Concert		Great power concert			
Negative peace	Conflict formation	Power restraining power	Negative peace	Cold peace	Negative peace
Conflict				Cold war	Lesser rivalry
				Hot war	Severe rivalry

security relations therefore contribute to creating regions and vary in terms of how security is maintained and the particular patterns of enmity and friendliness between states (Buzan and Waever 2003; Morgan, 1997). There are diverse ways in which peace can be manifested in a region, and certain states are more likely to be riven by conflict than others.

Dyadic levels of conflict and peace have been conceptualized in various ways, ranging from counting the presence of military clashes, or militarized interstate disputes (MIDs), to measuring the level of rivalry between states (Diehl et al. 2021; Thompson and Dreyer 2011). For instance, the Peace Scale index (Diehl et al. 2021) classifies the peacefulness of dyadic interactions into severe rivalry, lesser rivalry, negative peace, warm peace, and security community.

At the regional level, absence of war can be achieved and maintained even by various means of traditional power politics. Beyond that point, according to some scholars, sustained peace may emerge among a group of states. Within such "security communities," people are integrated to the point that it is assured that members of that community do not fight with each other and settle disputes in other (peaceful) ways. Traditional power politics allow states to freely determine security strategy and use military power as a means to resolve disputes, but less autonomy is granted as the security order approaches to the "integrated" end (Adler and Barnett 1998; Deutsch et al. 1957; Kacowicz 1998). In light of such regional heterogeneity in war, peace, and cooperation, it may not be sufficient to draw conclusions about international outcomes and state behavior solely from analyzing dyads separately. Making the assumption that all dyads operate similarly across regions and independently from extra-dyadic contexts is a dubious undertaking.

9.3 Explanations by Aggregating Local States and Dyads

Given the heterogeneity of regions, it is pertinent to consider the factors that shape variations in trends relating to war and peace. Most studies that consider this issue highlight the varying attributes of states across regions. In other words, regions vary because the types of dyads and states that exist within them also differ. Within the scholarly domain of international relations, dyadic studies of international politics have generated the most compelling findings. Most notably, a substantial body of work in the field of conflict studies focus on dyadic theories and analyses that indicate international outcomes are impacted by the economic, military, and institutional characteristics of a state or dyad.

One of the most notable findings reported by several studies is that the risk of conflict is increased by a parity in dyadic power (Organski 1958; Powell 1996). Grounded in power transition theory, this claim has received extensive theoretical and empirical support. Its core premise is that a pair of states with approximately equal capabilities will lack certainty as to who would emerge victorious in the event of conflict. Moreover, when relative capabilities alter in favor of the "rising challenger", the issue of commitment becomes especially serious.

At a regional level, the local distribution of power will have an impact on the sustainability of peace within a region. The overall spread of power within a region will inevitably be imbalanced if multiple dyads are characterized by unequal power ratios. Power transition theory (Organski 1958), which contends that "hegemonic wars" can be caused by change in relative capabilities toward equality between a declining global force and emerging challengers, can be extended to local systems. For instance, Lemke (2004) reported that conflict between local systems of minor powers can be reduced if there is a disparity in such power. There is less likely to be conflict between dyads with a disparity in material capabilities than in dyads whose capabilities are roughly similar. Thus, regional peace can be sustained by an unequal spread of capabilities within a local system.

An alternative but equally important dyadic explanation for peace is that of economic interdependence (Gartzke 2007; Russett and Oneal 2001). The key argument here is that the expectations states hold about the behavior of others in the long term are gradually changed as a result of continuing economic transactions. In theoretical terms, for both parties, cutting economic binds will incur costs; therefore, maintaining a close economic relationship can serve as an indicator of a state's resolve. It is therefore easier to make a credible threat when there is economic interdependence between two states. Furthermore, when a state has crucial economic interests invested in another, governments are dissuaded from elevating a disagreement into a major conflict by domestic economic actors.

When states share an interest in economic internationalism, it is easier to maintain regional peace. Solingen (2007) conducted research to determine why there have been a greater number of conflicts in the Middle East than in East Asia since the 1960s, even though both regions face similar challenges with respect to state-building, have experienced economic crises, share colonialist legacies, and have

undergone minimal development in the 1950s. Solingen concluded that the differences in trajectory between the two regions can be accounted for by the disparate models of domestic political survival that came to the fore. For instance, states in East Asia had common interests in establishing mutually beneficial and peaceful relationships, hence greater economic interdependence meant that this region became more peaceful than the Middle East where mutual economic reliance was less evident.

A third and well-established dyadic explanation for peace lies in the claim that democracies are not inclined to engage each other in military conflict (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Russett and Oneal 2001; Schultz 1998). Whether democracies are intrinsically more inclined to peace than autocracies remains a moot point. A notable empirical trend is that states whose regime characteristics are largely similar are more likely to cooperate and therefore less likely to engage in conflict (Bennett 2006; Leeds 1999). Therefore, it is important to consider the ramifications of regime type from a relational perspective rather than concentrate on the particular features of democratic institutions. For instance, there is a relationship between the expansion of trade and the growth of democracies, and different political-economic ordering ideas have been competing for dominance (Rasler and Thompson 2005).This type of competition with respect to ordering principles impedes substantive cooperation between states, regardless of whether it takes place in conjunction with multiple large-scale wars, as has been the case in the past history of Europe.

Akin to a dyadic power ratio, there is a direct relationship between the dyadic common democratic regime and regional similarities in regime type. For instance, Katzenstein (2005) performs a comparative analysis of Europe and Asia and argues that in Asia, a fully developed scheme for political cooperation at an institutional level is lacking. This is partly attributable to the varying political regimes of core important actors; the establishment of institutions akin to security communities in the region is impeded by divergence in political-economic principles. This finding aligns with that of Deutsch et al. (1957), who argue that a security community requires value compatibility among political units. As before, the regional similarity in democratic regime type is essentially the product of aggregated dyadic similarities (democratic dyads) and this can be scrutinized at the level of the dyad. It therefore follows that if there are a large number of democratic dyads in a region in comparison to democracy-autocracy dyads, the region is far more likely to be peaceful.[1]

However, given that the relative shares of democratic, mixed, and autocratic dyads within a region are not straightforward linear functions of the number of democracies that exist, aggregation becomes a complex issue when the focus is on the implications of dyadic democracy for each region, Instead, they can be more accurately characterized as non-linear (quadratic) functions. This suggest that if the number of democracies within a region starts to increase, a large number of conflict-inclined "mixed" dyads will still exist during this process. Empirical data on modern to

[1] An identical claim can be made with respect to peace in autocratic dyads. At an empirical level, when both parties in a dyad are extremely autocratic, a moderate "autocratic peace" effect arises. Thus, a dyad comprising extremely autocratic regimes will be more peaceful than a mixed dyad, albeit less peaceful than a democratic dyad (Bennett 2006). It therefore follows that a region filled with autocratic dyads will experience greater levels of peace than a region replete with mixed dyads.

contemporary Europe indicates that wars took place more often in periods where approximately 15% to 35% of states were democracies (Raknerud and Hegre 1997). Nevertheless, it is still possible to map the state-level variable (democracy) onto the regional composition of dyads, even though the relationship between the two is complex. The sum of dyadic conflict processes thus drives the level of regional conflict and can therefore be accounted for the overall number of democratic, mixed, and autocratic dyads within a region.

To ensure "stable" peace is sustained, factors other than trade interdependence and the local distribution of capabilities need to be considered. One notable factor that impacts regional cooperation is the degree of homogeneity among states. Katzenstein (2005) contended that formally institutionalized cooperation across Europe was facilitated by common political principles, regime homogeneity, a broadly similar distribution of power, and common domestic legal structures. Such conditions are lacking in Asia, as a result of which regional cooperation is largely informal in nature and restricted to the domain of economics.

Kacowicz (1998) also contends that one of the key determinants of regional peace is the type of political regime in place. Focusing specifically on the function of democracy, he argues that the development of stable peace is impeded by the level of dissatisfaction powerful autocracies have with the status quo. It is possible to maintain a rather shaky form of "negative peace" (absence of war) through, hegemony, deterrence, luck, or a lack of willingness or ability to wage wars. Conversely, under a form of "stable peace" supported by a normative framework that establishes ways to deal with conflicts through peaceful methods, war is no longer a feasible option. However, to make the transformation from a negative to stable peace means that satisfaction with the status quo among member states needs to increase, although this may be impeded by the levels of dissatisfaction that exist among powerful autocracies. Moreover, to create a security community distinguished by a sense of togetherness and institutionalization, Kacowicz argues that a high level of economic interdependence between states will be required. In the Balkans and the Middle East, Miller (2007) concludes that peace was detrimentally affected by an absence of liberal democracies, but also notes that the primary cause of conflict in these regions is that state boundaries do not clearly align with ethnic groups and nations.

Therefore, there are numerous ways in which dyadic characteristics can be aggregated at a regional level. Drawing on a dyadic analysis, the standard approach to international conflict thus sums dyadic features to explain war and peace in particular regions. Those filled with democratic dyads will be peaceful. Those filled with economically interdependent dyads, reflecting intense economic activity, will also be peaceful. Those filled with dyadic power ratios reflecting unevenly distributed capabilities will also be peaceful.

There is an implicit assumption in dyadic studies of international conflict, war, and peace that international outcomes are largely separate from extra-dyadic contexts and therefore primarily driven by within-dyadic conditions. Across regions, international conflict is characterized by "homogeneous" processes as dyadic mechanisms work the same way irrespective of external conditions outside, and dyadic outcomes are translated into a macro-regional outcome (i.e., regional war and peace).

There are several respects in which such an additive analysis may not, however, provide a full picture. First, even if regional variation in conflict and peace can be really explained by simply aggregating dyads, a theoretical explanation is required as to why certain types of dyads group together in some regions. For example, a focus on dyadic economic interdependence requires a theoretical explanation as to why international trade is more common in some regions than others.

Second, there may be cases where an implicit assumption of homogeneity is not always accurate. Gartzke (2007), for instance, argued that if "regional dummies" are considered, the robust claim that democracies do not fight each other may be called into question. There may be certain regions, most notably Europe, which have such unique and powerful features that they shape key empirical findings. Dafoe (2011) argues that cross-regional differences should not be controlled for using regional dummies if there is no theoretical rationale for doing so. However, if statistical results are driven by powerful "regional effects", the claim that democratic peace works in every region needs to be re-assessed. For instance, McCallister (2016) recently reported that the dyadic democratic peace effect is mediated by the regional level of democracy.

The regional heterogeneity of democratic peace can be empirically demonstrated as an example. Table 9.3 shows a comparison between simple empirical models predicting the onset of military conflict (militarized interstate disputes or MIDs). For simplicity, these models use the minimum set of variables. Also, they include the

Table 9.3 Militarized interstate disputes (MID) onset, logistic regression estimates

	All dyads			Excluding Western Europe		
	Prewar	Cold war	Post-cold War	Prewar	Cold war	Post-cold war
Capability ratio	0.150***	0.283***	0.289***	0.128***	0.282***	0.268***
	−(0.023)	−(0.024)	−(0.036)	−(0.035)	−(0.028)	−(0.038)
Democracy (low)	−0.025***	−0.031***	−0.054***	−0.013	0.000	−0.037***
	−(0.007)	−(0.007)	−(0.007)	−(0.011)	−(0.009)	−(0.007)
Contiguity	0.430***	0.530***	1.465***	0.852***	0.408**	1.259***
	−(0.076)	−(0.092)	−(0.129)	−(0.121)	−(0.124)	−(0.161)
Defense alliance	−0.144	−0.235**	−0.208*	0.109	−0.235*	−0.173
	−(0.141)	−(0.087)	−(0.104)	−(0.204)	−(0.092)	−(0.105)
Constant	−2.669***	−1.716***	−2.637***	−2.884***	−1.353***	−2.354***
	−(0.102)	−(0.121)	−(0.156)	−(0.167)	−(0.165)	−(0.192)
Observations	35,043	35,368	30,523	17,045	22,933	19,549
Log Likelihood	−3997.550	−3635.212	−2123.567	−1961.187	−2940.565	−1861.214
AIC	8011.099	7286.424	4263.134	3938.374	5897.130	3738.428

Note * p <0.05 ** p <0.01 Standard errors in parenthesis. Peace years and cubic polynomial terms are omitted from the table

minimum set of predictors: dyadic democracy, alliance, capability ratio, contiguity, and temporal dependence terms. Defensive alliance entries in the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) data (Leeds et al. 2002) are used to measure alliance, and cubic polynomial terms of peace years are employed to address temporal dependence following Carter and Signorino (2010).

The base model, which includes all dyads in each period from 1816 to 2014, suggests that a higher dyadic democracy score (denoted as "Democracy (low)" in the table) has a robust negative effect in in all—prewar, Cold War, and post-Cold War—samples. Once Europe is excluded from the sample, however, such significant effect of dyadic democracy is no longer observable in the Cold War and prewar samples. Moreover, the estimated size of the effect is drastically reduced even though the coefficient remains statistically significant only in the post-Cold War sample. Such sensitivity of the democratic peace effect reinforces the concern that dyadic arguments may not work universally regardless of regional contexts.

Doubts also remain as to whether the different characteristics of states and dyads are primarily or even solely responsible for spatial heterogeneity in conflict and peace. Even though previous studies have persuasively demonstrated that peace and cooperation at a regional level are influenced by the various characteristics of states, they do not always consider international dimensions. Even in studies of "regional war and peace," the focus is on state-level or dyadic-level issues and external contexts are generally absent from consideration. For instance, if the Cold War had not happened, would (Western) European cooperation and integration have developed in a similar way? It is highly likely that the initial phase of European integration was impacted to at least some degree by the Cold War and post-World War II contexts, including the common Soviet threat, German defeat, U.S. involvement, and framework of the NATO alliance (Rosato, 2011). As an alternative example, neither a drastic increase in economic interdependence nor the democratization of Taiwan and South Korea in the 1980 and 1990s alone directly triggered institutionalized regional collaboration, nor did they end conventional power politics within the East Asian region. Whether summing dyadic models offers a sufficient theoretical explanation is therefore questionable. The next section presents some alternative perspectives.

9.4 Conditions Outside Dyads

9.4.1 Diffusion of Conflict

A number of scholars have strived to take explicit account of the effect exerted by the extra-dyadic environment. A useful way to do this, particularly given the direct contagion of conflict, is to consider the "neighborhood effect." As Solingen (2012) argues, from regime type to institutional structures and technologies, there can be several subjects of spatial diffusion and numerous different types of diffusion

with respect to the media and type of agents implicated.[2] Among the latter, spatial contagion of conflict is the most direct causal mechanism underlying the spatial diffusion of conflict.

Although multiple studies contend that it is differences in the characteristics of local states which drive regional heterogeneity in war and peace, other studies claim that other factors are involved. There has been a continuing argument around whether it is certain forms of spatial dependence in conflict making or clustering in pre-existing state that drives spatial heterogeneity in military conflict (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008). Those advocating the former suggest that further neighborhood conflict is fueled by the fact that an existing military conflict is taking place. Put another way, there is spatial diffusion of war and conflict, and in the long-term, zones of peace and zones of conflict are created as a result of spatial "contagion." For example, a civil war results in a flow of refugees (including those who are politically active), which generates instability in neighboring states, increasing the risk of additional civil war. The geographic spread of conflict is also driven by the cross-border activities engaged in by rebel groups. International conflicts can also be triggered by civil war, especially at a local level, as they create new possibilities for intervention (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz 2008; Saleyhan and Gleditsch 2006; Kathman 2010; Salehyan 2007). The spread of conflict in this way results in strong spatial clustering.

However, beyond such contagion effects, there may be other factors driving regional heterogeneity in international war and peace. Direct contagion may not be the sole causal pathway to spatial heterogeneity. Although the triggering mechanisms of refugee flow and cross-border rebel activities have been focused on by advocates of the spatial contagion effect, these only explain a series of conflicts within a local area and therefore the scope of such an explanation is limited.

There may also be factors that have an indirect effect on interactions. A particularly crucial one with respect to regional war and peace is the enduring nature of established tendencies to engage in either peace or conflict. For instance, in West Africa, Thies (2010) reported that the "Lockean culture of anarchy" (Wendt 1999), in which the deployment of military forces is limited, tends to reinforce itself. The views of policymakers as to how politics works are shaped by a variety of local conditions, including territorial disagreements which create a culture that impacts the way in which states engage in conflict. Thus, the regional pattern of peace in the long term is shaped both by the existence of war, which initiates the process of diffusion, and the caliber of current political engagement.

Furthermore, there are many different forms of peace, such as an absence of war caused by effective power politics to war being rendered obsolescent within a "security community", and sustained peace is not always achieved by regional states, even if "hot wars" do not take place. For instance, security interactions in East Asia oriented to realpolitik do not appear to be the result of conflict events or chain reactions of wars. Although power politics continue in the area, no full-blown wars have taken place since 1953. Therefore, ground-breaking research on the spatial

[2] For a consideration of the conceptual issues relating to diffusion, see Elkins and Simmons (2005).

diffusion of conflict remains limited because it fails to consider whether and how the spatial heterogeneity in conflict and peace might be generated by alternative mechanisms.

9.4.2 Dyad-to-Dyad Interdependence

Alongside spatial spillover, another group of scholars have modeled the way the shape of connectivity, or network structures, surrounding the dyad have shaped dyadic international politics. The focus of this network-oriented view is on how a dyad becomes embedded within a larger framework of relationships between states. Thus, dyadic processes take place within a larger structure interdependent with the dyad, they do not exist in a vacuum. This is illustrated by the existence of strategic triangles in international politics. One notable example is the Cold War triangle among the Soviet Union. the United States, and China where the processes taking place with each dyad (e.g., the U.S.-Soviet Union) do not occur independently of those taking place in the other dyads. For instance, U.S.-Chinese relationships were impacted by Sino-Soviet split while the path taken by the U.S.-Soviet rivalry may well have been shaped by each country's respective relationship with China (Dittmer, 1981).

An emerging body of studies have also begun to model dyad-to-dyad interdependence as indirect relationships. For instance, Maoz et al. (2007) concluded that indirect relationships via third parties impacted the direct relationships between states, including military conflicts and alliances. Affirming one of the core expectations of network analysis, the authors found that, like individuals, "indirect friends" (friends of friends) often become allies. However, some studies have reported counterintuitive findings. For instance, they have found that indirect friends (enemy or enemy) are actually *more* likely to engage in conflict while indirect enemies (friend of an enemy) are *more* likely to be friends.[3] They demonstrated that the formation of a dyadic alliance and initiation of conflict are not driven solely by circumstances within a dyad as the nature of surrounding relationships may also be a vital determinant.

Several studies have applied more theoretical network models to such issues. For instance, Warren (2010) theorized alliance formation as the decision made by a state to alter the "network structure" that surrounds it. What this means is that states continually renew their relationships by establishing and terminating both friendships (alliances) and enmities (conflicts), extending their network of alliances over time. The hypothesis that the formation of an alliance is promoted by sharing a common ally is supported by empirical analyses.

A unique example of such studies is the application by Corbetta and Grant (2012) of structural balance to third party interventions. A triad is deemed "structurally" balanced and stable if it contains an even number (or zero) of negative ties. If there is one friendship tie and two antagonistic ties (i.e., all three actors are friends or

[3] This could be attributable to issues pertaining to data and methodology, although such a discussion is beyond the scope of the current study.

two share a common enemy) the triadic relationship is said to be in equilibrium and thus there is unlikely to be any change in attitudes. Conversely, if all three states are antagonistic (three negative ties) or two "friends of a friend" are enemies (i.e., one negative tie), the triad is unbalanced and it is likely that attitudes will change. Corbetta and Grant found that neutral or partisan interventions tend to be selected by third parties which increases the structural balance of the triad. Kinne (2013) extended such considerations to more general international cooperation, including non-alliance military agreements. He found that the dynamics underpinning the formation of an agreement were endogenously shaped by the existing structure of military cooperation. Hence, agreements are likely to be formed by indirect friends (triad closure) who share the same partner. Moreover, states are more likely to be chosen as cooperation partners (preferential attachment) if they already have multiple agreement partners. At an empirical level, such patterns exist with respect to economic, scientific, and military cooperation. This is largely because established ties provide essential information about parties as well as the benefits of cooperation for partners new to the scene.

Such studies systematically analyze the importance of dyadic interdependence (i.e., how a dyad is related to other dyads). Although the findings are often conflicting and can seem counterintuitive, they have made a valuable contribution to the field by considering a vital but overlooked characteristic of international relations. Although these encouraging changes are yet to be fully integrated into research on regional war and conflict, dyad-to-dyad interdependence is expected to be especially important in spatial or regional terms. For example, an indirect relationship through a remote state is less important in determining foreign policy than being "friends of friends" in the same local area. To illustrate, Japan and Norway are indirect allies because they are both allies of the U.S, but the role of the U.S is considerably less important than it is in the relationship between Japan and South Korea. Although the importance of indirect enmity between Cuba and United Kingdom (via the U.S.) is a matter of debate, it is undoubtedly the case that an alliance with an enemy of the Soviet Union was extremely important for West Germany and France.

