

**Is a Region like Pornography?\***  
**Conceptual, Theoretical and Empirical Issues for Comparative Regional Analysis in  
International Politics.<sup>1</sup>**

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\* "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description...But I know it when I see it..." Quote attributed to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, involving the Court's obscenity case (*Jacobellis v Ohio*, 1964).

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<sup>1</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge the work of Kelly Marie Gordell in assembling data on region characteristics.

## Introduction

It is clear that regions—geopolitical spaces based on various definitions—have been judged to be important for explanations about international politics. Area specialists devote their professional lives to the study of one or at most two regions. Quantitative international relations (IR) scholars use regional controls in empirical models of conflictual or cooperative relations, and typically find that regions matter, at least statistically. Despite the era of globalization, there is persistent evidence that “regionalization” continues to be important (and perhaps increasing in salience) as most states conduct much of their economic and political relationships within regions rather than globally (Acharya 2007, Hurrell 2007). At a very minimum, the geopolitical context in which most states reside constitute strong conditioning effects on how they conduct their external (and often their internal) affairs.

Yet, it is rare to find explanations of interstate relations that are embedded in a comparative regional perspective,<sup>2</sup> using the region either as the primary level or unit of analysis. We suspect that this state of affairs is due to a variety of definitional/conceptual/theoretical and empirical issues that have historically retarded development of systematic, comparative, and rigorous inquiry at the regional level. Our intention here is not to address those problems fully, nor are we planning to resolve them. Instead, we wish to offer a view of some of the more recent literature, suggest some trends as well as a definition and conceptualization of “region”, and provide a theoretical framework that may be useful to the development of more comparative regional analysis in the study of international relations. Lastly, we will offer a number of

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<sup>2</sup> The emphasis here is on a *comparative* regional perspective. Many 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, especially East Asia and Southeast Asia, and a smaller but growing literature on Sub-Saharan Africa. There is also some exemplary scholarship that focuses on two or three regions (e.g., Katzenstein 2005, Solingen 1998) and just as rare, scholarship that actually compares all regions (Buzan and Waever 2003, Gleditsch 2002, Lemke 2002, Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier 2012) in international politics.

theoretical bets that we believe will be useful for guiding the development of a larger comparative regional body of work.

### **A look at some of the literature**

We undertake in this article two sweeps of recent literature. In one, we focus on quantitative studies of phenomena<sup>3</sup> in international politics and analyze articles where scholars included “region” as part of the analysis. In the second sweep, we look for research focusing on the “region” as the primary level or unit of analysis in studies of international relations.

#### *Regions and regional effects in quantitative studies*

Focusing on literature utilizing quantitative models, we sought to address the following questions: 1) under what conditions do scholars choose to focus on region as a control or conditioning variable in their analyses; 2) how do researchers choose one classification scheme over another, or decide to create their own regional scheme; 3) how much cumulation is evidenced in the conceptualization and measurement of regions; 4) what distinct alternatives emerge in the conceptualization and measurement of regions; 5) when controlling for regions, what impacts do those controls have on the analysis; and 6) do alternative strategies for conceptualization/measurement of regions yield different results in terms of the impact on the dependent variable or on the salience of key independent variables?

In order to answer these questions we sampled eleven journals<sup>4</sup> over a period from 2010 to 2015, involving a cumulative total of over 245 journal issues published in that time frame.

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<sup>3</sup> We reviewed large-N empirical literature which either focused on a dependent variable of interest in international relations, or which featured a key independent variable related to international relations.

<sup>4</sup> 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*

While these journals do not constitute the universe of publications yielding quantitative analyses in IR, they do provide a broad view of current quantitative scholarship.

The articles chosen for analysis included quantitative studies where either the key dependent variable, or, one or more of the central independent variables used in the analysis included phenomena typically studied by scholars of international relations. This initial group yielded 695 research articles. Of these, we then narrowed our focus to studies where the models included “region” in the empirical analysis, and the analysis itself utilized a research site that would include more than a single region.