This is not to imply that the effect of network structure per se needs to be spatial – even if international peace and cooperation are shaped by networks of alliances and military agreements, this does not mean a spatial clustering mechanism is in force. Nevertheless, like trade ties, at an empirical level, security bonds relevant to peace and conflict are often spatially clustered. For instance, states in Europe (particularly Western), North America, and East Asia often exhibit high degree centrality (i.e., they have dense security links with other states). This is not likely to be coincidental. The initial creation of such binds may rely significantly on region-specific contexts such as geographic proximity and Cold War alliances. In addition to these initial ties, further "snowballing" will be generated by endogenous network dynamics through preferential attachment and triad closure. In the long term, longitudinal network effects such as these may, indirectly at least, provide an explanation for regional heterogeneity in peace and conflict.

9.4.3 Unsettled Borders

From a spatial perspective, regional conflict and peace may also be explained by patterns of territorial disputes, which are known to be among the strongest factors shaping international conflict. Given that territoriality lies at the heart of the sovereign state system, boundary disputes are often likely to spiral into overt conflict. Military conflict is especially likely to result from disagreement over territories that are deemed strategically, economically, and symbolically valuable (Gibler, 2007; Huth, 1996; Rasler and Thompson 2006; Senese and Vasquez 2005). Such disputes are also extremely salient with respect to international rivalry and recurrent conflict. Entrenched enmity among states in relation to particular issues is often referred to as rivalry, and is particularly likely to degenerate into conflict when the issues are spatial or territorial in nature (Colaresi 2007; Rasler and Thompson 2006; Rider and Owsiak 2015).

The importance of generating peace through the resolution of territorial disputes has been widely documented, particularly with regard to the debate over democratic peace. From the standpoint of territorial peace, a direct causal relationship between democracy and peace is considered spurious, as secure borders simultaneously encourage democracy while giving rise to international peace (Gibler 2007). Once Thompson (1996) contended that democracy is discouraged by threatening the strategic environment, empirical support for the effect of territorial peace on democracy (and thus territorial conflict on autocracy) has been provided by various studies (Gibler 2010; Gibler and Tir 2010, 2014).

Even though the theoretical mechanism that links territorial disputes and conflict is largely dyadic in nature, the sites of territorial disputes are, on a spatial level, distributed somewhat unevenly, which is often attributable to the context of independence. Territorial disputes and rivalries are likely to arise following the emergence of new states (Colaresi2007). As the example of India and Pakistan demonstrates, given the inherent difficulty of resolving recurrent conflict and entrenched enmity over disputed territories, new states with problematic borders and surrounding rivals are likely to engage in hostile relationships with their neighbors for a long period.

Furthermore, the very existence of territorial disputes is dependent on each other; for instance, the creation of one state (e.g., Israel) may give rise to multiple territorial disputes and spatial rivalries with neighboring states. This indicates that from the start, the locations of different territorial disputes may be mutually dependent. At a regional level, certain regions are especially prone to territorial disagreements due to different historical circumstances.[4] Miller (2007), for instance, notes that at certain historical moments, regions such as the Middle East and the Balkans have been plagued by a misalignment between state boundaries and nations. It can also be

[4] Whether arguments based on the territorial disputes and rivalries are dyadic/additive explanations are debatable. These variables are typically treated as dyadic in empirical analyses, but there are good reasons to believe that the presence of territorial disputes and rivalries are systematically dependent on each other. This is why territorial disputes are listed as a regionally oriented explanation, although the variable itself is essentially dyadic.

Table 9.4 Ongoing territorial disputes by regions

Region	1900		1950		1970		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Americas	44	62.0	19	23.5	21	20.8	18	16.2
Europe	11	15.5	9	11.1	12	11.9	11	9.9
Africa	7	9.9	7	8.6	21	20.8	20	18.0
Middle East	4	5.6	21	25.9	16	15.8	9	8.1
Asia	5	7.0	25	30.9	31	30.7	53	47.8
Total	71		81		101		111	

Note Data are from ICOW territorial dispute data version 1.01 (Hensel and Mitchell 2007). Regions are based on Hensel's coding

posited that due to military conflicts in earlier historical periods, "old" regions where territorial disputes have largely been settled are more likely to experience peace as they lack a major source of international conflict.

The regional distribution of territorial disputes at certain points in time is presented in Table 9.4. As shown, most disputes in the early 1900s took place in the Americas and Europe. By the start of the twentieth century, Europe was experiencing the most noticeable territorial conflicts, although Latin America had to deal with large numbers of unsettled borders. Reflecting the creation of new states and the strategic environment of the Cold War following the Second World War, the primary regions where territorial disagreements arose shifted to Asia and the Middle East. Toward the end of the Cold War, however, the Middle East became comparatively stable while Asia and Africa became the primary locations of territorial disputes. Asia then gradually became the most active region by 2000.

As a reflection of different historical and geopolitical conditions at various points in time, regions became either more or less inclined to engage in territorial disagreements. Many disputes took place in Africa and Asia as new states emerged, although across regions this was accompanied by a gradual trend toward dispute resolution. This resulted in an uneven spatial distribution of territorial conflicts, with certain regions especially riven with spatial issues. Of greater significance, such uneven spatial distribution was unlikely to have happened purely by chance. On the contrary, there were systematic causes for the initiation (and also forbearance) of clusters of territorial conflicts in certain areas. The spatial distribution of territorial conflicts thus constitutes a potential explanation for regional variations in conflict and peace.

9.4.4 Rivalry Dynamics

In addition to regional patterns of territorial disputes, regional-level variations in the form and nature of interstate rivalry are another major factor potentially driving the regional conflict and peace. Reflecting the uneven distribution of unsettled borders

and territorial disputes across regions discussed above, international rivalries are likely to exist and operate quite differently from region to region (Thompson et al. 2022).

It is debatable whether the regional pattern of interstate rivalry should be counted as an essentially dyadic phenomenon or there are extra-dyadic components in the process. Put differently, it is still possible to argue that the nature of rivalry per se is primarily determined based on the nature of a dyad or states that are directly involved, and therefore the regional degree of conflict and peace can be solely explained by aggregating such characteristics of rival dyads. However, recent scholarship points to a high possibility that rivalry processes are embedded in the regional—not simply dyadic—environment.

Rivalries over territorial issues (i.e., spatial rivalries) in different regions are prone to escalation into militarized disputes to varying degrees, and such regional variation can be in part attributable to regional-level conditions. During the post-Cold War period, for instance, spatial rivalries in South Asia (e.g., India-Pakistan) and East Asia (e.g., China-Japan) are highly susceptible to conflict, whereas those rivalries over territorial issues in Southeastern Asia and North Africa are much less likely to experience militarized disputes (Thompson et al. 2022: pp. 80–81). This varying propensity for conflict is influenced by the capabilities of rival states and the duration of a spatial rivalry—weaker and older rivalries are characterized by a weaker tendency toward escalation.

Attributes which influence the conflict propensity of spatial rivalries are not randomly distributed across regions. As discussed in the previous section, the emergence of new states can give a rise to multiple rivalries over contested territories, and processes of these rivalries in the neighborhood are clearly linked to one other because they often involve same sets of sates and share similar durations. Moreover, escalation of local territorial claims is often interdependent in the regional context, instead of being isolated from one another. Thompson2022: pp. 189–192) further find that an increase in new territorial claims corresponds with the rise of a regional power, which implies that intensified contestations over territories centers on a few potential regional powers, making them spatially cluster. Thus, dynamics of rivalries over spatial issues offers an explanation for the regional degree of hostility.

9.4.5 Mode of Economy and Trade

Even though it is frequently viewed as a dyadic factor of peace, economic interdependence may function on a regional level. It often reduces conflict via dyadic mechanisms. For instance, two states with close ties may strive to avoid direct conflict as this could result in a loss of the economic gains derived from bilateral trade. This is why an indicator of economic interdependence is the amount of bilateral trade with respect to the sum of GDP.

Other scholars, however, claim that pacification driven by economic factors operates on a regional basis. For instance, Lupu and Trang (2012) assert that the opportunity cost of conflict beyond bilateral trade is increased by indirect and triadic economic relationships. In a (regional) trade community with dense connections, multiple economic relationships between members may be disrupted by any bilateral conflict. Hence, if a conflict between two states disrupts trade, their common trading partners have a strong motivation to resolve any issues with collective action and avert the conflict. Using network analytic tools of community detection, Lupu and Trang identified clusters of trade ties, and found that a stronger pacification effect was exerted by being members of the same trading community than dyadic economic interdependence. Viewed in this way, regional peace cannot be explained by the simple "sum" of dyadic peace mechanism by trade interdependence. It is at the regional—trade community—level that the pacifying mechanism functions. The theoretical implications of this are that dyadic economic interdependence is less important than the type of region in which a state is located.

An alternative set of arguments posits systematic regional differences in the nature of the economy. For instance, Solingen (2007) contends that local peace is supported by the rapid growth of an export-driven internationalist economic strategy. For instance, successful land reform and a lack of natural resources impelled East Asian economies to engage in private entrepreneurship and manufacturing. Consequently, East Asian models of domestic political survival were based on export-led internationalism and economic performance. Middle Eastern rulers, by contrast, adopted inward-looking models of survival that were predicated on self-sufficiency and statism. In both areas, such models were strengthened through diffusion, coercion, and learning. Even though the pacifying mechanism per se is generally monadic (i.e., economic internationalism) or dyadic, the means by which the fundamental characteristics of economic orientation differ across regions is clearly expressed within the argument. In both regions, dominant models of political survival have been reinforced by learning mechanisms and spatial diffusion, which then shape the types of trade that vary across regions.

Another explanation for regional differences in peace and conflict that draws on the mode of the economy is enshrined in Levy and Thompson's (2011) "arc of war" model. This model suggests that it is the complexity of weaponry and political-military organizations that determine the costs and benefits of war. This is principally a historical argument in the sense that the importance of war changes as the mode of the economy transforms from agrarian to industrial. For industrialized societies, the increasing sophistication and deadliness of weaponry dramatically increases the costs of war. Moreover, because such economies are less reliant on acquiring land, the potential gains decrease. Thus, in industrialized economies, it makes almost no sense to engage in war.

It is possible that societal transformation on an immense scale, such as industrialization, is more than a monadic phenomenon. It often requires technological diffusion through multiple communication channels. There is likely to be a considerable degree of unevenness in growth and technological diffusion across different areas of the globe (Reuveny and Thompson 2008). Consequently, it is safe to presume

that industrialization is more of a regional than a monadic process. Therefore, the arc of war model is premised within a dyadic view of the economic effect whilst being grounded in the wider context of space and time. Rather than the simple sum of dyadic economic ties, regional peace and conflict can therefore be explained as the product of a historically formulated mode of economy that differs across regions.

9.4.6 Local Leadership

Differences in the global strategic environment may also shape regional variations in conflict and peace. Even though we lack extensive empirical research, attempts have been made to situate regions within a global perspective in order to explain regional peace.

Some scholars claim that regional peace is dependent on leadership within a local area. They explain that the problem of collective action is the principal impediment to institutionalized cooperation but that this can be resolved through the dedicated efforts of a strong leader state. When a privileged actor has such a vast number of resources that the perceived cost of creating and sustaining institutions is lower than the perceived benefits, hegemonic stability at a local level can be achieved. In the form of public goods through regional institutions, the local leader provides security. Moreover, by formulating a benchmark that results in converging choices, the support of an uncontested powerful leader may help to increase integration-oriented cooperation between key regional players (Lemke 2010; Mattli 1999). Deutsch et al. (1957) argue that cooperative political communities are created around certain "cores of strength," and that integration among political units is dependent on the capabilities of those taking part. A pluralistic security community based on firmly established regional ties will require a pattern of interactions based around a central group of states or just one powerful state.

Whether a local state strives to be a leading regional power will be based on both their willingness and the opportunities available. Capabilities and power status are not always commensurate—the activity of some states will be relatively greater than their capabilities (i.e., overachievers) while others have the capabilities but do not want to become actively engaged in regional affairs (i.e., underachievers) (Cline et al. 2011; Nolte 2010).[5] A strong global hegemon can also provide effective leadership provided they exhibit a credible commitment to local affairs and maintain a monopoly in terms of extra-regional intervention. Lake (2007, 2009) explains how a committed and powerful state can lessen conflict in the neighborhood and among "subordinates". The latter will then spend less money on defense. The efforts of their dominant protector are therefore important for states in hierarchical security relationships and lessen the degree to which they need to depend on their own military strength to protect their interests. Because they are aware that other local states are

[5] For more on power status, see also Rhamey et al. (2014).

tied to the same economic regimes, subordinate states are much more likely to be amenable to international trade.

Furthermore, subordinate states know that their neighbors are similarly protected and constrained by the dominant state against overly aggressive actions (Lake 2009). Therefore, the dominant state serves as an informal arbitrator when disputes arise, which reassures subordinate states and lessens their dependence on power politics. For instance, the post-war process of Western European cooperation was heavily dependent on the primacy of U.S. power. Because the purpose of NATO was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down," the anxieties of the French regarding the re-emergence of the German threat were assuaged by the commitment made by the U.S. to the region. Indeed, along with the shared threat from the Soviet Union, European cooperation was strongly shaped by Anglo-American commitments (Ripsman 2005; Rosato 2011).

It is important to note that such stability extended beyond the boundaries of subordinate states. The commitment of the dominant power to reduce the potential for anarchy (Lake 2009, p. 41) among subordinate states also reduced levels of suspicion and the potential for conflict among other states in the region. For instance, protecting subordinates from a "rogue" aggressor should also reduce threats to others in the neighborhood.

This approach is theoretically unique in that it explicitly incorporates the spatial dependence mechanism beyond direct diffusion of conflict. As both opportunity and willingness to engage in political interactions are provided by geographic proximity, the simple but powerful overarching principle that interaction is likely to occur between geographically close units (i.e., states) is likely to generate geographical clusters of political interactions. Geographic proximity not only offers opportunities for cooperative interdependence but also incites bellicose actions, thus the spatial dependence mechanism functions for both conflict and cooperation at the same time. Given that rendering interaction easier may have dual impacts on both cooperation and conflict, conflict is likely to reduce as it becomes easier to cross shared borders (Starr and Thomas 2005). As such, the implication is that political interactions are likely to be geographically constrained, which comprises the fundamental mechanism of clustering with respect to political behavior. Whether states will interact, be this belligerently or peacefully, is therefore reliant on geographic proximity, which means states will have a greater investment in what is happening nearby and are more likely to respond.

The behaviors of local states are rendered dependent through what Lake (2009) terms "local security externalities" These are external effects that arise as a result of the security interactions between states. Although security-related behaviors take place within specific set of states or just one state, such actions frequently have external ramifications. For instance, if a state acquires nuclear weapons to address security problems with a particular state, this may create security issues for a much larger group of local states. Unlike "global" externalities which impact all states, "local" security externalities are considered such because the external impact of interactions or behavior is spatially bounded in the sense that it only affects nearby states.

The concept of externalities is fundamentally different from that of direct contagion, although it is not always to make an empirical distinction between them. Spatial contagion refers to the way in which an incident (military conflict) taking place in one location directly initiates another. An instructive example of direct contagion is that of the spatial diffusion of international and civil wars through refugee flow and cross-border rebel activities. Conversely, rather than directly triggering other conflicts, local security externalities affect the local environment within which states function. Put another way, rather than create a chain reaction, security externalities generate "bad-neighborhood" effects.

Independent defense efforts can be reduced by local subordinates for two reasons: first, they have defense ties with a hegemonic power and, second, they expect equal protection and constraints to be placed on other local states by the hegemonic power. Thus, the existence of a dominant power generates positive local externalities that confer collective benefits on all local states. In terms of empirical research, Rhamey et al. (2015) reported that conflict is more likely to take place in a "dominance vacuum" where the projected power of major states penetrates only shallowly, while zones within the reach of their projected power are comparatively peaceful.

Thus, several studies have strived to include extra-dyadic conditions within the literature on international relations. Some aim to indirectly reveal the sources of regional heterogeneity while others expressly model extra-dyadic effects on local conflict. Even though the dominant approach continues to be the additive dyadic approach, productive developments in the field indicate that extra-dyadic mechanisms and factors may have an essential role to play in explaining regional peace.

9.5 Conclusion

There are regional variations in patterns of war and peace, not just in terms of whether war is taking place but also in terms of whether military conflict is likely to occur in the long-term. Several theoretical explanations of spatial heterogeneity in war and peace have been proposed. First, the types of states and dyads in a region are important as it is the aggregated features of these states/dyads that explain regional conflict. For instance, export-oriented economies, homogenous political regimes (especially democracies), and a locally unequal distribution of power are likely to support regional peace due to the existence of a large number of dyads that are not disposed to conflict.

Second, many developments now consider the effect of extra-dyadic conditions that range from diffusion of conflict or spatial "contagion" to the regional impact of international hegemony. The feature all these approaches share is that they propose either direct or indirect mechanisms that shape the regional clustering of peace and conflict. Explanations that draw on local security externalities and regional hegemony expressly presume a mechanism of spatial dependence. Others propose theoretical explanations as to why socioeconomic conditions, such as national borders and mode

of economy, are spatially diverse. These represent promising advances toward more effective explanations of regional peace and conflict.

Existing studies have not offered a full and comprehensive account of regional heterogeneity with respect to war, peace, and cooperation. Several directions for future research have emerged, a few of which will be discussed. First, if a spatial dependence mechanism that links dyadic processes can be established, a useful line of research would be to determine how spatial interdependence works. An example in this respect concerns the effect of hegemony on regional politics. How has the conflict-proneness of different regions been impacted by hegemonic powers? Beyond initiating conflict, how has such hegemony shaped the behavior of local states?[6] And how does the behavior of such states impact others within this wider field of influence? An alternative issue to explore concerns how norms associated with economic orientation and models of political survival diffuse over space. Uncovering these complex processes will elucidate how (and whether) spatial interdependence functions in the domain of international politics.

Second, it would be fruitful to systematically examine how spatial clustering occurs for certain types of states and dyads. Why are democracies clustered in this way? Why do communities of economically interdependent states exist? Why do territorial rivalries and disputes persist in certain regions? Why are there geographically concentrated memberships of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)? Although previous studies have had important ramifications for these questions, addressing them directly would be extremely valuable as it would help to connect the wider question of regional peace with traditional dyadic research on conflict.

At a methodological level, is it feasible for a region to be employed as the unit of analysis when conducting a meticulous empirical study? This work has challenged the excessive reductionism that leads to an exclusive focus on micro mechanisms functioning at the dyadic and state levels, By the same token, vital causal mechanisms may be overlooked if the focus switches to a solely macro-regional perspective that includes all states and dyads together.[7] Alternative solutions would be to incorporate, within the same framework, multilevel and network methods focusing on states and dyads with structural and macro-regional variables.

Overall, even though scholarly work is continuing to evolve, many important studies have been conducted that have the potential to explain regional heterogeneity in conflict and peace. Through the incorporation of alternative methodological tools and theoretical perspectives, researchers could therefore reassess the status of the primary theories of conflict and peace (such as democratic peace) that currently

[6] Examples of studies pursuing these questions include: Rhamey et al. (2015) and Sakuwa (2019), although the former focuses on the effect of multiple regional hierarchies instead of global hegemony as in the latter.

[7] Even though this topic has rarely been considered, a solely regional approach (which employs the region as the unit of analysis) may be of value if the concern is with nonlinear dynamics within an aggregated regional system. For example, a "tipping point" or critical mass of dispute density may exist that exponentially elevates the risk of neighborhood conflict. Previous studies have identified such macro-systemic nonlinear dynamics (Thompson 2003; Vasquez et al. 2011).

dominate this field. One potentially useful tool is network analysis, although the spatial variation of international conflict could be examined using a broad range of methodological instruments, such as spatial statistics. By developing further research on extra-dyadic mechanisms, a range of productive and valuable insights into the nature of regional war and peace will be made available on an ongoing basis.

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Chapter 10
Bad Neighborhoods in World Politics: Ethnic Political Exclusion, Weak States, and Interstate Territorial Disputes

We have multiple contenders for the engines of international pacification—including democracies, capitalism, and territorial dispute cessation, among others. What these arguments say is that regions with more of these attributes are more peaceful and hence better neighborhoods than regions with less of these attributes. But what about bad neighborhoods? Are they simply regions without democracies, capitalism, and the cessation of territorial disputes? That is certainly one way to approach the problem. However, another way is to ask why do some international neighborhoods lack the desirable attributes of better neighborhoods? Our answer is that some regions are characterized by their propensity to deal with societal heterogeneity by excluding group participation (and especially ethnic groups) in domestic politics, the existence of kindred groups in adjacent states, and weak state capacity. This triangular combination does not explain all conflict in the world, but it appears to be responsible for a respectable proportion of internal and external warfare, particularly in Afro-Eurasian regions. It is highly possible that that we are looking in the wrong places by focusing exclusively on global Northern processes such as democratization and economic interdependence. For instance, in some parts of the world, the absence of full democracy is manifested as exclusionary politics, which has the potential for instability, especially when aggravated by the presence of adjacent kin groups and weak states. We believe that this combination of factors offers a more constructive approach than merely relying on the relative absence of processes found elsewhere.

To account for this bad neighborhood phenomenon, we integrate theoretical arguments and empirical findings developed by Miller (2005, 2007), Wimmer (2013), and Cederman et al. (2013a, b). In the analysis that follows, we concentrate on interstate disputes about territory—most of which involve boundary disagreements. Our question is to what extent are territorial disputes a function of ethnic political exclusion, regionalized ethnic politics, and weak states? Our findings show that there is a very strong relationship. As a result, we argue that disorder in some parts of the world can be traced to a combination of domestic and international factors that are centered on ethnic political interactions which in turn are aggravated by inadequate state capacities. While disorder may be due to the relative absence of democracies,

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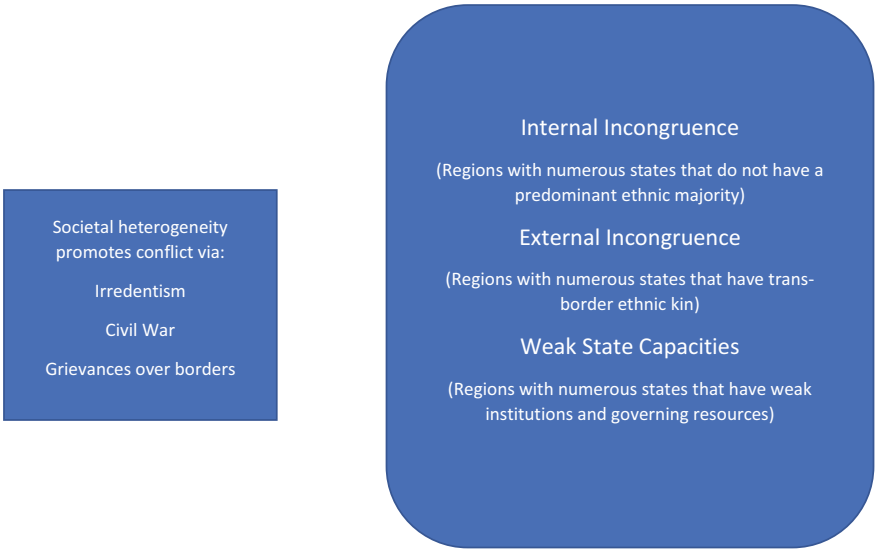

Fig. 10.1 Miller's theory of regional conflict

economic interdependence, and industrialization, it may also be the case that the absence of these factors that make good neighborhoods is due to the presence of other processes and institutions that make bad neighbors in the first place.

Leaving aside these broader issues for another time, we focus instead on a narrower aspect of the relationship between ethnicized politics, weak states, and interstate conflict. We build a theoretical foundation that explains why the interactions between ethnopolitics, and weak states generate international conflict. Afterwards, we assess how well our theory explains a specific type of interstate conflict; namely, territorial disputes. The reason is that much of the IR theoretical and empirical research on interstate conflict has identified territorial disputes to be a principal driver (Vasquez 1993, 1995, 2001; Hensel 1996; Vasquez and Henehan 2001; Rasler and Thompson 2006; Senese and Vasquez 2008; Gibler 2012; Schultz 2015). Hence, boundary disputes, which constitute the lion share of territorial disputes, is our dependent variable.

10.1 Societal Heterogeneity/Weak State Approaches

Miller's (2007) theory is predicated on the region as the unit of analysis. He emphasizes (Fig. 10.1) three main attributes: regional internal incongruence, regional external incongruence, and weak states.[1] The first variable is the state-to nation

[1] Miller's thesis also includes two intervening variables one of which is not part of the theoretical and empirical analysis in this paper. Miller argues that liberal institutions can overcome regional internal and external incongruence. We examine this possibility cautiously since, as will be seen,

imbalance. Regions with many states that encompass multiple nations are imbalanced or incongruent. If most states in a region possess a singular national identification, the region is said to be balanced or congruent in an internal sense. A second variable refers to external balance/congruence. Greater imbalance occurs in regions in which the groups found in one state are also resident in neighboring states. The types of conflict that are most prevalent in highly incongruent regions are wars of unification (one state attempts to expand to combine scattered groups in different states) or wars of secession (minority groups attempt to break away from a state in which the majority discriminates against the minority). In some cases, the conflict is a civil war in which the majorities are attempting to break free of minority rule. Regionalized conflict can erupt if groups in one state are unhappy when groups with which they identify are mistreated in a neighboring state. Alternatively, dissident groups are likely to find assistance from kin groups residing in adjacent states.

The third variable in Miller's theory is state strength. He contends (2007: 54) that if states lack effective institutions and resources, they cannot be expected to fulfill state functions such as controlling violence. As a consequence, both economic growth and the ability to fund state services are handicapped severely. Weak states also have severe problems policing their dissidents who either reside in another country and/or receive aid across their borders. In a nutshell, weak state capacities aggravate national imbalances and regional incongruence. They also have important effects on the probability of democratization, economic growth, trade and foreign investment.

One problem with Miller's thesis is that he argues regional conflict is the result of too many different nations attempting to coexist within a state's boundaries. Yet, all states that encompass multiple nations do not necessarily devolve into conflict among its sub-groups. Wimmer (2013) suggests that a way to sharpen the focus is to examine whether sub-national groups are excluded from their political system. While countries with multiple sub-groups have the potential for conflict, it is those states that politically discriminate against some of their sub-groups that are more likely to see that potential become reality.

Wimmer's theory (Fig. 10.2) begins with the observation that older, more centralized states have had an opportunity to develop an exchange system. Their citizens are offered political participation and public goods in return for loyalty to the state. However, states that are weakly centralized are less likely to develop this type of exchange process because they have less mobilized citizens, weak civil society and/or strong ethnic divisions which serve as obstacles to effective resource allocations that can ensure popular loyalties. Therefore, securing ethnic group loyalties is a more attractive strategy since it involves a limited distribution of public goods. In such states, co-ethnics are showered with public goods and political parties are mobilized on the basis of ethnic affiliations. At this point, state rulers develop strong incentives

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it overlaps with our operational approach to state strength. Meanwhile, great power involvement in regions can either exacerbate or decrease regional conflict depending on the type of its involvement. A full consideration of great power interventions will be postponed to later investigations, especially since the precise causal mechanisms are complex.

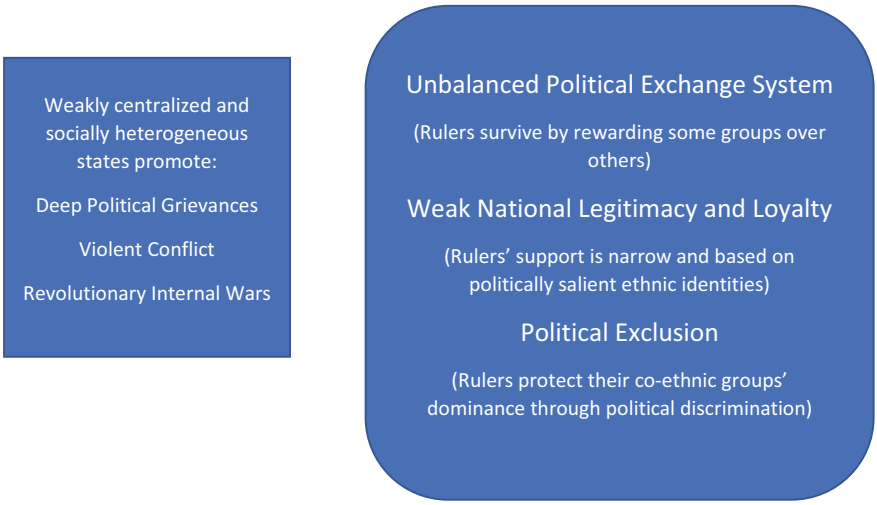

Fig. 10.2 Wimmer's theory of ethnopolitical violence

to prevent another ethnic group's political dominance while maximizing their own ethnic group's welfare in a zero-sum struggle.

Wimmer's (2013) theory also has important implications for understanding interstate conflict. In states characterized by strong ethnicized politics, democratization becomes difficult to sustain since the perceived risks and costs of political competition are too great. Elite circulation is either unlikely or characterized by extensive conflict. Widespread state legitimacy is improbable. The result is that state capacities are likely to be weak and remain weak since national elites lack the resources to improve them.

Meanwhile, minorities are likely to be subject to discrimination, political exclusion and attracted to rebellion. Internal warfare becomes more probable. National boundaries that define which ethnic groups are included and excluded from the state are likely to be disputed, especially if the boundaries and/or the state are relatively new and uncertain. Some of these disagreements over contested spaces may even lead to rivalries between adjacent states.

In addition, states with strong ethnic segmentation tend to be clustered geographically within similar regions with ethnic groups often divided by national boundaries. The ill treatment of co-ethnic groups can swiftly become an international issue as leaders are pressured by their domestic constituents to take action in order to protect ethnic kin communities in neighboring states. The internationalization of domestic ethnic rifts also occurs when leaders in neighboring states provide external support to politically excluded ethnic groups for the purpose of undermining their rivals. Thus, ethnic conflict has the potential to expand regionally as Miller's (2007) argument suggests.

Based on both Miller and Wimmer's arguments, we argue that political systems that exclude groups from influencing the policy-making process will be prone to domestic and interstate conflict. Domestic conflict occurs when groups disagree about

the appropriate allocation of societal resources. International conflict emerges when leaders confront ethnic subnational groups that are divided by both national borders and national allegiances. These circumstances become combustible in the presence of weak state capacities.[2] Weak states, with intense group competition, are more likely to be sites of internal conflict because their rulers are unable to deliver services that could elicit loyalty and legitimacy from the populace. Moreover, weak states are unlikely to be able to suppress internal rebellions effectively as well as establish and maintain definitive national boundaries. Aware of these weaknesses, sub-national ethic groups are apt to exploit boundary issues to advance their political agendas. Therefore, domestic contexts that are characterized by both political exclusion and weak state capacities are likely to be associated with interstate conflict via boundary disputes.

10.2 Previous Findings

Fortunately, there is a deep and rich body of evidence that has established the connections of ethnicity to civil wars and the regionalization of conflict via ethnic kin interactions.[3] In addition to the findings linking political exclusion to civil war, an especially revealing discovery is Cederman et al.'s (2013a, b) finding that trans-border ethnic kin size has a curvilinear relationship with civil war onsets. Ordinarily, the relationship is positive but at higher values of trans-border kin size, a restraining effect occurs that discourages the participation of transnational ethnic kin from intervening in a cross-border civil war.[4] These and other findings (see footnote 4) resurrect the salience of ethnic group grievances in civil wars as important causal explanations in addition to past works that focused on weak states, hospitable terrain and greed motives. Ethnic causal explanations were downgraded as a popular index of ethno-fractionalization proved to have limited predictive powers. However, Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010) have developed new data that identifies not merely the presence of ethnic groups but also their relationship to their governments in terms of their exclusion, discrimination, or autonomy. Subsequent findings show that there are robust connections between politically excluded (and discriminated) ethnic groups and civil war onset.

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[2] For the linkages between weak states, civil wars, and international conflict, see Hironaka (2005), Stetter (2007).

[3] See, in particular recent works by Cederman et al. (2009), Saleyhan (2009), Cederman et al. (2010), Wimmer (2013), Cederman et al. (2013a, b), Forsberg (2008), Rasler and Thompson (2014). For a comprehensive review of the linkages between ethnic conflict and international conflict, see Carment et al. (2009).

[4] Ironically, this curvilinear proposition has been advanced in large part because Russia has been more reticent than one might have expected in defending Russian groups in the Near Abroad. But that was before the war with Georgia, the seizure of Crimea, and the ongoing Ukrainian conflict. It may be, then, that the curvilinear expectation is also outdated.

Nonetheless, the primary focus on ethnic conflict has been placed, not surprisingly, on internal warfare. Yet, the increasing emphasis on regionalized conflict via adjacent co-ethnic ties implies a strong potential link to territorial disputes. Miller (2007) argues, for instance, that sub-national groups provide agency for territorial disagreements. Why are boundaries a political issue? National boundaries and state boundaries are misaligned and members of nations want their groups included within their own state's boundaries and not somebody else's. Wimmer concurs that boundaries are apt to become politicized by ethnic groups contesting who belongs and does not belong within the polity. Just what is internal and what is external to the state can become complicated as groups vie with competing political survival strategies. Even if boundaries are considered settled, they can become a nuisance for the pursuit of trans-national goals as rebels move back and forth from external sanctuaries and refugee camps to sites of guerrilla attacks. Unsettled borders, on the other hand, often reflect disagreements about which side of a boundary resident populations belong. Either way, ethnicized politics and boundary disputes are likely to be linked. The question then becomes to what extent, territorial disputes in general are driven by domestic political discrimination and exclusion.

Less empirical work has been done on the specific linkages between societal heterogeneity and territorial disputes. One exception is the work carried out by Huth (1996). In a comprehensive analysis of territorial disputes (1950–1990), Huth examined two variables that overlap with our inquiry. One variable captured whether "bordering minority groups within the target share ties of language and ethnicity with the population of the challenger"—as in Somalia or Kashmir. A second asked whether "the populations of challenger and target share ties of a common language and ethnicity." The first variable was found to be insignificant in explaining the advent of territorial disputes while the second one was significant and substantively important, accounting for a roughly 16% increase in the likelihood of a dispute emerging.

The first finding was seen by Huth as a surprising rejection of irredentist tendencies. There is no question that the interactions between bordering minority groups sometimes escalate into conflict over territorial control but in his dataset, most pertinent cases did not involve disputes. Therefore, Huth read that outcome to mean that divided minorities were either not as conflict prone as popularly thought and/or because leaders were reluctant to raise such issues lest they encourage restlessness among their own minorities. Huth viewed the second finding to reflect the tendency for former colonial areas or defeated states to be divided at independence or separated early by military force (e.g., Vietnam, Korea, Germany, Yemen, and Northern Ireland). Such divisions were unstable because one or more parties sought to reunify the former nation.

The divided nation problem represents a variation on Miller's incongruent nation argument. These situations reflect imposed structures in which nations are divided into two or more adjacent states for political purposes. In principle, this type of imbalance is no different from artificially separating ethnic and tribal groups into several

adjacent states. The resulting states are structurally incongruent. However, operationally, it is difficult to capture both types of imbalances with one measure of incongruity. It is convenient for analytical purposes, therefore, to put the small number of divided nations problem aside to better focus on domestic majority-minority questions. In view of the paucity of empirical research on the linkage between group conflict and territorial disputes, Huth's findings loom large in suggesting that there are only weak linkages that exist between domestic group conflicts and territorial disputes. However, he may have been too quick to focus solely on divided nations as an explanation for his own mixed findings.

Huibregtse (2011), the second exception to the statement about little previous work, has conducted an empirical investigation of the linkages between ethnic composition, powerful ethnic kin and dyadic interstate conflict. She finds that dyads containing ethnically diverse states with dominant ethnic groups are more prone to militarized interstate disputes that involve the use of force. She also finds that those dyads with the presence of a powerful ethnic group that is also associated with transborder ethnic kin are more likely to be associated with a dyadic escalation of violence. While these findings are certainly encouraging, she relies on an ethnic fractionalization index to identify the composition of states' ethnicity and whether the dominant group is associated with a geographically concentrated transborder ethnic kin. Our study relies on what we believe to be a more politically salient measure of ethnic composition for internal and transborder ethnic kin that are variably subject to political discrimination. We also employ a non-dyadic (country-level) approach, and our dependent variable is not militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) but the presence or absence of boundary disputes.[5] Our analysis proceeds on the assumption that boundary disputes are more likely to be directly linked to ethnopolitics than are MIDs in general.

We proceed with the expectation that the combination of domestic group political conflict and state weakness accounts for a significant proportion of territorial dispute behavior. Domestic groups are contesting their places within states and some of this competition spills over into interstate conflict, as a direct consequence of the assistance from cross-border ethnic kin and disagreements over which groups and their associated territories belong inside one state or the other. Weak states are unable to regulate these group conflicts very well, but liberal political systems may help to reduce such conflicts through their propensity to negotiate or seek arbitration for these disputes. Drawing on both Miller's incongruity and Wimmer's ethnicized politics theories, we hypothesize that:

1. Political systems with excluded ethnic groups are more likely to be linked to disagreements about state borders. The larger the size of the excluded groups, the greater is the expected impact.

[5] Huibregtse asks a different empirical question than we do. The dyadic structure leads her to look at the average ethnic domination in each dyad and relating that to subsequent conflict. It is not clear how to interpret average dyadic ethnic domination based on the size of the majority group alone or the finding that more domination leads to more interstate conflict.

2. Political systems whose excluded ethnic groups have cross-border co-ethnics are more likely to be associated with disagreements about state borders. The larger the size of the transborder ethnic kin, the greater is the expected impact. Whether transborder ethnic kin are included or excluded in their own political system should not make much difference. Either type of status can have some impact on boundary disputes.
3. Political systems characterized by weak states are more likely to be associated with disagreements about state borders. Weak states, moreover, aggravate the connections between politically excluded groups and disagreements about state borders.

The three hypotheses appear to be reasonably straightforward with one or two caveats. We are proceeding on the assumption that the previously found curvilinear relationship between transborder ethnic kin size and civil war onsets will not be observed when we focus on boundary disputes. The asserted constraints on large-sized groups are certainly plausible but they are less likely to be observed in what are essentially verbal disputes over contending claims that only sometimes result in the use of force.

In hypothesis 2, we introduce the possibility that it might matter whether transborder ethnic kin are included or excluded in their own political system. Again, it is quite conceivable that it might make some difference about how much clout transborder ethnic kin can wield. A politically powerful, transborder ethnic kin should be expected to influence its state's behavior more likely than a minority group that is also discriminated against in its own country. This logic would indicate that included transborder ethnic kin would be more conflict-prone. However, excluded transborder ethnic kin can be linked to dispute behavior in several different ways. For instance, given the right kind of geography, they can provide sanctuaries and facilitate arms smuggling and other resources. If transborder ethnic kin are concentrated along or near the border, they create political problems for governments on both sides of the border. Moreover, these settings also provide governments with some potential to exploit border issues for ambitious or diversionary agendas. Thus, we do not expect the political status of the transborder kin to make much difference. Both inclusion and exclusion could prove to be problematic in different ways.

Finally, boundary disputes are also a function of interstate factors such as external threats and rivalry, which have been well established empirically.[6] Therefore, we will compare the relative contribution of both external (e.g., rivalry) and internal (e.g., domestic political exclusion and the presence of transborder ethnic kin) factors.[7] Since we have no compelling reason to expect external factors to squeeze out the effects of domestic factors or vice versa, we anticipate that both types of factors will prove to be significant. The empirical task is to compare their relative weight in generating territorial conflict.

[6] See, for instance, Rasler and Thompson (2006), Gibler (2012), and Owsiak (2012).

[7] The contrast is made a bit hazier by our "internal" factors including transborder ethnic kin.

10.3 Research Design

To explain boundary disputes as a function of both external and internal processes, the following indicators are used in the subsequent analysis.

10.3.1 Independent Variable Measures

Internal political exclusion: We use an indicator that measures the relative size of politically excluded ethnic groups based on the 1946–2013 country level data taken from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Core Dataset 2014 (Vogt et al. 2015).[8] Since this dataset is designed for group level analyses, we take the size of the largest politically excluded group for each state per year from 1960 to 2011. Politically excluded groups are judged to be powerless because they are blocked in their access to political power or discriminated if the exclusion is systematic and targeted.

Transnational ethnic kin group size: For each country, we selected the size of the largest transnational ethnic kin group that shares a similar ethnic identity as that of the internal politically excluded group from 1960 to 2011, provided in the Cederman et al. (2013a, b) EPR-TEK dataset. This variable is based on the relative demographic weight of a transnational ethnic kin (TEK) group compared to the incumbent's population across the border in which its primary ethnic kin reside.[9] The variable varies between 0 (where the size of the TEK group relative to the incumbent population is negligible) and 1 (where the size of the TEK group approximates the same size as the incumbent population). In terms of boundary disputes, we see the size of the adjacent group as likely to be correlated with disagreements about where to draw state borders. The larger the ethnic group that is split by the boundaries, the more likely there is to be contention over precisely how the lines should be demarcated, especially when the TEK group is coupled with a politically excluded internal group.

Excluded and included transnational ethnic kin group sizes: Once we determined the largest size of the TEK group associated with the internal politically excluded group, we ascertained whether the TEK group was included or excluded in its own political system. Again, if the TEK group is excluded, the group is blocked from

[8] The data can be found at the International Conflict Research ETH website at: http://www.icr.ethz.ch/data/tek.

[9] We thank Idean Salyehan and his research team for their generosity in providing the TEK dataset for this analysis. The TEK data that we use in this paper was used in the Cederman et al. (2013a, b) article in *International Organization*, rather than the EPR-TEK 2014 dataset provided by (Vogt et al. 2015). In cases where the ethnic data did not extend to 2011, we took the last 2009 value for both 2010 and 2011 since demographic data changes very little over time. We relied on the 2013 data used in Cederman et al. (2013a, b) because it contains the size of the TEK group relative to the incumbent as well as designating whether the TEK group is excluded or included. We also checked the TEK group designation with the EPR-TEK 2014 dataset as well.

political power or politically discriminated systematically. We did not code a TEK as excluded if the group had regional autonomy. Likewise, the TEK group was considered included if the group dominated or shared political power with its government. These designations were obtained from the Cederman et al. (2013a, b) TEK dataset or the EPR-TEK 2014 data set (Vogt et al. forthcoming).