Of the research articles examined 75, or approximately eleven percent, yielded models that included “region” in the empirical analysis.<sup>5</sup> A cursory analysis of the remaining articles that *could have* included regional controls in their models indicates virtually no mention or justification for not doing so. Clearly, most quantitative analyses fail to take into account possible regional effects on the primary research question.

Among the 75 articles that include region as a variable in empirical models, it appears primarily for methodological reasons (e.g., controlling for fixed effects) and only secondarily for substantive reasons (controlling for region as possibly generating secondary effects separate from the primary research question at hand). In many cases, there is no reason given for utilizing

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*Resolution, Foreign Policy Analysis, International Interactions, International Studies Quarterly, and International Organization.*

<sup>5</sup> If a work discussed regions but failed to include them in the empirical model, we did not include it in the sample. There is also substantial variation across journals, possibly reflecting in part editorial judgments about the salience of regions or fixed effects considerations in empirical models: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* yielded the lowest percentage of models including regional effects (two percent), while the *American Journal of Political Science* (25 percent) and *International Studies Quarterly* (22 percent) yielded the highest percentages.

regional controls. Unsurprisingly, in the majority of cases when “region” appears to be significant in the model, the theoretical consequences are not discussed.

How are regions classified? Given the relative inattention to the salience of regions, there is little consensus in the literature either about conceptual meaning or operationalization. Thompson’s (1973) seminal review of the regions literature—now more than four decades ago—continues to ring true: classifications range from large, geographical entities (meta-regions such as Africa, Asia, Americas, or Europe) to half-hearted attempts to inject some political significance into more nuanced geopolitical spaces (“Europe East and post-Soviet Union” or “Asia/Tigers”). The lack of an emerging consensus is reflected in no fewer than 70 different regional labels across the 75 studies (see Appendix A).

As one illustration, 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”). As Appendix A illustrates, Asian states are delineated across no fewer than 22 categories. To some extent, this shows that the relevance of certain regional conceptions changes over time (e.g. the rise and fall of “East Europe”), although such changes are not explicitly noted in the literature.

Table 1. Classifications of Regions in the Quantitative Literature, by percentages (N=75)			
<i>Meta-Regional Schemes</i>		<i>Other Schemes</i>	
Meta-Regions without Modification	21%	Standard Codes	23%
Meta-Regions with Minor Modifications	17%	Unclear	12%
Meta-Regions with Substantial Modifications	13%	Other Classifications	13%

Table 1 approximates the dominant classifications in the surveyed literature. Meta-regions are large, continent-wide geographical areas; Minor modifications reflect small deviations from meta-regions; Substantial modifications consist of modifications to meta-regions based on theoretical considerations or cultural/political identity; Standardized categorizations are based on World Bank, United Nations (UN) or Correlates of War (COW) codes; Other Classifications represent regional distinctions different from the previous ones; and Unclear indicates that there was insufficient information available in the article and the available statistical “.do” files to make a judgment about how regions were classified.<sup>6</sup>

As Table 1 illustrates, a majority (51 percent) of region classifications are based on meta-regions with or without modifications. Another 23 percent of the studies utilize standardized codes, (with half of these utilizing COW codes). Approximately 13 percent of the literature rely on other categorizations of regions.<sup>7</sup> The preponderance of research reviewed utilizes coding schemes created for purposes typically unassociated with the primary research question being pursued in these efforts.

There does not appear to be much original work done on identifying and measuring regions across these works, nor is there much agreement about an existing “gold standard” for classification. Furthermore, discussion about the conceptual meaning of region is generally minimal to non-existent, as are issues about the validity of the empirical classification for states.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> An initial inter-coder reliability test we conducted yielded aggregate agreement with the regional classifications were correlated at .89. After a reconciliation for minor errors, the second round yielded agreement at .96. Primary disagreements revolved around minor versus substantial deviations from meta-regions.