State strength: Conceptually and following Holsti (1996), we think state strength measures, in the comparative sense, should be linked to three components: extraction, violence monopoly, and legitimacy.[10] Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find appropriate measures for all three components in the context of a large cross-national study over a long period of time. Consequently, we focus here on the legitimacy elements of state strength.

State legitimacy: We utilize a single indicator, suggested earlier by Belkin and Schofer (2003: 607), that is derived from combining two measures from the Polity IV dataset: the *regulation of participation* (whether national political organizations compete for influence) and *parcomp* (the extent to which political competition occurs) dimensions. Basically, this measure captures the degree to which contests for political office and political parties are allowed. We standardized each measure and then added them together to form a single variable. We find that this measure is strongly correlated with an earlier state legitimacy measure using World Bank governance data for the post-1995 era ($r = 0.75$).[11]

Rivalry: As a proxy for external threat, we rely on the number of interstate rivalries in which a state is involved. The more rivalries that are ongoing in a given year, the greater is a state's external threat. Thompson's (2001; Thompson and Dreyer 2011) strategic rivalries, which are defined in terms of competitive adversaries that see each other as enemies, are employed as the rivalry indicator.

[10] For a review of earlier attempts to measure state capacity, see Hendrix (2010). By "comparative sense" we mean to differentiate state capacity from the alternative usage often associated with international relations interpretations that focus on the state's military strength.

[11] A second measure that we have used focuses less on how the political system functions and more on how it was structured. Englebert (2000: 127) develops a binary historical continuity index that separates states that have been colonized, experienced diminished sovereignty at independence, lacked human settlements prior to colonization, virtually eliminated or assimilated the indigenous population during colonization, or created post-independence institutions that deviated considerably from pre-existing institutions. States that lack continuity are less legitimate than those that can claim continuity over time. Years in which states are identified as "non-legitimate" by Englebert's measure are coded 1 and zero otherwise. Since we have two legitimacy measures, the Polity-based indicator is referred to as (political system) "legitimacy" and the Englebert index is labelled (state) "non-legitimacy." We expected this indicator to be as useful for boundary disputes as it was in predicting civil wars. However, the Englebert index's utility for territorial disputes proved to be less efficacious and remained statistically insignificant. Consequently, it is not used in this analysis as part of an effort to reduce the impact of collinearity problems.

10.3.2 Dependent Variable: A Binary Measure of Boundary Disputes

Boundary Disputes: We have expanded a relatively new measure of unstable boundaries by systematizing information on contested borders found in Biger (1995) and we combine this data with the information reported in Huth and Allee (2002), the ICOW project (Hensel and Mitchell 2009), and CIA (2013).[12] These sources provide information that extends from the 1800s through 2012.[13] While the coverage of this indicator is quite good, its main disadvantage is that we are unable to gauge the intensity of the disputes.[14] We only know whether boundaries are completely settled or not. Thus, this measure is an imperfect index of external threat emanating from disputed boundaries, but its flaws should work against the likelihood of finding strong positive relationships. Many states still have minor disputes even though they may have settled their major disputes some time before. In other words, its use results in a conservative test of the role of unstable boundaries.[15]

A single indicator of territorial disputes was derived from the sources above. We determined whether each country had any territorial disputes in each year from 1960 to 2011 and coded a binary variable as 1 for every year in which a country had a territorial dispute and 0 otherwise.

10.3.3 Control Variable Measures

Six control variables are considered: democracy, power capabilities, economic development, population size, the number of state borders, power capabilities as well as measures to control for temporal dependence. For democracy, we use a binary variable derived from the Polity 21-point scale in the Polity IV Project: Political

[12] This measure first appeared in Rasler and Thompson (2014) when it was still restricted to pre-1995 data.

[13] There should be no question that all of the sources are equal in usefulness. Biger's approach is to discuss each pair of adjacent states and to comment generally on the history of the boundary. What a reader gets is mainly information about whether the boundary was ever contested, whether it continues to be contested, or when it stopped being contested. Since our operationalization is focused on simply specifying whether or not a boundary is contested in a given year, Biger's limited information can serve our purposes, especially since we also have more precise information in the other two sources. The CIA source is used primarily to update Biger's information which ends in 1994–95.

[14] The measure also does not code disputes by the type of disagreement. It simply captures dichotomously whether there are any ongoing boundary disputes.

[15] Moreover, we are not using boundary disputes as the principal independent variable, as is customary in territorial peace analyses, but rather as the dependent variable. At some point, these questions should be examined with a territorial dispute indicator that allows for varying intensity, but it is not clear that such an indicator is currently available for a global sample.

Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2012 at www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm. Democracy years (1960–2011) are coded 1 when they are associated with a polity score of 7 or above and zero otherwise.[16]

For power capabilities, we use the Correlates of War measure of CINC which is a composite index of national capability, and a standard international relations version of state strength. For each state, its share of military personnel, military expenditures, total population, urban population, and iron and steel/energy consumption is summed and averaged for an annual score (Singer 1987).

We also control for development (logged GDP per capita) and total population size (logged) since either one might be expected to influence the amount of conflict experienced.[17] We expect that economic development will dampen conflictual propensities over boundaries. Larger populations, in contrast, are likely to be positively associated with territorial disputes since they are likely to be more insistent on pursuing their territorial preference than smaller states, especially in the Global South.

The fourth control is for the number of borders a state possesses.[18] We expect that states with more borders are likely to increase the probability of their participation in territorial disputes. The last control variables deal with the presence of autocorrelation in the dependent variable. Traditionally, international relations scholars rely on a peace years count variable and accompanying splines (Beck et al. 1998). Carter and Signorino (2010), however, suggest a simpler method, that we employ, by estimating t, t^2, and t^3 instead—where t stands for time. In order to reduce the collinearity among these three variables, we "demeaned" the time variable and then squared and cubed it to produce three measures that enter into the three logit models below.

10.3.4 The Case for a Monadic (Country-Year) Level of Analysis

The standard approach in quantitative analyses of international relations questions currently is the dyadic level of analysis. For studies of civil wars, monadic analyses usually predominate, although there are some studies that are located at the group

[16] We introduce democracy in our subsequent logit models where the state legitimacy variable is not present. We understand that the democracy measure is likely to not only be highly correlated with our legitimacy measure but also to be composed of some of the indices of legitimacy.

[17] We anticipate some possible problems using these control measures, especially with GDP per capita, in the context of relative political capacity which is also based on calculations employing GDP. Both the GDP per capita and population size variables were obtained from PENN World Table at https://pwt.sas.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt61_form.php, version 6.1. North Korea, Myanmar (1998-2013) and Kosovo population data obtained from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. https://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/series/POPTOTKPA647NWDB.

[18] Surprisingly, we were unable to locate a dataset that included the number of borders that each state possesses. A new one was constructed based on reviewing information on a country-by-country basis found in Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, 1816–2006 (Version 3.2)—online at http://correlatesofwar.org (Stinnett et al. 2002).

level. For our analysis, we choose to examine our empirical questions at the monadic (country-year) level.[19]

This choice is made for two reasons. One is that the theoretical question is whether states characterized by certain attributes (political exclusion, ethnic kin across the border, and state weakness) are associated with territorial/boundary disputes. These questions would be compatible with a monadic approach. The second reason deals with an issue that arises with a dyadic analysis. To measure monadic attributes in dyadic analyses, investigators normally employ the lowest common denominator. For instance, in a two state (or dyadic) comparison, this approach involves adopting the weaker state's score as the dyadic score for state weakness. The empirical question is thus changed from whether weak states or states with political exclusion are associated with territorial disputes to one of whether dyads with at least one relatively weak state or one state with political exclusion are associated with these types of disputes. Although this analytical shift is not a serious one for all the variables, we find that such an approach does change the nature of the question being asked and therefore produces results that are difficult to interpret, especially when one is looking at the size of politically disadvantaged and ethnic kin groups across the border.

One remaining issue is the regional dimension of territorial disputes. Most territorial disputes involve contiguous states quarreling over some territory adjacent or nearby. Some of these quarrels are more long-distance affairs and reflect colonial legacies. For this reason, we restrict our examination to intra-regional disputes and exclude extra-regional ones. Eleven relatively conventional regions are employed: North America, South America, Caribbean and Central America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Pacific, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the former Soviet Socialist Republic states. Thus, Gibraltar is a territorial dispute between the United Kingdom and Spain within the European region. The Falklands/Malvinas dispute counts as a within-region dispute for Argentina but not for the United Kingdom.

10.4 Findings

One of the aims of our analysis is to assess the argument that states with large politically excluded ethnic groups as well as those with relatively large cross border ethnic kin communities combined with weak state capacity are more likely to be associated with territorial disputes. Earlier research by Rasler and Thompson (2014) shows that these factors do indeed influence intra-state conflict. The current question is whether

[19] The alternative to the country-year level of analysis is a dyadic approach. While we prefer the country-year level, we conducted a logit analysis at the dyadic level. The results show that TEK size is positively and significantly related to disputes while controlling for the influences of rivalry, borders, power capability, GDP/per capita, total population and regime type. However, the % excluded population variable was not significantly related to disputes. The post-estimation results also showed that rivalry, borders and power capability had the largest effects on disputes while TEK size had a much smaller effect.

these characteristics are also associated with territorial disputes and, therefore, interstate conflict. We also introduce another important neighborhood influence in the form of strategic rivalries. We conduct a cross-sectional pooled time series (country year) analysis. The full sample ranges from 6426 to 7059 for 159 nation states from 1960 to 2011. The summary statistics are provided in Appendix 1. The sample size varies due to the data availability for GDP/per capita, state legitimacy and power capability across the sample. A logistic regression model for a binary measure of dispute years with robust standard errors will be the primary mode of analysis. Marginal effects and predicted probabilities are estimated to interpret the coefficients.

The variation on the binary dependent variable of dispute years is skewed toward the positive value. More precisely, the total number of dispute years between 1960 and 2011 is 7059 and 4724 of these observations (67%) are associated with the value of 1 for the presence of a territorial dispute. Hence, moderate levels of collinearity among the key independent variables of interest are likely to result in some statistically insignificant coefficients. The correlation matrix of the independent variables in Appendix 2 shows that legitimacy is correlated with GDP/per capita at 0.59 and with democracy at 0.62. The variables for the various ethnic group sizes also share significant correlations. For instance, the size of excluded ethnic population is correlated with the three TEK variables (TEK size, *excluded* TEK size and *included* TEK size) at 0.47, 0.35 and 0.33 respectively. Meanwhile, TEK size is highly associated with *excluded* TEK size with a correlation of 0.72 and a moderate correlation of 0.41 with *included* TEK size.

Consequently, five logit models are estimated with the aim of minimizing the influence of collinearity, especially among the TEK variables. The first logit model estimates the influence of rivalry, the size of the excluded internal ethnic group, and legitimacy while controlling for the influence of the number of borders, GDP/per capital, and population size. In the second logit model, relative TEK size and relative excluded TEK size are introduced, while in the third model, relative excluded and included TEK size variables are estimated. The last two models test for the robustness of the earlier findings with controls for power capability and democracy.

Overall, the results across the five models in Table 10.1 show that rivalry, the indicator for external threat, and legitimacy, the indicator of state strength, have robust and consistent relationships to dispute behavior. As expected, rivalry is positively related to disputes while legitimacy shares a negative relationship. The five models also show that the control variables behave appropriately most of the time. For instance, population and power capability exhibit strong positive relationships with disputes, and democracy has a statistically significant negative association with disputes, However, the results are not as consistent for GDP per capita which is largely the result of its collinearity with legitimacy. When democracy is introduced in lieu of legitimacy (see model 5; Table 10.1), GDP/per capita has the expected strong negative effect on disputes.

The results of these logit models are best explained in terms of the marginal effects that the key variables of interest have on disputes. Table 10.2 displays these effects for each variable, while holding the remaining at their mean levels.

Table 10.1 Logit regression for dispute years, 1960–2011

	Model 1%Coeff	Model 2%Coeff	Model 3%Coeff	Model 4%Coeff	Model 5%Coeff
Rivalry	1.237**	1.211**	1.202**	1.237**	1.218**
	0.080	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.083
% excluded ethnic group size	0.559**	0.033	−0.010	0.042	−0.087
	0.197	0.222	0.231	0.220	0.224
% relative TEK size	–	0.442**	–	0.557 **	0.525**
		0.153		0.150	0.164
% relative excluded TEK size	–	0.816**	1.327**	0.619**	0.635**
		0.215	0.178	0.211	0.223
% relative included TEK size	–	–	0.578**	–	–
			0.206		
State legitimacy	−0.229 **	−0.219**	−0.227**	–	−0.269**
	0.026	0.026	0.026	–	0.028
Democracy	–	–	–	−0.531**	–
		–		0.073	–
Power capability	–	–	–	–	73.159**
		–		–	6.122
GDP per capita	−0.020	−0.005	0.008	−0.061**	−0.086**

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

	Model 1%Coeff	Model 2%Coeff	Model 3%Coeff	Model 4%Coeff	Model 5%Coeff
	0.031	0.032	0.032	0.028	0.034
Population	0.254**	0.272**	0.268**	0.338**	–
	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.028	–
Borders	0.119**	0.103**	0.109**	0.282**	0.109**
	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.024	0.015
T	0.021**	0.018**	0.019**	0.024**	0.021**
	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.006
t^2	−0.000	0.22–04	0.000	0.000	0.000
	0.000	0.16–04	0.000	0.000	0.000
t^3	-0.41–04 **	-0.37–04**	−0.38–04**	0.40–04**	−0.21–04**
	0.12–04	0.12–04	0.12–04	0.15–04	0.23–04
Constant	−0.646**	−0.874**	-0.978**	−0.214	0.005
	0.277	0.281	0.281	0.241	0.297
N	6344	6251	6251	6514	5674
Log likelihood	−3210.268	−3127.778	−3128.131	−3267.456	−2776.194
Chi-square	849.040	887.780	897.720	870.250	777.780
Pseudo R-square	0.206	0.216	0.216	0.210	0.229

Note Robust standard errors are reported below coefficients. **p ≤ 0.05; *p ≤ 0.10. Sample size varies largely due to data availability on GDP per capita, legitimacy and power capability variables

Table 10.2 Marginal effects of rivalry, ethnic group sizes and state legitimacy on the probability of disputes, 1960–2011 for Logit models in Table 10.1

Variables	Dispute probabilities	95% confidence intervals	
Model 1			
Rivalry	0.225	0.204	0.247
% excluded ethnic group size	0.102	0.032	0.172
State legitimacy	−0.042	−0.051	−0.032
Model 2			
Rivalry	0.219	0.198	0.241
% excluded ethnic group size	0.006	−0.073	0.085
% relative TEK group size	0.080	0.026	0.134
% Relative excluded TEK group size	0.148	0.071	0.224
State legitimacy	−0.040	−0.049	−0.030
Model 3			
Rivalry	0.218	0.196	0.239
% excluded ethnic group size	−0.002	−0.084	0.080
% relative included TEK group size	0.105	0.032	0.178
% relative excluded TEK group size	0.241	0.178	0.304
State legitimacy	−0.041	−0.051	−0.031
Model 4			
Democracy	−0.095	−0.121	−0.069
Model 5			
Rivalry	0.197	0.177	0.218
State legitimacy	−0.044	−0.051	−0.034
Power capability (COW)	11.855	10.054	13.655

Note Marginal effects are obtained from the corresponding logit models that were estimated in Table 10.1. Each effect is estimated while the remaining variables are held at their means

Starting with Model 1, rivalry increases the probability of disputes by 23%. State strength as measured by legitimacy decreases the probability by 4%, and the size of the excluded internal ethnic group increases disputes by 10%. However, the logit estimates in Models 2 and 3 in Table 10.1 provide the essential answers to the effect of transnational ethnic kin on disputes. The marginal effects for model 2 shows that relative TEK size increases the probability of disputes by 8%, but the larger impact on disputes is accounted for by excluded TEK size with a 15% probability.[20] Meanwhile, the influence of excluded internal group size is reduced to zero in the presence of these TEK variables. The marginal effects for model 3 illustrate the role of *included* TEK size on disputes as well as that of *excluded* TEK size. While *included* TEK size increases the probability of disputes by 10%, *excluded* TEK increases disputes by

[20] We did not find a significant curvilinear relationship between TEK and boundary disputes.

24%, which exceeds the impact that rivalry has at 22% and legitimacy at 4%. These findings suggest that our expectations are slightly incorrect. We thought that the TEK variable would work equally strongly whether the TEK group was included or excluded. Both types of status work in the same direction but excluded TEK groups are more than twice as influential in aggravating boundary disputes as are included TEK groups.

Three important findings emerge overall. First, the role of the size of *excluded* internal groups on territorial disputes is not as important when controlling for the presence for any of the three TEK variables. Second, increases in the relative size of the TEK group vis-à-vis the incumbent government are associated with an increased probability of territorial disputes, but that relationship is superseded by much stronger associations between the sizes of relative *excluded* and *included* TEK groups with dispute behavior. Moreover, the relative size of *excluded* TEK groups brings about a greater probability of disputes in comparison to increasing sizes of *included* TEK groups. Third, the size of *excluded* TEK groups plays an equally important role as rivalry does in increasing disputes. In short, the presence of transnational ethnic kin and rivalry are potent neighborhood effects on boundary dispute behavior.

The next question is at what levels in the sizes of the *excluded* and *included* TEK variables can we observe dispute probability to be the highest? In order to track this precisely, we estimated the predicted probabilities of disputes across the levels of each TEK variable, *Excluded* TEK size has a steeper and greater impact than included TEK size has in the right panel. Moreover, the confidence intervals for *excluded* TEK size are much smaller than those for *included* TEK size indicating that there is greater precision associated with *excluded* TEK size predictions. This outcome is likely to be due to the greater frequency of dispute years associated with excluded TEK size ($n = 2127$), relative to those associated with included TEK size ($n = 467$). When excluded TEK size reaches the upper end of its range, the predicted probabilities of disputes increase from 85 to 90%, not unlike the predicted probabilities for included TEK size at its upper range which is between 80 and 85%. In short, as *excluded* and *included* TEK group sizes close the gap with the size of the ethnic group represented in the initial regime, territorial disputes increase significantly.

Finally, we calculated the predicted probabilities of dispute behavior in Table 10.3 in order to ascertain the extent of the contribution of *excluded* and *included* TEK sizes vis-à-vis rivalry. The baseline model when all of the independent variables (Model 3 in Table 10.1) are held at their mean shows a 0.76 probability of dispute behavior. Although the number of rivalries for each country varies from 0 to 6, we estimated the probability of disputes when rivalry takes on the value of 1 since the lion share of the countries in our sample have just a single rivalry. In this situation, the probability of dispute behavior increases to 0.81, a 7% increase over the baseline model. When rivalry is introduced with values of *excluded* and *included* TEK sizes set at 50% of the incumbent's size, the probability of disputes increases to 0.91, a 19% increase from the baseline. In addition, when the excluded and included TEK sizes are estimated at 70% of the incumbent's size along with rivalry, the probability increases to 0.98, a 28% increase from the baseline. Hence, the contribution of the two TEK variables is quite substantial. All of these results are robust even in the

Table 10.3 Predicted probabilities

Variable	Predicted probabilities	95% confidence interval	% change from baseline
Rivalry = 1	0.819	0.799, 0.834	7
Rivalry = 1; Excluded TEK = 0.5; Included TEK = 0.5	0.908	0.882, 0.932	19
Rivalry = 1; Excluded TEK = 0.7; Included TEK = 0.7	0.979	0.969, 0.989	28
Baseline model (for dispute years only)	0.762	0.745, 0.779	

Note The predicted probabilities are derived from Model 3 in Table 10.1, while all other X variables are held at their means

presence of regional controls, including Africa and the Middle East where these types of territorial disputes occur with some frequency.

In sum, the findings support our three hypotheses with some qualifications. Territorial disputes are a function of interstate rivalry, political exclusion, transborder kin, and weak states. External and domestic factors interact to make boundary disagreements more probable. The size of the excluded group matters in predicting territorial disputes unless a transborder ethnic kin variable is in the model (hypothesis 1). When it appears in the model, the size of transborder ethnic kin squeezes out the relationship between political exclusion and territorial disputes (hypothesis 2). Both *included* and *excluded* transborder ethnic kin increase the probability of boundary issues. However, *excluded* transborder ethnic kin, contrary to our initial expectations, have a much greater positive effect on disputes than do *included* transborder ethnic kin. State strength can constrain the likelihood of boundary disputes (hypothesis 3). Yet, while both internal and external factors are significantly involved, it would appear that the external factors, particularly rivalry and transborder ethnic kin groups, are the most potent drivers of the existence and persistence of territorial disagreements.