<sup>7</sup> Four utilize a previous effort’s focus to assess democracies (Hadenius & Teorell 2005); one replicates a categorization used for analyzing diffusion in democracies (Brinks and Coppedge 2006); one study duplicates a classification used to study shatterbelts (Hensel and Diehl 1996); one borrows a classification created for analyzing civil wars (Hegre and Sambanis 2006); one uses COW codes modified by Bueno de Mesquita (1981); and one (Hafner-Burton and Ron 2013) modifies World Bank classifications by creating a category of “powerful West”.

<sup>8</sup> For an exception, see Dafoe (2011).

The regional variables that are used appear to follow either similar, previous work on the subject or appear to be chosen by most authors because they are conveniently available, but seldom justified in terms of the options that were originally available.

As harsh as this judgment sounds, it is understandable. Almost all the literature we reviewed was otherwise rigorous both theoretically and especially methodologically. However, typically, the region variable was utilized as one of a subset of “controls” in empirical models and thus was secondary to the primary analysis and research question. In most cases “region” was approached as if it lacked substantive significance and used only as a method of controlling for fixed effects. Thus, in many cases the impact of region on the dependent variable in question was not even reported in several of the statistical tables (except as a note, indicating that region was taken into account in the analysis).

Table 2. The Frequency of Significance for Regional Specification			
	<i>Unavailable</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Number of Articles Reporting Significant Regional Effects	34	36	5

Yet, region appears to matter substantively for the dependent variable of interest in most of these studies.<sup>9</sup> To assess how often this is the case, we reclassified all articles according to whether or not they report the effects of regions on dependent variable of interest, and if so, whether or not regional classifications are significant and substantive. As Table 2 illustrates, the appropriate information in 34 of these articles (45 percent) is unavailable. Overwhelmingly, the author(s) indicate that while regional distinctions were used for “fixed effects”, or control variables, or for robustness checks, or that regional dummies did not significantly impact on the

<sup>9</sup> We are not the first to note this. For instance, Hegre and Sambanis (2006) find that regional dummies, compared to a range of other variables used to study civil wars, rank high in salience.

primary relationship being tested, they do not disclose if regional considerations had a significant impact on the dependent variable, and report only that the predicted relationships survived robustness tests or controls for fixed effects. Two indicate that regional classifications have some impacts and/or are significant, but the extent of these relationships are not contained in the analysis presented.

Table 3. The Significance of Regions on the Dependent Variable in the Literature Considering Regional Effects, by Key Dependent Variable

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Articles Showing Significance</i>
Conflict	19.5%
Cooperation	14.6%
Economic	17.1%
Human Rights	7.3%
Institutions	19.5%
Regime/Democracy	9.8%
Terrorism	12.2%
Total	100%

Thus, we are left with 41 articles that present results that include regional classifications as variables in the empirical models. Overwhelmingly, region *does* appear to matter for a wide array of political phenomena: 88 percent of these articles report substantively significant relationships with the dependent variable in question; only five articles report otherwise.<sup>10</sup> As Table 3 illustrates, the significance of regions appears across a wide range of dependent variables. In fact, regional significance survives in most of these studies despite empirical models that contain a rich range of independent variables (often including contiguity measures)

<sup>10</sup> Of these five, one uses a highly restricted arena for ratification of treaties (Cartagena Protocol in Schneider and Urpelainen 2013); another indicates previous findings showing substantial salience for regional classifications regarding crises, and suggests the need for further refinement (Ozdamar and Ahbaba 2014).

and despite the fact that there is nothing approaching consensus in these findings regarding the appropriate classification scheme for region.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, given the lack of agreement on regional classifications, it is extremely difficult to integrate substantive findings on regions across studies. For instance, we cannot gauge systematically the independent effect of regions on conflict processes when individual articles differ by regional classification and method (varying in terms of which dummy region to drop from the analysis). It appears that the two most consistent outliers in most conflict studies appear to be “Europe” and the “Middle East”, a result consistent with face validity, but even membership in these two “regions” varies substantially across studies.