10.5 Conclusion

Unfortunately, there is a large zone of states whose domestic political arrangements lead to the political exclusion of particular groups from the political process. These groups, depending on their size and other factors, have a propensity to be rebellious. Moreover, these excluded groups, in conjunction with external rivalries and the presence of transborder ethnic kin, are associated with higher probabilities of the existence of boundary disputes. Although many of these boundary disputes may be

trivial, territorial disputes have been demonstrated to be one of the strongest motivations for war. Our findings indicate that domestic political discrimination and/or exclusion is linked, directly and indirectly, to internal and external conflict.

States characterized by political exclusion practices, transborder ethnic kin, and weak states are not randomly distributed around the globe. They are predominately found in the Global South, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. There are also evident clusters in the northern tier of South America and one that has emerged more recently in parts of Eastern Europe that border Russia. Consequently, it is not hard to understand why some regions remain highly conflictual while others are largely pacific in orientation. We make no claim that all conflict is due solely to the combination of political discrimination, transborder ethnic kin, weak states, and interstate rivalries. However, the most pacific regions, such as North America and Western Europe, have tended to move away from these processes and attributes. In regions such as the Middle East and East Africa, the characteristics that we have highlighted are abundantly present.

In addition, political exclusion practices are not the only factor that binds states together in highly conflictual regions. Interstate rivalries and ethnic groups that are divided among different states also produce reverberating regional hotbeds of dissent and interstate clashes as a result of diffusion processes. The Syrian civil war is a good example. The Syrian case started initially as an internal war that quickly escalated and diffused to adjacent states in the region.

Our findings suggest that there are further avenues to explore. We need to assess whether this exclusion-based, instability zone is expanding or contracting.[21] Have we identified the critical factors that contribute to this zone or are there others? We suggest that prior colonial decisions that delimited states according to metropolitan convenience is clearly one of those factors. We know less about the roles that climate change, deteriorating water supplies, and demographic gender imbalances may have in exacerbating conflict. Does inequality matter? To what extent does economic interdependence in the world economy make a contribution? Are regions that have experienced less globalization more susceptible to political exclusion? Or, does political exclusion limit globalizing influences? Finally, do these instability zones overly encourage Northern/great power military interventions and to what extent have the interventions produced more or less stability?

Appendix 1

Summary Statistics of Variable

[21] The number of states with above average levels of political exclusion is actually declining. The number of states registering above the overall mean at each decade mark is: 1960 = 20, 1970 = 30, 1980 = 36, 1990 = 32, 2000 = 32, 2010 = 19.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Disputes (binary)	7059	0.669	0.471	0	1
Rivalry	7059	0.717	1.119	0	6
% largest excluded ethnic group	7058	0.119	0.188	0	0.98
% TEK group of largest excluded ethnic group	6928	0.217	0.334	0	1
% Relative excluded TEK group size	6928	0.118	0.242	0	1
% Relative included TEK group size	6928	0.044	0.174	0	0.97
Borders	7059	3.982	2.591	0	19
State legitimacy	6769	−0.004	1.489	−4.175	2.729
Democracy	7059	0.349	0.477	0	1
Power capability (CINC)	6426	0.007	0.022	0.000	0.215
Log GDP/pc	6612	8.307	1.269	4.911	11.969
Log population	7059	2.253	1.486	−1.551	7.189

Appendix 2

Inter-Correlations among Independent Variables (n = 5674)

	Excluded ethnic size	TEK size	Excluded TEK size	Rivalry	Borders	Power	State legit	Dem	GDP/PC
Excl. ethnic group size	1								
TEK size	0.47	1.00							
Excluded TEK size	0.35	0.72	1.00						
Included TEK size	0.33	0.41	−0.12						
Rivalry	0.21	0.16	0.23	1.00					
Borders	0.05	0.14	0.07	0.30	1.00				
Power capability	−0.10	−0.13	−0.09	0.26	0.34	1.00			
State legitimacy	−0.26	−0.24	−0.19	−0.16	−0.18	0.18	1.00		
Democracy (DEM)	−0.27	−0.20	−0.17	−0.17	−0.17	0.16	0.62	1.00	
GDP per cap (log)	−0.17	−0.18	−0.09	−0.07	−0.14	0.17	0.59	0.54	1.00

(continued)

(continued)

	Excluded ethnic size	TEK size	Excluded TEK size	Rivalry	Borders	Power	State legit	Dem	GDP/PC
Total population (log)	−0.12	−0.09	−0.08	0.29	0.44	0.57	0.06	0.11	0.05

Note N-size is affected by missing values for Power Capability indicator after 2007

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Chapter 11
Regions and World Order Preferences

11.1 Introduction

The end of the second world war brought about a new world order (Ikenberry 2001), or three, depending on one's scholarly reference (e.g., Ikenberry 2018; Braumoeller 2019; Mearsheimer 2019, Thompson et al. 2022, Chap. 10). Powerful states produce these world orders which, in turn, are salient for creating broad global norms and guidelines for state behavior. These orders can also change or collapse altogether in response to direct challenges by rising powers (Ikenberry 2018), or due to system-wide political shocks (Gordell and Volgy 2022).

There are academic disputes over whether the emerged world order(s) constitute a liberal version, and/or when they became liberal (if ever).[1] The liberal world order (LWO) has been defended and led by the U.S., and is characterized by openness and rules-based institutions (both global and regional), the defense of state sovereignty and democracy, the promotion of state cooperation and multilateralism, and the "responsibility to protect", which has sometimes come at odds with other elements of the LWO (Ikenberry 2011). Yet, and to the extent that there is a global status quo to which power transition theorists refer (e.g., Tammen et al. 2000), the order that emerged and still exists today in modified form represents the object of status quo evaluations at the global level.

The purpose of this chapter is not to evaluate the nature of that world order nor the controversies surrounding it. Our task is simpler: we seek to evaluate the degree to which that order is supported or opposed in international politics, and especially seeking to address the extent to which dissatisfaction with the dominant global order varies within and across regions of international politics. Essentially, this is an inductive and descriptive exercise and it is conducted with the hope that the patterns we identify below provide some clues about (a) how extensive is the dissatisfaction with the status quo, (b) how much variation exists across and within

[1] For examples, see Barnett (2019), Sylvan (2019).

W. R. Thompson et al., *Regions, Power, and Conflict*, Evidence-Based Approaches to Peace and Conflict Studies 6, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1681-6_11

regions supporting or opposing the present order; (c) which, if any, regions may emerge as strong advocates for an alternative world order, and (d) the likelihood that their challenge to that order will be successful. Once our description is complete, in the discussion section we offer a set of potential consequences of these patterns for conflict and cooperation within and between regions, based on the dynamics we have discussed in previous chapters.

Those consequences should help us to answer the question of why do we care about the extent to which regions vary in supporting the global world order? We are concerned about three implications. First, the extent to which regions may vary in their status quo dissatisfaction (and the intensity of those preferences) can provide clues about which regions are likely to clash with each other and/or to form coalitions with each other to support or oppose the order. Depending on the salience of the region to major powers supporting the status quo, regional opposition to the world order may provide additional clues about major power intrusion into some regions and not others.

Second, consistent with power transition theory arguments (e.g., Lemke 2009), we assume that status quo dissatisfaction within regions, depending on power relationships, holds a significant clue in trying to account for why some regions are more conflictual than others (in terms of intra-regional conflict). While most regions are relatively homogenous in their policy preferences toward the status quo, outliers may become a source of conflict, and especially if they are rising powers within the region. We recognize that there are likely to be two dimensions to such dissatisfaction: one about the global and the other about the regional status quo.[2] Some regions are relatively homogeneous about the first issue while quite divided and contentious about the second (e.g., Central Africa). Other regions may express satisfaction with the regional status quo but demonstrate strong dissatisfaction with the global order (e.g., East Europe during the Cold War). Still other regions are deeply divided over both regional and global orders (e.g., the Middle East, East Asia). By assessing variability in support for the global status quo within regions, we can assess one potential conflict dimension across all regions.

Third, as we had noted in Chaps. 2 and 9, regions are not permanent: they shrink, expand, and at times disappear. We know far too little about the conditions under which regions form or dissolve, expand or shrink. One possibility however is that they may dissolve over major divisions within the region,[3] including over policy differences regarding the global status quo. Alternatively, regions may coalesce into a larger region (see Chap. 5), depending on the extent of conflict over global and regional status quo preferences. Thus, we try to assess not only how much aggregate regional support exists for the liberal world order on the part of each region, but as well the relative homogeneity among salient members over these preferences.

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[2] However, most of the analysis that follows focuses on global status quo dissatisfaction; regional status quo dissatisfaction is addressed in the concluding section.

[3] Note for instance the inability of the East African region to form a viable community as East African community members reject community-based integration perspectives (Rauschendorfer and Twum 2021), or the fluctuations in regional stability due to dissatisfaction with the regional status quo in Central Asia after the end of the Cold War (Zakhirova 2012; see also Chap. 5).

11.2 Assessing Global Status Quo Dissatisfaction

Status quo satisfaction/dissatisfaction is about the policy preferences of states toward extant global and regional orders. Measuring states' foreign policy preferences systematically over time has been a daunting task for scholars. The most useful approach developed so far has come from an analysis of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting behavior[4]; no fewer than 75 articles over a fourteen-year span utilized such votes to construct measures of state policy preferences (Bailey et al. 2017: 432).

In principle, UNGA voting appears to have strong face validity as a proxy for state foreign policy preferences for certain types of issues. Since UNGA resolutions are only advisory, they are often considered to be "cheap" manifestations of actual policy preferences (Bearce and Bondanella 2007) compared to UN Security Council voting patterns.[5] Voting trends in the UN General Assembly reflect well changes in relations between the US and the USSR, the changes between the USSR and the Russian Federation, changes in Chinese policy preferences between Cold War and post-Cold War eras, and fluctuations in support of the U.S. policy positions between left-wing and right-wing governments (Voeten 2000, 2004; Bailey et al. 2017).

One weakness of using UNGA roll call votes over time revolves around the problem that the agenda for sessions of the UNGA is likely to change substantially from one year to the next. Agenda setting can reflect particular circumstances at a given point in time (such as a new conflict), or new issues that a specific group of states wish to advance (Bailey et al. 2017). Thus, the content of votes may change dramatically, making it difficult to separate actual changes in voting behavior around a set of issues from agenda changes once votes are aggregated and compared across sessions. Fortunately, Erik Voeten and colleagues (Bailey et al. 2017; Bailey and Voeten 2018; Voeten 2019) have pioneered an approach that creates a single dimension of voting across all sessions of the UNGA that focuses on identical votes, allowing for longitudinal comparison. That dimension appears to reflect well state positions toward the U.S. led liberal world order.[6] We use this voting dimension to assess the extent of satisfaction with the liberal world order over time across regions of international politics.

In Chaps. 2 and 9 we had used the ROW approach to delineating regions, allowing both regions (region appear and disappear depending on the willingness of states to interact with each other) and membership in regions (e.g., Turkey moving in and out

[4] For a quick summaries of the uses of UNGA voting in the literature see Bailey et al. (2017), Voeten (2004, 2019).

[5] As opposed to UN Security Council votes, which have substantial consequences and researchers have found strong efforts on the parts of states to influence UN Security Council voting outcomes, including the use of aid and loans in exchange for votes (Dreher et al. 2006; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2009; Hwang et al. 2015).

[6] For an extensive discussion of the procedures for creating ideal point estimates, see Bailey et al. (2017) and Bailey and Voeten (2018). For a further discussion of the data and its validity see Voeten (2019). The data are available at: https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ.

of the Middle East) to fluctuate. In this chapter, tracking support for world order over time across regions becomes problematic when both regions and their membership changes. Therefore, we locate regions in the most recent full decade of analysis (2001–2010) and keep both regions and their membership constant over time.[7]

11.3 Patterns of Support and Opposition to the Liberal World Order

Before turning to an analysis of support for the U.S. led liberal world order (LWO)[8] by region, we first note the overall pattern of support by states over time. Figure 11.1a shows annual levels and Fig. 11.1b demonstrates mean support by decades. Regardless of the calculation, three trends stand out. First, it is obvious that support for the US-led LWO has monotonically decreased over time; the correlation between LWO support and time is −0.83. It is also clear that this trend is not just a function of time: the correlation between support for LWO and UNGA membership is −0.92, indicating that as new states have entered the UN, their preferences were overwhelmingly opposed to the LWO.[9]

Second, it is also clear that the LWO had substantial global support only during the 1950s when much of the UNGA's membership consisted mostly of U.S. and USSR allies,[10] and the former dominated the Assembly. Once newly independent states entered the UN, the substantial support for the LWO quickly dissipated in the 1960s and 1970s. Third, the diminution of support for the LWO is far from being reversed in the post-Cold War era; although there is an uptick in support during the early 1990s and the last two years of the 2010s, the mean scores by decade indicate more opposition to the LWO during the 2000s and 2010s than at any other time during the timeframe being surveyed.

[7] The regions and their state membership are listed in Appendix 1. There are two obvious exceptions to this rule. One is when new states join the international system and are classified into a region. The second is when global disruptions create a new region, specifically Central Asia in the post-Cold War era, resulting from the disintegration of the USSR. The changes brought about for the USSR and its allies at the end of the Cold War also leads us to offer two version of the "European" region after 1989. We keep the East European designation as a separate region but also show the collapse of that region's states into a large European region.

[8] Cognizant of Mearsheimer's (2019) warning that at least during the Cold War there may have been at least three orders in operation (a US-led order for non-communist states; a USSR-led communist/East European order; and an order fashioned between the US and the USSR over security issues), we label this dimension as the US-led liberal world order and refer to it as LWO.

[9] This trend is temporarily reversed in the early 1990s as former USSR allies and newly independent republics from the old Soviet Union enter the UN with substantial support for the LWO.

[10] Unsurprisingly, the standard deviations from the mean support are highest during the 1950s, due to strong USSR and its allies' opposition to the US-led order.

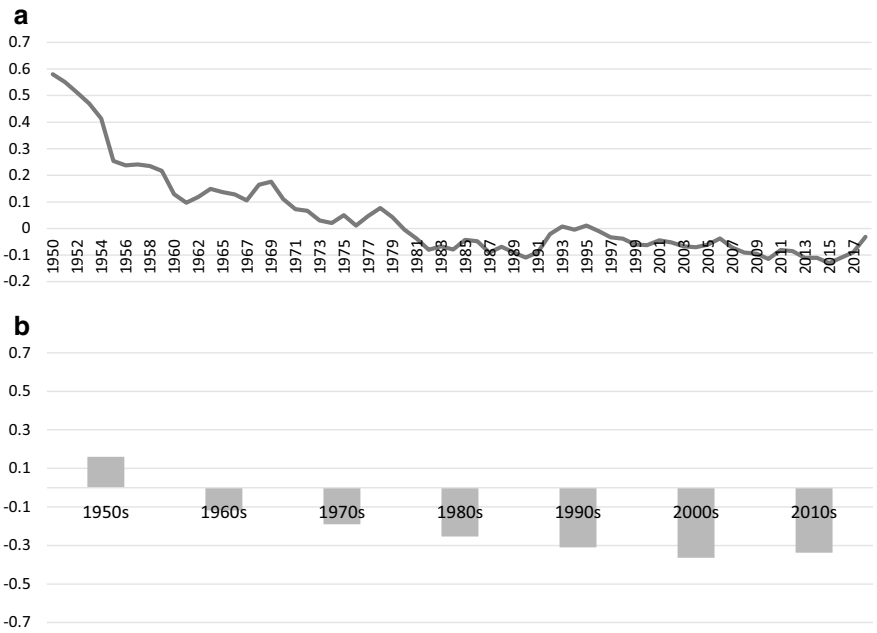

Fig. 11.1 **a** Annual global support in the UNGA for the liberal world order, 1950–2018. **b** Mean global support in the UNGA for the liberal world order, 1950s–2010s. *Source* Voeten

11.4 Regional Variation in Support for the LWO

We divide our regions into three groups: regions that are substantially supportive of the LWO, regions that are substantially opposed to the LWO, and regions whose positions on the LWO have substantially changed over time.

11.4.1 Regions Supporting the LWO

The list of "suspects" in this category is obvious: North America and Western Europe (along with the Asia–Pacific region) have been the key supporters of the LWO from the UN's inception. We begin with North America, reflected in UNGA voting patterns in Fig. 11.2a, which compares average North American UNGA votes with the global mean over time. Clearly in the aggregate, the North American region has been and remains highly supportive of the LWO. The region is small in membership (three states) but large in its economic, military, and political presence in international politics (see Chap. 5), especially since it houses the US.

Support for the LWO in North America, however, is not homogeneous in the region. As Fig. 11.2b indicates, despite major economic interdependencies between

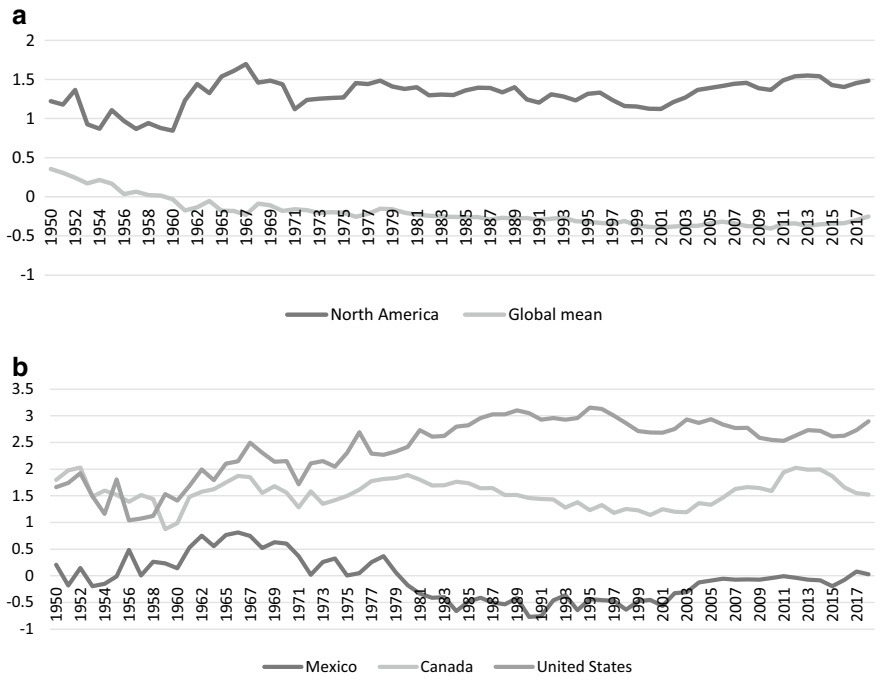

Fig. 11.2 **a** Annual support for the LWO, North America and global support, 1950–2018. **b** North American Support for LWO, for U.S., Canada, and Mexico, 1950–2018

the three economies, the creation of stabilizing institutional arrangements (e.g., NAFTA and its successor), and very few militarized intraregional interstate disputes (MIDs), Mexico appears to be substantially more agnostic about the LWO than its regional partners.[11]

In our conceptualization, the region we designate as Western Europe includes 18 states, two major powers (the UK and France) and one regional power (Germany since 1990). Perhaps no other region is as strongly tied into the LWO, including the development of complex supranational institutions promoting liberal economic and social policies. As Fig. 11.3a illustrates, the region far exceeds the global norm in support of the LWO, and its support has remained, in the aggregate, relatively stable over time. The region's members have also become relatively homogeneous in their support as well, as illustrated in Fig. 11.3b which shows diminishing standard deviations for the group across time, and especially after the signing of the Maastricht treaty in 1992.

Is there any indication in the data that the UK pursued Brexit as a function of its support for the LWO? Figure 11.3c shows the difference between mean Western

[11] Interestingly, the leftist presidency of Lopez Obrador (AMLO) has not appeared to have led to deterioration in Mexican support for the LWO, despite extensive conflicts with the US over trade, water, and immigration issues.

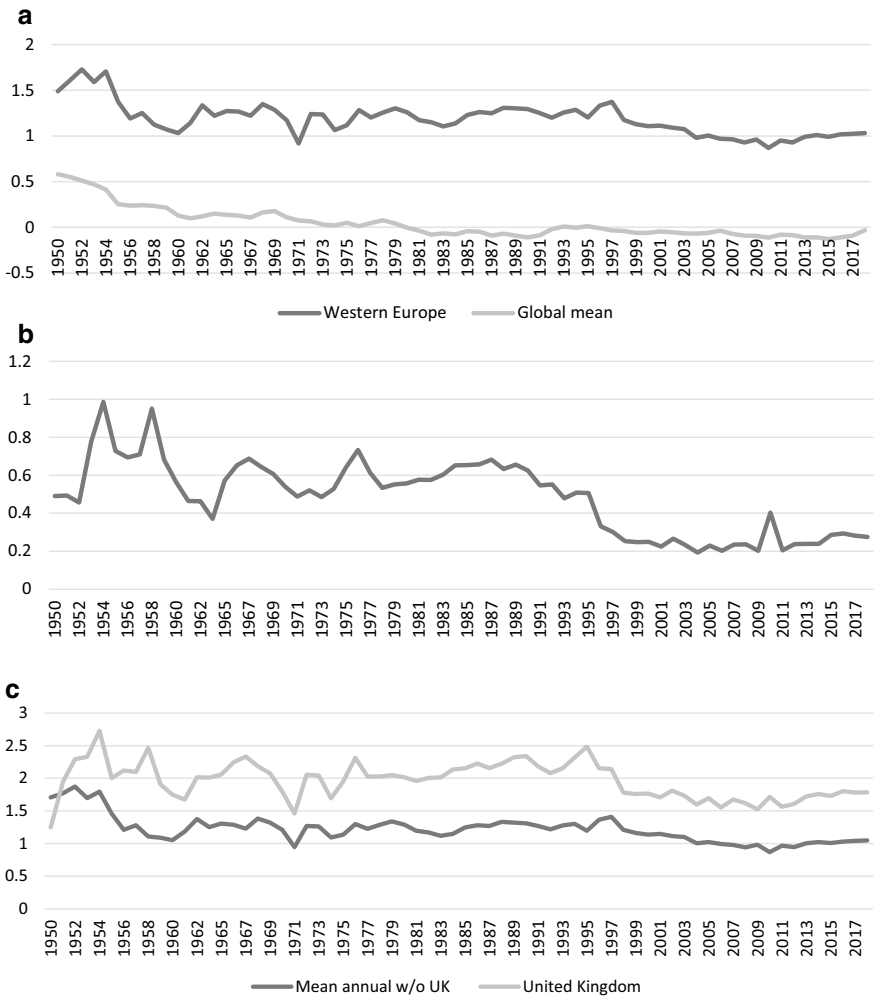

Fig. 11.3 **a** Western Europe, mean annual support for the LWO, 1950–2018. **b** West Europe, annual standard deviation values, level of support for the LWO, 1950–2018. **c** UK and Western Europe, annual support for the LWO, 1950–2018

European support without the UK vs. the UK's support for the LWO. The differences are substantial, with the UK often showing LWO support that is about one standard deviation above the mean support by the rest of the region. There appear to be clear differences in the magnitude of support for the LWO between the UK and the rest of the region, and such differences are not unique to the Brexit era. These differences also appear consistent with the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's

public statements about the UK's new role globally.[12] The most we can surmise from these data, however, is that differences in policy preferences over the LWO may have been a contributing factor to the Brexit decision.

As the Cold War ends, we can collapse Eastern and Western Europe into one large region whose members interact extensively with each other.[13] Does the addition of Eastern Europe water down European support for the LWO? Figure 11.4a provides a partial answer; Eastern European support for the LWO manifests in the aggregate as somewhat less supportive, but similar to Western Europe, and substantially higher in LWO support than the global norm.

It is clear as well that the major power in the East European part of the large European region—the Russian Federation—becomes an outlier after the West's confrontation with Serbia in the early 1990s and with NATO's three rounds of expansion from the late 1990s through the following decade. Russia's original post-Cold War support for the LWO virtually disappears afterwards. The disparity in policy preferences towards the LWO between the Russian Federation and the other members of the region suggests ongoing conflicts, both within Eastern Europe and within the larger European region, consistent with the unfolding of events since the mid-1990s. In this sense Eastern Europe represents one of only two regions (with the Asia–Pacific being the other) in the regional inventory where a major power's world order preferences are at substantial variance with most of the regions's other members.[14]

As we had discussed in Chap. 9, one of the distinguishing features of the western part of the European region is that it contains hierarchy (at least one dominant power) but that hierarchy is potentially weakened by the co-existence of two major powers (UK and France) and a strong regional power (Germany). Prior to World War II such an arrangement had often led to confrontation and major conflict. These states emerged from World War II into the Cold War with relatively similar policy preferences, at least towards the global order (see Fig. 11.4b), allowing for the coordinated, cooperative arrangements that eventually unfolded into the development of the European Union.

To the extent that the post-Cold War era integrated the East and West European regions, it brought into the larger regional space another major power, the Russian

[12] British Prime Minister Johnson said: "The truth is that even if we wished it—and of course we do not—the U.K. could never turn inwards or be content with the cramped horizons of a regional foreign policy," retrieved from Politico at: https://www.politico.eu/article/boris-johnson-global-britain-blueprint-not-vainglorious-gesture/ See also "Global Britain In a Competitive Age: the integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy", issued by the UK Government, March 2021, retrieved at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy.

[13] We make that argument in Chap. 2, based on the ROW regions approach that reflect substantial interactions between the states we have labeled Eastern Europe and the Western European region, and especially in the last decade of our data analysis.

[14] Of the twenty-two states we classify as being part of Eastern Europe after 1990, only five (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine) demonstrate neutral to negative support for the LWO while the rest approximate support similar to Western Europe, including even the "illiberal" democracies of Hungary and Poland. We revisit this issue below as we take a closer look at the relative cohesion within post-Cold War Eastern Europe.

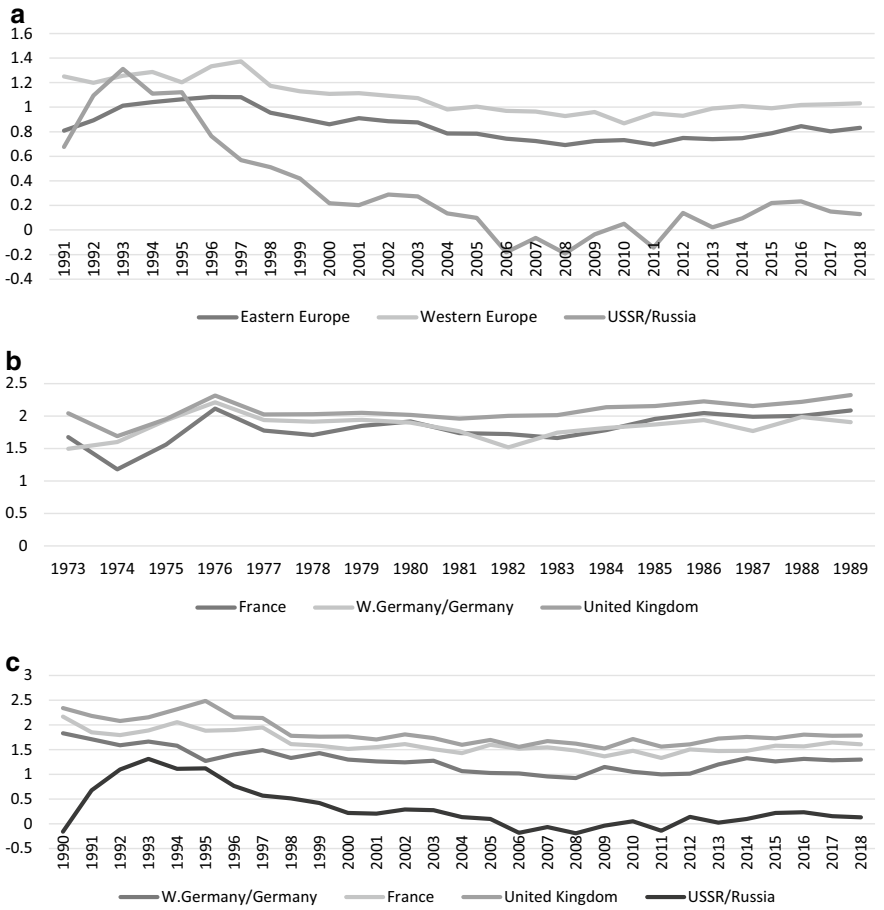

Fig. 11.4 **a** Support for LWO, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russian Federation, 1991–2018. **b** Cold War LWO support scores for France, Germany and the UK, 1973–1989. **c** Relative LWO support scores for Germany, France, UK, and Russian Federation, 1990–2018

Federation, with policy preferences that substantially diverge from the other major players in the region (Fig. 11.4c). Unsurprisingly then, conflicts have escalated in Europe, not only in the eastern part, but as well between the Russian Federation and strong West European states over a variety of issues involving the liberal world order and the appropriate role for the region in that order. Unless LWO preferences can become more homogeneous between the major states in Fig. 11.4c, we would anticipate continued and escalating conflict within the larger region.[15]

[15] The pattern in Fig. 11.4c suggests an interesting counterfactual. Despite the American involvement in the region, would the high level of integration had occurred in Europe if Russia had been part of the region during the Cold War? Would these states have had these preferences towards the LWO? We would expect the answer to be a resounding "no".

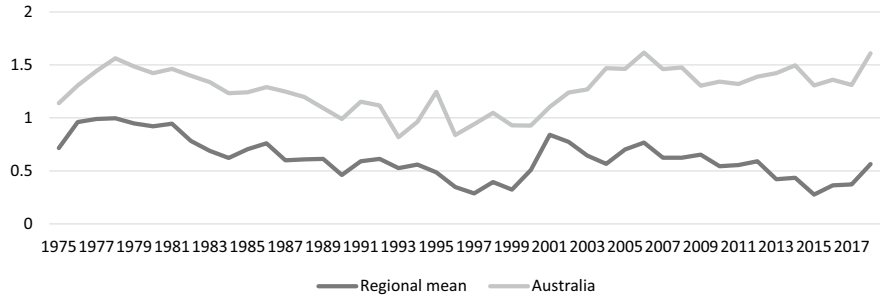

Fig. 11.5 Asia–Pacific Support for the LWO, 1975–2018

Between global warming and the rise of the world's oceans and the incessant pull of Asian states towards a possible Super Asia (see Chap. 5), there may no longer be an Asia–Pacific region in the near future. However, since it contains two of the stronger supporters of the LWO (Australia primarily but also New Zealand), we map out as well this region's relative satisfaction with the global order. Leaving aside microstates, we identify six states as members of the region (see Appendix 1), and Fig. 11.5 charts their collective support for the LWO beginning in 1975.[16]

As Fig. 11.5 illustrates, the region's support for the LWO declined incrementally over time towards a more neutral position, although the two strongest states (Australia and New Zealand) continue to be strong supporters of the global status quo.[17] Most striking in Fig. 11.5 is Australia's position as the regional power; its support for the status quo differs dramatically from the regional mean through almost the entire data sequence. In fact, its support for the status quo was not significantly different in 2018 than Britain's voting record in the UNGA.

11.4.2 Regions Opposing the LWO

Seven regions in international politics have consistently opposed, although by varying degrees, the LWO across both the Cold War and post-Cold War eras (see Table 11.1). These include the Maghreb, East Africa, South Asia, West Africa, the Middle East, Central Africa, and Southeast Asia,[18] in descending order of opposition during the Cold War. All these regions were subjects of substantial colonization by Western powers. Every one of these regions increased their opposition to the LWO after the end of the Cold War.

[16] When Papua New Guinea gained its independence from Australia. Two other states—the Marshall Islands and East Timor—were added to the region when they become members of the UN in 1991, and 2002.

[17] Albeit New Zealand's support for the LWO has also gradually declined over time.

[18] We are excluding Central Asia here since it did not exist during the Cold War as an independent region. It does demonstrate consistent dissatisfaction with the status quo in the post-Cold war era.

Table 11.1 Support for the liberal world order, Cold War and Post-Cold War eras

Region	Cold War	Post-Cold War	Difference	
North America	1.2787421	1.34582331	0.06708	Consistent LWO supporters
West Europe	*1.2631655*	*1.07878859*	−0.1844	
Asia–Pacific	0.792	0.531	−0.261	
Southern Africa	0.7786344	−0.5850232	−1.3637	Regions with changed positions
South America	0.4009408	−0.3143757	−0.7153	
East Asia	0.0976634	−0.1850197	−0.2827	
Southeast Asia	−0.14669	−0.8178247	−0.6711	Consistent LWO opponents
Central Africa	−0.162097	−0.5408034	−0.3787	
Middle East	−0.223756	−0.6441676	−0.4204	
West Africa	−0.244529	−0.5572418	−0.3127	
South Asia	−0.392294	−0.6864697	−0.2942	
East Africa	−0.435685	−0.7251208	−0.2894	
Maghreb	−0.5905	−0.9740433	−0.374	
East Europe	−1.83146	0.8486943	2.68015	Regions with changed positions
Central Asia	NA	−0.1271305	NA	

The patterns of opposition by these regions to the LWO are enumerated in Appendix 2. Leading the group of consistent LWO opponents is the Maghreb region (Fig. 11.19), opposed to the extant order during the Cold War and increasing that opposition by roughly 65% after the Cold War's end. The Maghreb's regional mean is somewhat deceptive due to one outlier state: it is substantially impacted by Libya's intense opposition (and somewhat erratic fluctuations) to the world order, and especially so during Colonel Qaddafi's control of Libya's political system.

Trailing closely behind in opposition to the LWO is East Africa. Its mean opposition scores are somewhat lower than the Maghreb's although its post-Cold War opposition increases by about the same amount (66%). Also similar to the Maghreb, one state behaves as a major outlier: Sudan demonstrates substantially greater opposition than the other regional members (Fig. 11.20). While relations were more favorable following independence and in part due to the anti-communist attitudes of the government, the military coup of Omar al-Bashir in 1989 led to a sharp decrease in attitudes toward the LWO.

South Asia ranks as the third most opposed region to the LWO, although its pattern over time differs from the previous two regions (Fig. 11.21). Uninterrupted by the end of the Cold War, its opposition to the world order steadily declines from 1979 through 1995, with less intense opposition afterwards. The region's mean opposition to the LWO parallels its regional power's (India) dissatisfaction with the global status quo across the entire series of observations.[19] Unlike the previous two regions, we

[19] The major rivalry in South Asia between Pakistan and India is not reflected in the region's opposition to the LWO: both states have similar UNGA votes on this dimension, underscoring our

detect no state in this region that we would classify as a major outlier around the region's collective global status quo evaluations.

West Africa's pattern of opposition to the LWO is quite straightforward (Fig. 11.22). Its regional mean virtually replicates the voting pattern for its regional power (Nigeria). There are no major outliers in the region. While its opposition to the LWO more than doubled from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era, its dissatisfaction with the post-Cold War order is still significantly below all but one of the regions showing consistent opposition to the LWO.

The Middle East, unsurprisingly, presents a pattern of opposition to the LWO that is substantially different from the previous regions in opposition. Its opposition to the global status quo is evident across both Cold War and post-Cold War eras, yet its patterns (see Figs. 11.23, 11.24 and 11.25) show significantly unique characteristics. First, consistent with the post-1989 world, its opposition to the LWO demonstrates a very strong shift from the Cold War era (an increase of over 71% in opposition).[20] Second, consistent with the nature of its extensive rivalries, there are three major outliers from the regional pattern: Israel, Iran, and to a lesser degree Syria. Hidden behind its regional mean, the three outliers, residing in the same region, represent the strongest supporters *and* opponents today of the LWO.[21] Given the high level of regional members' dissatisfaction with both the global and their regional order, it is not surprising that the Middle East consistently represents the most conflictual region in international politics (Chap. 9).

Central Africa ranks next in opposition to the LWO. The region competes with the Middle East in terms of the numbers of severe militarized disputes per region, intrastate conflicts are widespread, and the area has been the subject of massive migration and poverty. Genocide-level killings and destruction by both governmental and nongovernmental forces have occurred across much of the region, and especially in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the Cold War the region was in opposition to the LWO, but barely so (Table 11.1). During the post-Cold War's first decade its opposition accelerated, and then somewhat reversed the following decade, only to increase again during the 2010s, demonstrating somewhat of a roller coaster trend consistent with the enormous turmoil in the region (Fig. 11.26).

Among the regions in consistent opposition to the LWO, South East Asia shows the most amount of change among the individual members of the region, across the Cold War to post-Cold War eras. The low regional mean in opposition during the Cold War disguised substantial differences across region members as Indonesia first and then a newly united Vietnam later expressed strong opposition to the LWO,

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warning earlier that preferences about both the global and the regional status quo may matter equally for regions, and in those regions engaged with major rivalries, regional status quo preferences may matter more.

[20] While the Middle East does not demonstrate the strongest post-Cold War movement in opposition to the LWO when we generate regional mean scores, it should be noted that when Israel is excluded from the regional mean the Middle East then rivals any other region in opposition to the post-Cold War order.

[21] The standard deviations for the region, and especially after 1989, are the largest of all the regions we survey.

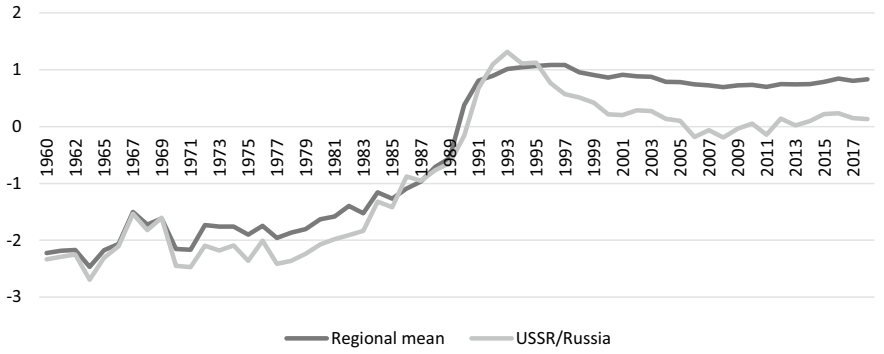

Fig. 11.6 East European annual mean values in support of the LWO, 1960–2018

while Singapore strongly supported the global order. Corresponding to the greater role played by ASEAN in coordinating relations between the states in the region after the end of the Cold War, there appears to be substantial convergence towards a more unified position towards the LWO, although one that is in substantial opposition to the global status quo (Fig. 11.27).

Unlike every other region in our study, Central Asia is the only region where we are unable to compare cold war and post-cold war attitudes, given that all five states only gained their independence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, While other parts of Eastern Europe that were part of the Soviet Union clearly demonstrate far more support for the LWO than did the Warsaw Pact states during the Cold War, these five states have increased their opposition since the 1990s, and more so than the Russian Federation (Fig. 11.28). Central Asian states have also remained consistently more autocratic than their East European counterparts and have struggled with economic development.

11.4.3 Regions that Changed Their Status Quo Evaluations

As Table 11.1 notes, four regions have changed their evaluations of the LWO from the Cold War to the post-Cold War eras, including East Europe, Southern Africa, South America, and East Asia. Of those, East Europe, as expected, moved from substantial opposition to substantial support for the LWO. The change is indicated in stark terms in Fig. 11.6.[22] As states changed political systems and ideological orientations following the collapse of the Soviet Union, their status quo evaluations changed along with these fundamental changes to their domestic politics.

[22] Uniformity in the region's voting behavior during the Cold War is distorted by Yugoslavia's inclusion in the region; Yugoslavia's somewhat greater support for the LWO parallels its efforts during that time to pursue a leadership position independent of the Soviet Union and through the non-aligned movement.

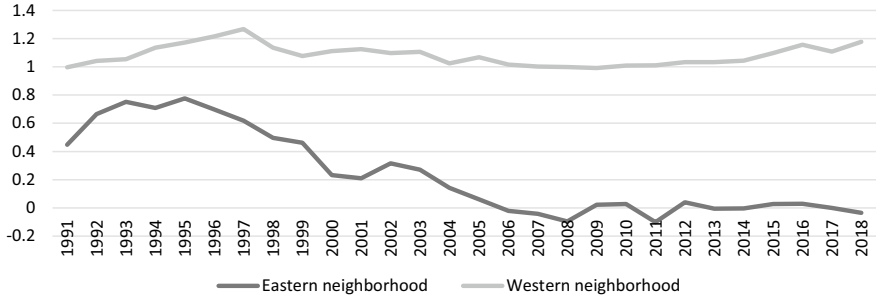

Fig. 11.7 East European Region support for LWO, by neighborhood, 1991–2018

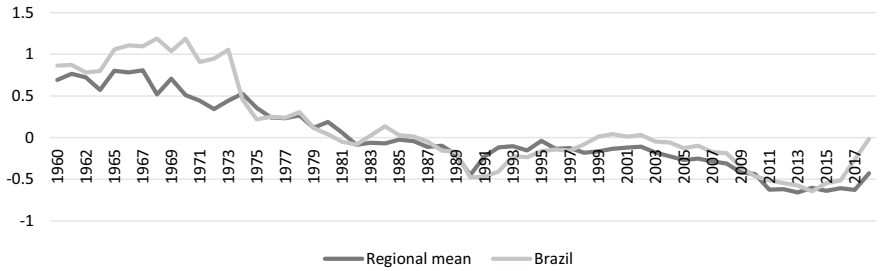

Fig. 11.8 Mean regional values for support of LWO, South America, 1960–2018

Beneath these momentous changes in the region, there is also much division within it since the Cold War's end. We divide the region into Western and Eastern "neighborhoods,"[23] and illustrate patterns of support for the LWO across the two groupings (Fig. 11.7). The contrast is striking. In the eastern neighborhood, the initial support for the post-Cold War order began to decline by 1995 and by 2006 disappeared completely. In the western neighborhood—and despite clashes over "liberal" issues[24] between Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria versus Western European EU member states—the neighborhood demonstrated strong and consistent support for the LWO.