### *A Second Sweep of the Literature*

We conducted a second sweep of the literature, this time focusing on a slightly different mix of journals<sup>12</sup> more likely to include conceptual work in addition to empirical analysis, and we increased the time frame to cover over ten years (2005-2015), involving in excess of 450 issues of these journals. The purpose here was to identify the extent to which researchers, focusing on international political phenomena, utilized “region” either as the primary level of analysis or unit of analysis in their work.<sup>13</sup> We excluded studies that focused only on one region,

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<sup>11</sup> As if region was like pornography: we can't “define it but we know it when we see it.”

<sup>12</sup> These journals included *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *World Politics*, *International Organization*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Affairs*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *International Studies Quarterly*, and *International Security*.

<sup>13</sup> We exclude for instance Dafoe's (2011) excellent analysis of regional effects regarding the democratic peace since region is one of, but not the primary concern in the article. We also exclude book reviews unless the author provides new theoretical or empirical material; thus, we include Acharya's review (2007).

unless there was an explicit attempt and a usable framework to expand the findings or the approach to other regions not being analyzed.<sup>14</sup>

We uncovered only twenty articles (less than one percent of all relevant ones) across the entire time span that met our criteria for inclusion (Appendix B). Unsurprisingly, given the dearth of attention to regions in the previous literature review, few scholars appear to focus on region as either the appropriate level or unit of analysis in international politics. One quarter of these articles are produced by two scholars (Acharya 2007, 2014; and Solingen 2007, 2008, 2012).

Table 4. Frequency of Articles Focused on Selected Topics, when Region is Level or Primary Unity of Analysis

	<u>Democratic Peace</u>	<u>Diffusion Processes</u>	<u>Regional Organizations</u>	<u>War and Conflict</u>	<u>Theory of Regions</u>	<u>Other</u> <sup>15</sup>
# Articles	4	3	3	5	3	2

The subject matter focus of these articles is noted in Table 4. They are not concentrated in any specific area of inquiry, albeit studies of war, conflict, peace, and the democratic peace—typical foci in the broader literature—constitute a plurality of these studies. Theoretical advancement of the study of regions is not highly visible in the sample, constituting only three articles.

### **Where to From Here?**

<sup>14</sup> Henderson (2009) and Thies (2010), focusing on Africa but providing a comparative context, are examples of such an exception.

<sup>15</sup> Includes one article on media regional bias in human rights reporting (Hafner-Burton and Ron 2013) and a comparative look at resistance to the Washington Consensus over economic development (Grugel et al. 2008).

These two literature reviews underscore the following: There is not much conceptual development ongoing regarding the meaning of regions. There is little agreement on how to delineate regions empirically. It is difficult to aggregate the impact of regional dynamics given substantial differences in the research over both regional delineation and method of regional exclusion. Yet, and despite all these difficulties, when regional effects are explicitly included in the research, their effects persist over a broad range of research questions.

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 modest proposals: first, an approach to conceptualizing and measuring regions; second, a theoretical framework for conducting comparative regional analysis in international relations. We do not anticipate that either proposal will resolve long-standing difficulties; we propose them to stimulate further debate, discussion, and research that hopefully can generate more cumulation over regional effects and the salience of regions for theories of international politics.