The South American region's support for the LWO has also undergone very substantial change over time (Fig. 11.8), and in a direction opposite from Eastern Europe. As others have noted (e.g., Bailey et al. 2017) major regime changes and

[23] The "eastern neighborhood consists of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and Serbia; the "western neighborhood" consists of Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. We are not the first to conceptualize post-Cold War Eastern European geographical space as falling into two distinct neighborhoods. For instance, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) classifies these post-Cold War states as either "Central Europe" (our Western neighborhood) or "Eastern Europe". SIPRI however places Georgia in Eastern Europe, and Serbia in Central Europe.

[24] Including conflicts over minority rights, human rights, press freedoms, an independent judiciary, and the salience of cleaning up corruption.

Fig. 11.9 Comparison of left and center-left South American neighborhoods, mean support of LWO, 2009–2018

movements towards more left-wing democratic governments have preceded changes in South American UNGA voting behavior, away from both the US and from support of the LWO. This is especially the case during the post-Cold War era; the mean value for the region during the era is some 70% lower than during the Cold War. However, as a point of comparison, the region's opposition to the status quo is minimal compared to that of other regions opposed to the LWO. Of note as well: after the end of the Brazilian-Argentinian rivalry (ending in 1985), as the dominant regional power, Brazil's position on the LWO corresponds more closely to the regional mean.[25]

Consistent with the "pink tide" of leftist governments in half of the region's states, the standard deviation values for the last 10 years have been increasing in the South American region, indicating that the mean scores on LWO support hide increasing intra-regional divisions. Plausibly, at least over the last decade we can point to the emergence of two "neighborhoods" within the region, one with leftist governments and the other with center-left governments, with substantially different policy preferences towards the global status quo. Figure 11.9 illustrates the differences in the two neighborhoods, averaged over the last decade of available data.[26] While leftist governments appear to be much more opposed to the LWO in the last decade, center-left governments are much more moderate in their opposition.

East Asia is the third region that moves over time, but unlike the previous two cases, it fluctuates between support and opposition both within *and* across the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. The erratic pattern noted in Fig. 11.10 is partly due to major changes in membership: China (Taiwan) is replaced in the UN by the Peoples Republic of China in 1971, and the two Koreas (in an ongoing major rivalry with each other) are added to the UN in 1991. It is also a small region in terms of membership

[25] See "After the End of the Pink Tide, What's Next For South America," *World Politics Review*, September 2, 2021, retrieved at: https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/insights/27904/after-the-end-of-the-pink-tide-what-s-next-for-south-america.

[26] This is, of course, not the first time that the region has bifurcated into competing neighborhoods; how long this most recent round of divisions will continue has been and continues to be the subject of much conjecture.

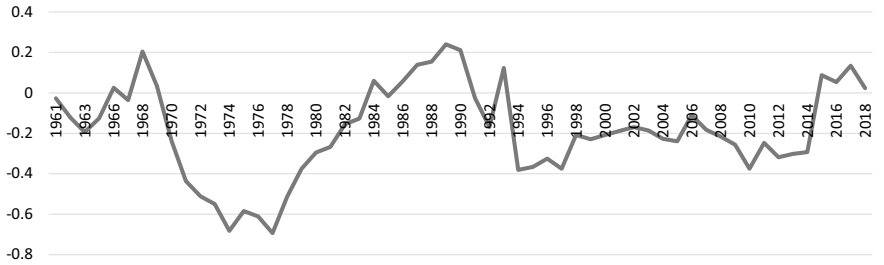

Fig. 11.10 East Asia mean support for LWO, 1961–2018

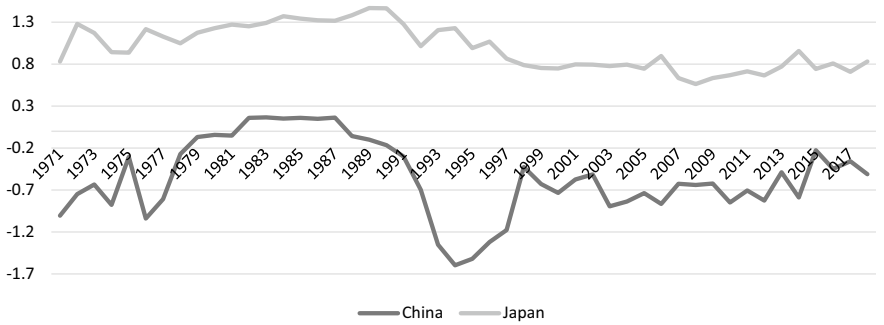

Fig. 11.11 Support for LWO, China and Japan, 1971–2018

(only five states) but containing two major powers (China and Japan) after the end of the Cold War.

As Fig. 11.11 illustrates, the two major powers in the East Asian region provide clashing perspectives towards the liberal world order: Chinese and Japanese orientations towards the status quo demonstrate fundamental differences. Japan's preferences are relatively stable over time and supportive of the LWO (although not as supportive as the major Western powers) while China's opposition fluctuates, and except for the 1980s, is generally in negative territory both during the Cold War and afterwards.

11.5 Discussion

If there was early global enthusiasm (and that depends on how one defines both "enthusiasm" and "global") for a U.S. led liberal world order, our analysis by region suggests that it has been transformed to general, albeit not extensive, opposition to the LWO. Figure 11.12 charts the movement in regional preferences between 1950 and 2018, demonstrating both somewhat reduced intensity (among supporters

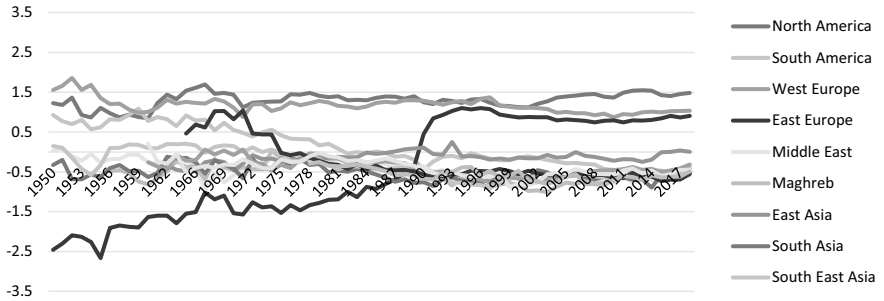

Fig. 11.12 Mean regional scores on LWO support, 1950–2018

and opponents alike) and as well a convergence of most regions around minimal opposition to the world order.

Yet, such movement away from preferring the Liberal World Order is perhaps more deceptive than it appears. First, the convergence is towards less intensity of preferences rather than stronger opposition on the part of most regions. Second, the strongest of regions have either remained quite stable in their support of the global order (North America and Western Europe), moved considerably closer to supporting the order (E. Europe) or remain deeply divided over the status quo (East Asia). Third, in regions with existing hierarchies, the dominant states in opposition to the status quo are either relatively weak (South Africa in Southern Africa, Nigeria in West Africa) or balanced by other dominant powers strongly favoring the LWO (Russian Federation vs. the UK, France, and Germany in Europe, China vs. Japan[27] in East Asia).

Are the opponents of the liberal world order strong enough presently to change the status quo? Based on Chaps. 7 and 8, we offer a few generalizations that, for the near future, yield a tentative "no" to this question. We make a simplifying assumption by suggesting that the two critical facets of the liberal world order involve economic and security orders.[28] Consequently, we base our prediction, all other things equal, on

[27] We note that Japan has recently embarked on a relatively ambitious program to provide loans, technical expertise, and bilateral assistance to states in Asia to counteract the worst excesses of China's Belt and Road initiative. Unlike Chinese projects that employ Chinese citizens, there is an emphasis on hiring local citizens when the Japanese initiatives are accepted. See "A glimpse into Japan's understated financial heft in South-East Asia," the Economist, August 14, 2021, retrieved at: https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2021/08/14/a-glimpse-into-japans-understated-financial-heft-in-south-east-asia.

[28] There is a third dimension that is more emphasized in the post-Cold War era than during the Cold War: the emphasis on human rights and democratic governance across countries. Our data illustrates that there are no regions containing primarily democracies that oppose the world order (although South America moves perilously close) and the strongest opponents appear to come from regions that rank low on both democratization and human rights, despite the unanimous endorsement of all UN member states of the Responsibility to Protect commitment (R2P) at the UN's 2005 World Summit.

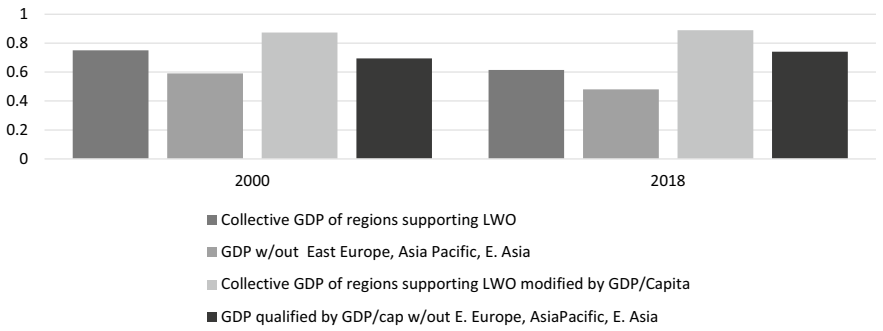

Fig. 11.13 Regions' cumulative economic strength, LWO supporters, 2010, 2018. *Source* World Bank

the relative economic and military strength of regions in support of and opposition to the LWO.

Recall that, based on our analysis of UNGA voting support, the following regions constitute the staunchest supporters of the LWO: North America, Western Europe, and Asia–Pacific. Eastern Europe contains both supportive and non-supportive neighborhoods, as does East Asia. We therefore present two sets of patterns of economic and military strength: one that includes only regions that are relatively unified, and in a second view we add neighborhoods from divided regions.

Figure 11.13 presents both groupings from the standpoint of economic strength. As we had noted in Chap. 7, we are not enamored with using gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of economic strength of states or regions since GDP tends to reflect population size as much as economic capacity, and thus appears to simply reflect a "bulk" measure rather than a region's economic strength that can be harnessed for political purposes. We prefer GDP constrained or enhanced by GDP/capita, integrating both the economic size and the wealth of states and regions. We present both versions in Fig. 11.13, and we present two data points (2000 and 2018) to illustrate any changes over an eighteen-year timeframe.[29]

Simply using the GDP measure and excluding regions that are divided in LWO support between neighborhoods (East Europe, East Asia, and Asia–Pacific), one could make the most plausible case that the economic strength of LWO supporting regions is fading. The share of the global economy among LWO supporting regions, excluding those three regions is a bit less than 60% in 2000 and fades to 48% by 2018. That picture improves once the supportive neighborhoods from the previously excluded regions are included (especially due to the inclusion of Japan in the second

[29] We use World Bank data for these estimates, and while they are available through 2020, we stop at 2018 since the UNGA data for world order preferences were only available to us through 2018.

round of calculations). Now the global economic share of LWO supporting regions is over 75% in 2000 but also declines to about 61% by 2018.[30]

A very different picture emerges when economic bulk is qualified by GDP/capita. Once we do so, even with the exclusion of regions containing divided neighborhoods, LWO supporting regions' share of global economic strength is around 70% in 2000 and rather than declining, their share of global economic strength *increases* incrementally by 2018 to around 74%. If we also include LWO supporting neighborhoods in divided regions, then the share of global economic strength on the part of LWO supporters (modified by GDP/capita) is never under 85% in either 2000 or 2018.[31]

Thus, in terms of economic strength, the edge goes substantially to regions in support of the LWO. Does that mean that the LWO is likely to continue? There are of course numerous ways that the LWO based economic rules, norms, and institutions may crumble in the near future, even without dissatisfied regions having sufficient clout to work together to alter it. As we had learned during the Trump administration's tenure, even the most satisfied state can damage substantially economic institutions and alliances formed in support of the extant order. We know as well that political and economic shocks such as the global economic crisis of 2009 or the global covid pandemic[32] can damage extant institutions and erode further confidence in the order both from satisfied and dissatisfied regions. It may be plausible that the liberal world order could collapse under such pressures even if its supporters have enough economic strength to defy those who oppose it.

Figure 11.13 also indicates another potential threat to the continuity of the extant order. The continued economic clout of supportive regions exists in some part due to the extensive and still growing inequalities *between* regions and is a pattern that appears to be replicated *within* states and within regions as well (e.g. The World Social Report 2020) Some have argued that this is a significant contributing factor for the rise of nationalism and populism in especially the regions supporting the liberal world order, illustrated by former President's Trump's MAGA movement in the United States and in the populist risings in both Western and Eastern Europe (Broz et al. 2021; Cox 2021).

These considerations, along with other issues too numerous to elaborate here,[33] may eventually destroy the existing liberal world order. We lack a crystal ball with

[30] Much of the diminution in LWO supporting regions' economic bulk is a function of the rapid growth in the sheer size of the Chinese and Indian economies; however, such growth is offset by growing GDP/capita of LWO supporters, as we note below.

[31] None of these calculations account for the extent of economic interdependencies within and between regions, interdependencies that would require substantial additional economic strength on the part of LWO opponents to create an alternative economic order. We estimate that interdependence to be quite high. Global trade divided by global GDP was over 58% in 2019, compared to only 38% in 1990.

[32] Particularly the global covid pandemic has highlighted both the extent to which globalization has created extensive interdependencies between states and as well the fragility of global supply chains in the face of such an unexpected event.

[33] Including the crisis of global climate change, cyberterrorist attacks by non-governmental actors on economic institutions, global health emergencies that severely damage economic conditions, etc.

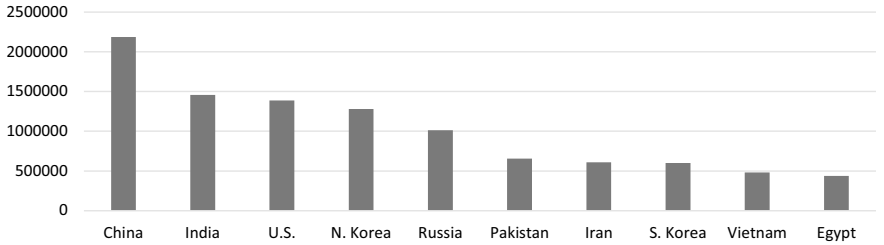

Fig. 11.14 Top 10 countries, size of active militaries, 2019. *Source* International Institute for Strategic Studies

which to predict whether those states and regions that have created and worked to stabilize global economic orders are willing to continue to do so. However, if the concern is whether the dissatisfied regions can now, or in the near future, have enough clout to successfully alter the existing economic order, our analysis suggests that they may not, at least from the standpoint of having sufficient economic strength.

Do the dissatisfied regions have sufficient military strength to successfully challenge the extant world order? There is an obvious and clear connection between economic and military strength, albeit mediated by the will of states to extract varying amounts of economic assets for military strength purposes. Similarly, the quality of one's economy (and its governance) is also likely reflected in the quality of a state's (or a region's) military assets (see Chap. 7). Thus, we expect that an assessment of the military strength of regions will not yield a more positive outcome for dissatisfied states than their standing on relative economic strength.

We begin the analysis of this dimension of strength by assessing military capabilities at the "bulk" level, similar to the analysis of economic strength. Then, and following Chap. 7, we qualify this approach with an indicator that assesses the *quality* of military strength in the context of military spending on coercive capabilities.

Figure 11.14 provides one quick hint about the "bulk" dimension of military capabilities for regions supportive of, or, in opposition to the liberal world order: it captures the size of the largest active militaries, not only globally but as well in their own regions. The world's top ten largest militaries span six regions: East Asia (China, N. Korea, S. Korea), S. Asia (India and Pakistan), North America (the U.S.), Eastern Europe (Russia), the Middle East (Iran, Egypt), and South East Asia (Vietnam). Only two of those regions are supportive of the LWO, and in one of them (East Europe), its least supportive member (Russia) has the region's largest active military (although the quality of its military, as the war in Ukraine is demonstrating, is far more questionable).

Again, we caution that these are just bulk measures, often tied to the population size of states, although policy makers can and do at times generate armed forces that are far above and beyond the normal ratio to their population.[34] A more frequently

[34] For instance, the per capita figure for China's military (given its population) is 1.6; for India it is 1.1, and for the U.S. it is 4.2. More extensive extractions occur in Russia (7.1), S. Korea (11.6), and N. Korea (50.4).

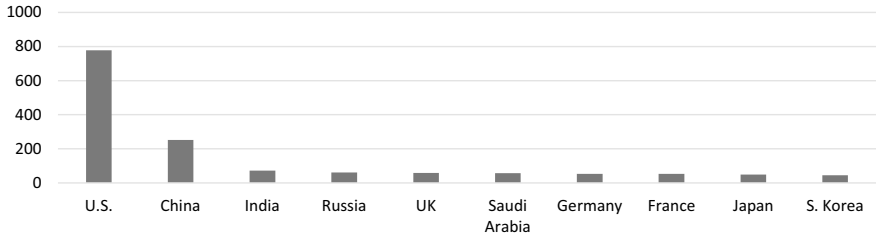

Fig. 11.15 Top ten countries, military spending in billions of $'s, 2020. *Source* SIPRI

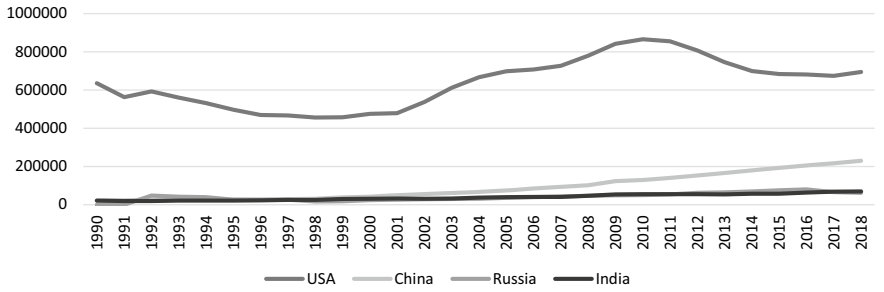

Fig. 11.16 Military expenditures in constant (2019) US$'s, for four largest spenders. *Source* SIPRI

used alternative measure is to focus on the amount of military spending committed by states and regions for coercive capabilities. As Fig. 11.15 illustrates, the top ten spenders cover 6 regions: North America (U.S.), East Asia (China, Japan, and South Korea), South Asia (India), Western (Germany, France, and the UK) and Eastern Europe (Russia), and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia). Thinking in terms of potential coalitions of LWO supporters and opponents, LWO supporters from North America and Western Europe alone account for roughly two thirds of the military spending of the top ten states in the world.[35]

This is of course no surprise since the U.S. dwarfs all other countries in military spending, accounting for approximately 39% of all global military spending in 2020.[36] Despite much consternation in the West about China's renewed commitment to enriching its military assets and closing the gap with the world's only superpower (Fig. 11.16), the U.S. share of the dyad's military spending in 2020 still stood at approximately 76%.[37]

[35] And that figure reaches over 70% when S. Korea and Japan are added from the East Asia region's pro LWO neighborhood.

[36] Source, SIPRI at: https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

[37] And even if the other three top spenders shown in Fig. 15 coalesced to oppose the global order (an unlikely scenario given Indo-Chinese competition in Asia), the U.S. share of their combined military spending still represents over two thirds of the total spending of the four.

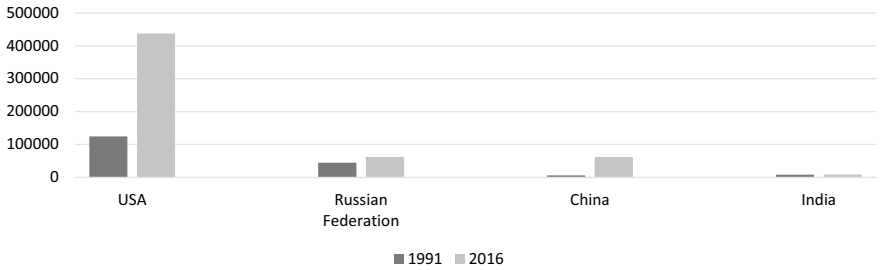

Fig. 11.17 Military spending per size of the military, US, Russia, China, and India, 1991, 2016. *Sources* COW, CINC

Still, we are only focused on military spending, and not the quality of coercive capabilities in regions supporting or opposing the LWO.[38] Therefore we present two alternatives to viewing quality of military capabilities. In one, we constrain spending by creating a per capita measure, dividing spending by the size of a state's military. We do so on the assumption that to be a quality fighting force, troops need to be paid, trained, and provided with high quality equipment, and per capita spending also will reflect differences in the technological capabilities of the armed forces. Modifying military spending by the size of the active military is illustrated in Fig. 11.17; it indicates a substantially wider gap than in Fig. 11.16 between the U.S. and the next three largest military spenders.

The second alternative is to focus on the global reach of strong states that, along with other members of their region, oppose or support the LWO.[39] One crucial distinction between regional versus major powers is the ability of the latter to generate coercive capabilities beyond their own regions (e.g., Volgy et al 2011). In terms of global order, very strong states in international politics can seek to establish, modify, maintain, or overturn global orders if they and their allies together have sufficient global reach to move beyond their own regions. It was this global reach on the part of the U.S. that allowed it, together with its allies to create the post-WW II order; its greater global power projection, compared to the USSR and its allies, helped it to contain Soviet aspirations to creating only a regional order in Eastern Europe.[40]

[38] Nor do these data reflect the ability of states to reach beyond their regions. For example, as NATO forces tried to evacuate their personnel from Afghanistan at the end of the U.S. withdrawal, the Germans (along with other allies) complained about their relative inability to extract their citizens without extensive U.S. assistance, even though Germany ranks seventh in the world in military spending.

[39] While it may be possible for a region to try to create regional order without a major power in residence (e.g., as in the case of ASEAN and South East Asia, see Acharya 2021), we know of no cases where a coalition of states without a major power has successfully created a new global order, or brought down an existing one. Therefore, the focus on military strength here is on major powers that inhabit a region that would be buttressing or opposing the LWO.

[40] As Lee and Thompson (2018) demonstrate, U.S. global reach capabilities, compared to the USSR, were overwhelming in the early stages of the Cold War, but even in the later stages the U.S. enjoyed a 5 to 3 margin in power projection.

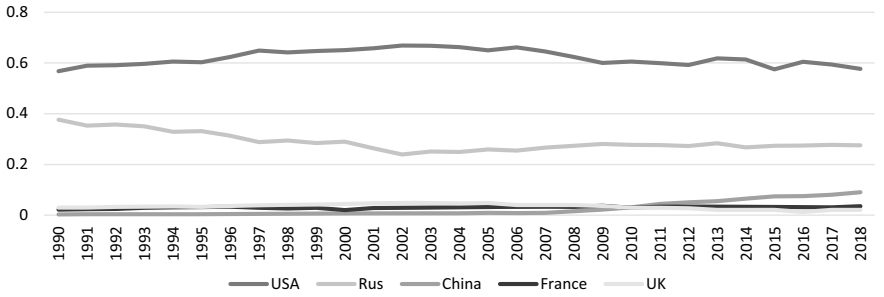

Fig. 11.18 Share of global reach capabilities, major powers, 1990–2018. *Source* Lee and Thompson (2018)

We use a recently developed measure[41] to assess the global reach of major powers that support or oppose the LWO. The results for the post-Cold War era are illustrated in Fig. 11.18. The global reach of the U.S., in relative terms, appears to be at least as dominant today than it was at the end of the Cold War, and this appears to be the case even if the Russian Federation and China's emerging global reach were to be combined.

Again, we caution that relative strength of supporters and opponents can shed light on the likelihood that one would triumph over the other depending on the balance or imbalance in their economic and military/coercive capabilities, and thus to prop up or dismantle the liberal world order, *all things being equal*. We know of course that all things are never equal. Weaker players sometimes triumph over stronger ones, as the Chechens inside the Russian Federation showed once and the Taliban have now shown twice. Even at the height of its coercive capabilities the U.S. limped out of Vietnam against an opponent that looked extremely weak on paper. Will, strategy, tactics, luck, incredible sacrifice, and domestic politics all conspire to ensure that all things are not equal.

Nor are we suggesting that sufficient economic and coercive capabilities may be enough to prop up the liberal world order even if its opponents can be stopped. As we had noted above, it may disintegrate on its own, damaged by growing inequalities, decaying institutions that are not being replaced, rules that may have outlived their usefulness, domestic politics among supportive regions that punish policy makers dearly for continuing to support the order, and lack of strong leadership to address new global challenges to international politics. Our point instead is that if the liberal order disintegrates, it will not be due either to more intense policy preferences coming from regions opposed to the present order, or because supportive regions are weaker in their economic or coercive capabilities.

[41] The measure is based on the sea and air capabilities of states. For a discussion of the measure and its validity, see Lee and Thompson (2018). The measure is updated to 2018 and was obtained courtesy of the authors.

11.6 Conclusion

We wish to raise several issues and caveats in conclusion. First and foremost is the concern about identifying regional satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the status quo. We suggest that there are at least two dimensions to regional foreign policy preferences. One is about relative satisfaction with the global status quo, and that has been the focus of this chapter. We have been able to assess which regions (and with how much economic and coercive strength) support, oppose, or are divided about the LWO. Those assessments allow for some conclusions regarding whether LWO opponents are strong enough to successfully challenge the LWO and provide some insight regarding the relative clash of regions over this consideration, and the extent to which regions can form strong informal or formal coalitions over the LWO.[42]

LWO preferences also provide some clues about the degree to which there are likely to be ongoing intraregional conflicts over the global order. East Asia and Eastern Europe appear to be particularly vulnerable to these conflicts as security issues underscore similar divisions in these regions (China versus Japan and Taiwan in East Asia; Russian intrusion into Ukraine in Eastern Europe). We can provide far less insight over regional order satisfaction and the extent to which major clashes over extant regional orders are likely to create intraregional conflicts. Unfortunately, UNGA voting data are of little use for this dimension. To date there has been no satisfactory measure developed to probe this source of intraregional conflict, although we suspect that for perhaps more than half the regions in our inventory, foreign policy preferences regarding regional order may be more salient that dissatisfaction with the global status quo. Thus, further advancement of work on regions would benefit greatly from the development of such a measure.

Second, consistent with the arguments made in Chap. 9, we note the salience of hierarchy in accounting for a relatively homogeneous regional response to the LWO[43] and perhaps for regional evaluation of the global status quo. In most regions where hierarchy exists, the dominant power(s) appear to be quite consistent with regional preferences (including in West Africa, Southern Africa, South Asia, South America, and Western Europe). Due to Mexico, North America's pattern is somewhat divergent, as is Australia's in the Asian-Pacific region, albeit we have witnessed few clashes in at least one of those regions over global order preferences.

Third, it is plausible, but still to be determined by our analysis whether regions internally and strongly divided over global satisfaction can maintain an ongoing regional identity or will collapse and move towards larger or smaller regions. Chapter 5 has probed the extent to which there may be developing a super-Asia. Given divergent preferences toward the LWO in the Asia–Pacific and East Asian

[42] During the Cold War a large coalition of states (and regions), labeled the Group of 77, provided strong support for a counterpoint to the nascent LWO in the form of promoting a new international economic order (NIEO), and even generated sufficient support for its principles to have passed the appropriate resolution by the UNGA in 1974.

[43] A glaring outlier appears to be South East Asia where without a dominant power in the region, ASEAN appears to have been pivotal in creating relatively homogeneous preferences regarding the LWO among members. Surrounded by regional (India, Australia) and major powers (China, Japan, and the U.S.) however may have contributed to such homogeneity.

regions, it may be possible that such developments are partially linked to states searching for larger regional spaces where such divergent global policy preferences can become less salient for intra-regional affairs. That process of expansion does not seem to be working very well in the new super Europe that would include both East and West and an increasingly hostile Russian Federation.

An alternative to regional collapse or integration into another region would be for regions is to create strong regional institutions of cooperation that, in part, would seek to overcome intra-regional divisions over the global order, or, when there is substantial and homogeneous opposition to the LWO, to develop and use those institutions to minimize what region members would consider to be aspects of the LWO most harmful to their regions. In some sense this may have been the case for the development of ASEAN in South East Asia where there are both substantial divisions over the LWO and ongoing efforts to mitigate its effects for the region (Acharya 2021). A similar effort has been underway in Central Asia through the reinvigoration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Ambrosio 2008; Lukin 2015).[44]

Fourth, a first scan of changes in LWO support across regions suggests that when such changes occur, they appear to follow either global political shocks or domestic political changes. As the literature on political shocks suggests (e.g., Gordell and Volgy 2022), even global shocks do not necessarily have uniform effects across all regions of international politics. When they do, however, such as the global economic crisis of 2008 or the exploding Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, and the LWO fails to respond quickly and adequately, regional support will diminish dramatically for the global status quo. What magnitude of global political shock would be needed, and which regions will respond negatively are two areas requiring much further research.[45]

Regarding the effects of changing domestic politics on regional support for the LWO, the clearest example is highlighted by the South America regional pattern: changes in the region regarding global status quo dissatisfaction appear to be driven by major changes in domestic politics, transitioning either from authoritarian to democratic regimes and later between center-left and left governments. In Europe the diminishing political threat posed by populist and right-wing parties appears to have solidified continued Western European support for the LWO. Since the LWO has been particularly unable to address both new global challenges and growing inequality issues arising from globalization, we would anticipate that a major driver of regional world order preferences will continue to be the domestic politics of states and especially in democracies facing the challenges created by high levels of economic inequality.

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[44] Unexplored here but a subject that appears to be salient for a stronger understanding of regional dynamics would be about the range of conditions in regions that allow for the creation and nurturing of such institutions to mitigate aspects of the LWO.

[45] Regions could respond negatively or move to create new global rules and institutions in response. We consider the first more likely since creating new global institutions is exceedingly costly. A more modest position would be to create regional institutions that would address the problems raised by the political shock, as was the case of the Chinese response to the global economic shock of 2008. The graphs we provided above show a mixed picture of which regions increased their dissatisfaction following the economic crisis of 2008; clearly world order preferences did not uniformly change across all or even most regions.

Appendix 1: Regions in World Politics[46]

South America	W. Europe	West Africa
Colombia	United Kingdom	Nigeria
Venezuela	Ireland	Ghana
Guyana	Netherlands	Guinea
Suriname	Iceland	Ivory Coast
Ecuador	Belgium	Liberia
Peru	Luxembourg	Sierra Leone
Brazil	France	Cameroon
Bolivia	Monaco	Gambia
Paraguay	Liechtenstein	Benin
Chile	Switzerland	Burkina Faso
Argentina	Spain	Mali
Uruguay	Andorra	Niger
N. America	Portugal	Senegal
US	W. Germany	Togo
Canada	Austria	Guinea Bissau
Mexico	Italy	**Southern Africa**
Maghreb	Malta	S. Africa
Morocco	Greece	Angola
Algeria	Cyprus	Botswana
Libya	Finland	Mozambique
Tunisia	Sweden	Namibia
Middle East	Norway	Swaziland
Iran	Denmark	Zambia
Turkey	**E. Europe**	Zimbabwe
Iraq	German DR	Lesotho
Egypt	Poland	Malawi
Syria	Hungary	Madagascar
Lebanon	Czechoslovakia	Seychelles
Jordan	Albania	**Central Africa**
Israel	Yugoslavia	**Chad**
Saudi Arabia	USSR/Russia	Burundi
Yemen Arab Republic	Bulgaria	Congo (D.R.)
Yemen	Romania	Congo (Rep.)
Yemen People's Republic	Czech Republic	Kenya

(continued)

[46] States with populations under 500,000 were not included in the analysis.

(continued)

South America	W. Europe	West Africa
Kuwait	Slovakia	Rwanda
Bahrain	Montenegro	
Qatar	Macedonia	
United Arab Emirates	Croatia	
Oman	Slovenia	
S. Asia	Moldova	Gabon
Afghanistan	Estonia	Equatorial Guinea
Bangladesh	Latvia	Central Afr. Rep
India	Lithuania	**East Africa, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda**
Pakistan	Ukraine	Eritrea
Tajikistan	Belarus	Ethiopia
Sri Lanka	Armenia	Somalia
Maldives	Georgia	Djibouti
Central Asia	**SE Asia**	**Asia–Pacific**
Kazakhstan	Indonesia	Australia
Kyrgyzstan	Thailand	Brunei
Uzbekistan	Vietnam	East Timor
Turkmenistan	Singapore	Fiji
E. Asia	Malaysia	Kiribati
Mongolia	Philippines	Marshall Islands
China	Cambodia	Micronesia
Nepal	Myanmar/Burma	Nauru
Japan	Brunei	New Zealand
Korea (North)	Laos	Palau
Korea (South)		Papua New Guinea
Bhutan		Samoa
		Solomon Islands
		Tonga
		Tuvalu
		Vanuatu
		Maldives

Appendix 2: Patterns of Opposition to the LWO by Consistent Opponents of the Global Order

See Figs. 11.19, 11.20, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.27 and 11.28.

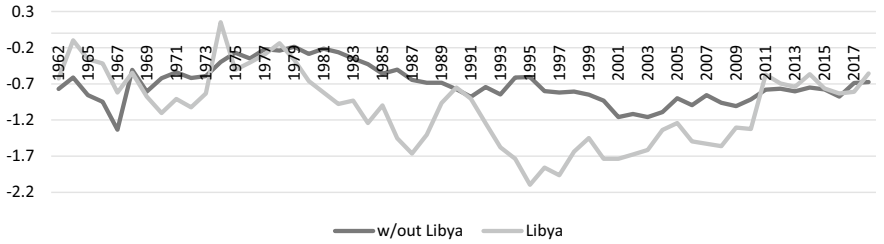

Fig. 11.19 Maghreb support for the LWO, 1962–2018

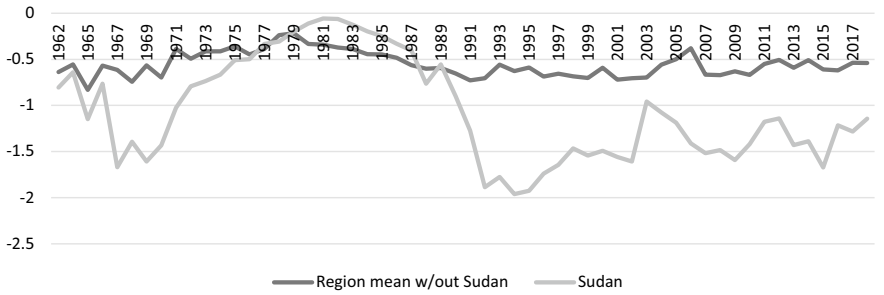

Fig. 11.20 East African support for the LWO, 1962–2018

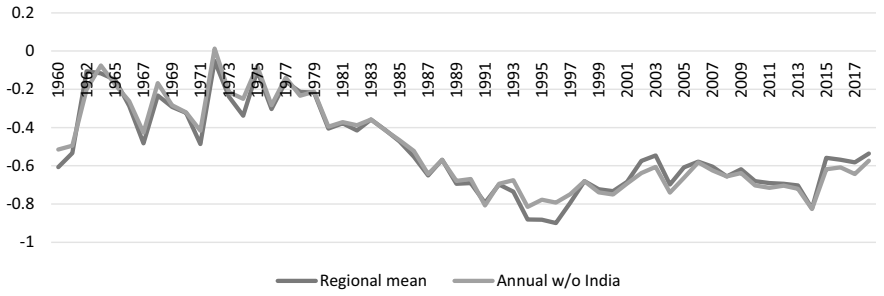

Fig. 11.21 South Asian support for the LWO, 1960–2018

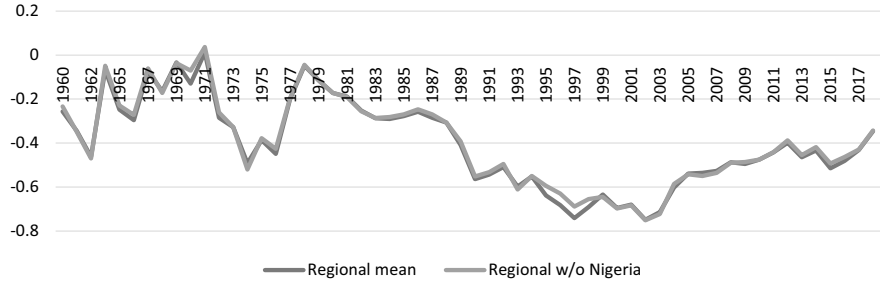

Fig. 11.22 West African support for the LWO, 1960–2018

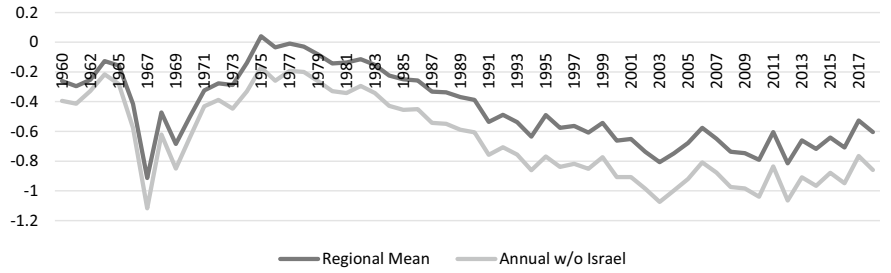

Fig. 11.23 Middle East, Israeli support for the LWO, 1960–2018.33

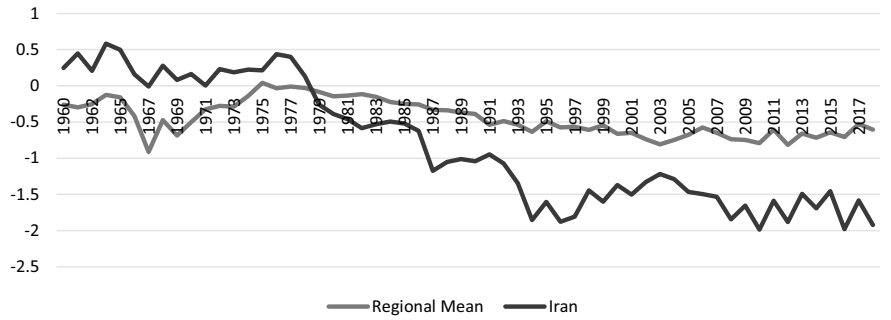

Fig. 11.24 Middle East, Iranian support for the LWO, 1960–2018

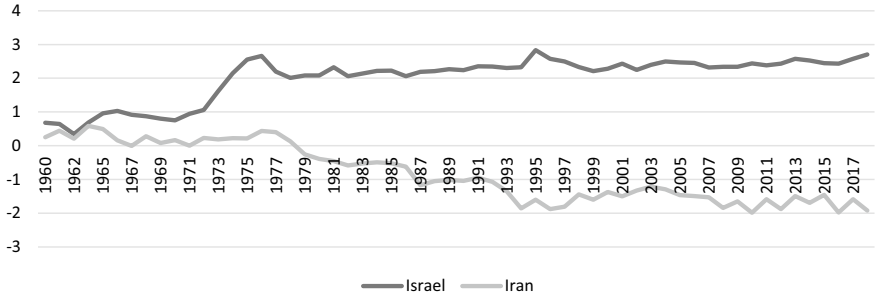

Fig. 11.25 Israeli and Iranian support for the LWO, 1960–2018

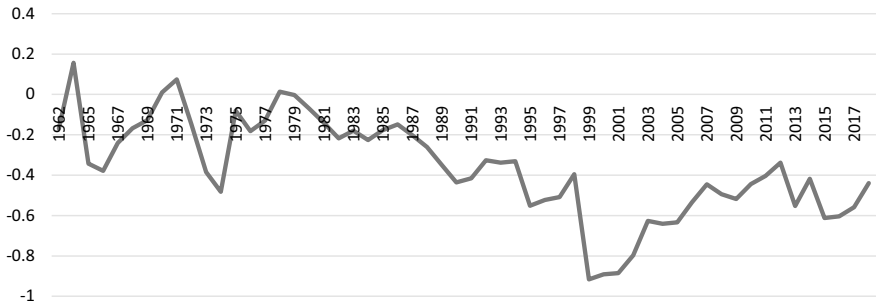

Fig. 11.26 Central Africa, support for the LWO, 1962–2018

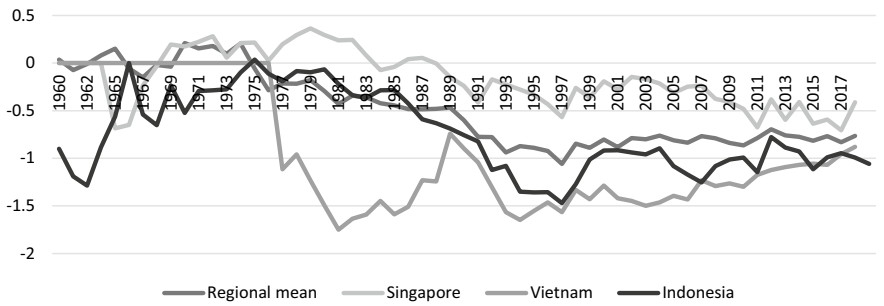

Fig. 11.27 South East Asia and selected countries in the region, support for the LWO, 1960–2018

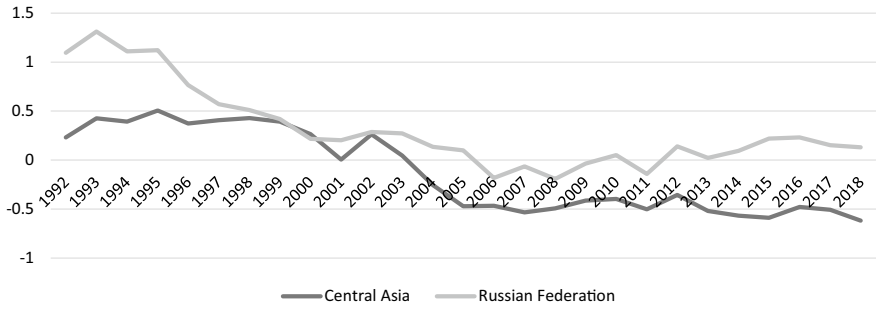

Fig. 11.28 Central Asia, Russian support for the LWO, 1992–2018

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