### *Delineating Regions*

Our summary of the most recent literature sampled reflects a persistent pattern: while the salience of regional spaces for international relations research has a long tradition (e.g. Mackinder 1904), consensus on the most effective means of identifying the contours of relevant regional subsystems has thus far remained elusive (Buzan 1998, Fawn 2009). Much of the research published prior to our review typically employed as well definitions and classifications that are often little more than simple arbitrary designations, typically continentally driven, remain

invariant over time, and mostly default to schemes developed for purposes other than those related to the analysis at hand.<sup>16</sup> Even when regions are used to assess fixed effects in empirical models, without some substantively meaningful rationale behind the region's identification, the meaning underlying the regional fixed effect becomes questionable, particularly if that fixed effect is also altering the sign and significance on other variables of interest.<sup>17</sup> Some have sought to remedy the problem of arbitrarily determined regions by defining regional 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 due to selection effects for delineation (e.g., Why do some regions develop institutions while others fail to do so?).

As an alternative approach, we define regions 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 interactions (Rhamey 2012; Volgy and Rhamey 2014). 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. By restricting states to those that are contiguous and mutually capable of interacting, our conceptual approach is consistent with much of the literature on politically relevant dyads (Lemke and Reed 2001; Quackenbush 2006). By including a minimal willingness constraint, we provide a baseline of mutual recognition between region members, capturing politically relevant regions that come into existence as a function of interactive, overlapping interests. However, we avoid the tautological dangers of previous

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<sup>16</sup> Examples include the COW designations, as well as those by the United States Department of State, the UN, or the World Bank.

<sup>17</sup> Note, for example, the regional dummy variables in Gartzke (2007).

regional measurements on more specific criteria by being ambivalent as to the nature of that interaction. The result is an operationalization of regions comprised of contiguous states capable of interacting, and that choose to do so uniquely apart from the broader international system. In the realm of international relations research, this broad operationalization satisfies the conceptual criteria upon which most regional analysis is conducted, and is broadly amenable for incorporation not solely into analyses that treat the region as a fixed effect, but also those that wish to treat regional clustering as substantively important random effects (Rhamey 2012).

In order to measure the capabilities constraint, we calculate the gross domestic product (GDP) of each state as a percentage of total global GDP (Heston et al. 2012).<sup>18</sup> We then calculate the ability of states to interact using Lemke's (2002) method of identifying potential regional hierarchy, whereby two states are capable of interacting if their projected power at one another's capitals,<sup>19</sup> determined by Bueno de Mesquita's (1981) loss of strength gradient, is at least 50% of their total capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Second, we estimate the extent of interaction between states, calculating the total number of scaled events from Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) for 1950-1978 (Azar 1980) and Goldstein (1992) scaled events from Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA)

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<sup>18</sup> Others that use Bueno de Mesquita's (1981) Loss of Strength Gradient typically include COW's Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) as the measure of "power." In recent years, however, the CINC scores have produced some peculiar outcomes resulting primarily from the inclusion of total population in the index (notably, China strongly surpassing the capabilities of the United States). GDP provides a more plausible hierarchy of states, but, in the post-Cold War era, is still strongly correlated with the CINC score at approximately .95 (Rhamey 2012, p. 69). Given the strong correlation, in those very limited cases where GDP is unavailable (e.g. North Korea), we impute the estimated GDP value based upon the CINC score.

<sup>19</sup> For a justification of the use of capitals, see Lemke (2002, p. 79).

<sup>20</sup> The projected capabilities from some state  $i$  to some geographic point  $j$  is given by the formula:

$$P_{ij} = \text{Power}^{\log\left[\frac{\text{miles}}{\text{milesperday}} + (10 - e)\right]}$$

where power is measured as the state's GDP as a proportion of global GDP, and miles per day in the post-World War II era is designated at 500 (Bueno de Mesquita 1981). The gradient conceptually creates a bubble radiating outward from each state's capital whereby the state's capabilities decline across distance. At that point where distance has eroded the capabilities of a state by greater than half, Lemke suggests states beyond that threshold are unlikely to be significantly relevant to the projecting state's foreign policy goals (Lemke 2002, p. 80).

for 1990-2013 (Bond et al. 2003). We then calculate, annually, each state's directed scaled foreign policy activity to each other state as a proportion of their total foreign policy activity. Those states that expend an above average proportion of their total foreign policy activity with another state, regardless of whether that interaction is cooperative or conflictual, surpass the willingness threshold. Finally, we identify cliques in network analysis (Hanneman and Riddle 2005) to determine unique clusters of interaction where pairs of states receive a link if they mutually surpass both opportunity and willingness thresholds, annually. Identified cliques that are contiguous, over land or less than 500 miles of water, are then designated into regions, resulting in regions consisting of geographically contiguous states whose patterns of behaviors with the international system are highly correlated with those of other region members.<sup>21</sup> Finally, to maintain stability in regional composition and to prevent anomalous events limited to a single year from driving the regional membership, states are placed in the regional cluster for each year within which they identify most frequently across the preceding ten year period (e.g. a state in 1959 is placed in the region it is most frequently a member of from 1951-1960).

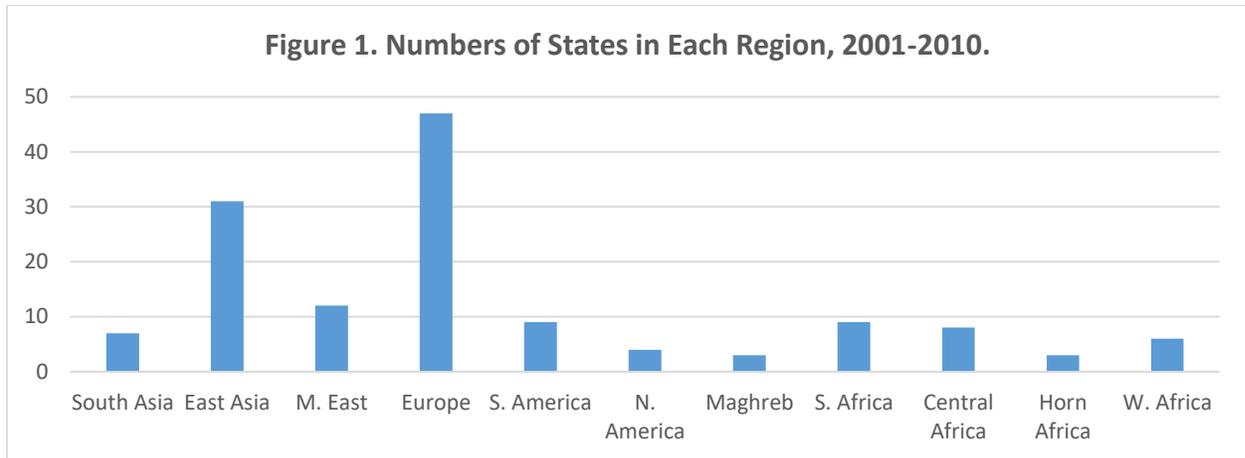
By focusing on contiguity, opportunity, and willingness, this approach incorporates state behavior and capability in the development of a regional classification rather than a pre-selected structural categories at best determined by the existence of regional architecture. Through designating regions by clusters of observable behavior, the approach recognizes the constructed, changeable nature of regional spaces, while remaining sufficiently broad as to be applicable to a wide range of international relations phenomena. Additional utility is produced by the flexible

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<sup>21</sup> Note, this means that not every state is necessarily in a region in every year. Some states may lack the ability to mutually interact with any contiguous actor, or instead may be equally divided between two regions, resulting in a set of regional non-members and/or border states in geographic spaces between regions. Frequent examples include Sudan and Afghanistan. The one exception to this rule are states whose location is deep within the spatial location of a region but cluster with neither regional members nor states outside of the region; we add these states into the appropriate region, and designate them as being in the region's "periphery".

nature of both regions and states within them. Some states will be on the periphery or belong to no region. Some states, such as Turkey, 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. Some regions may merge to become super-regions (Europe or East Asia which may now include much of what used to be Oceania).

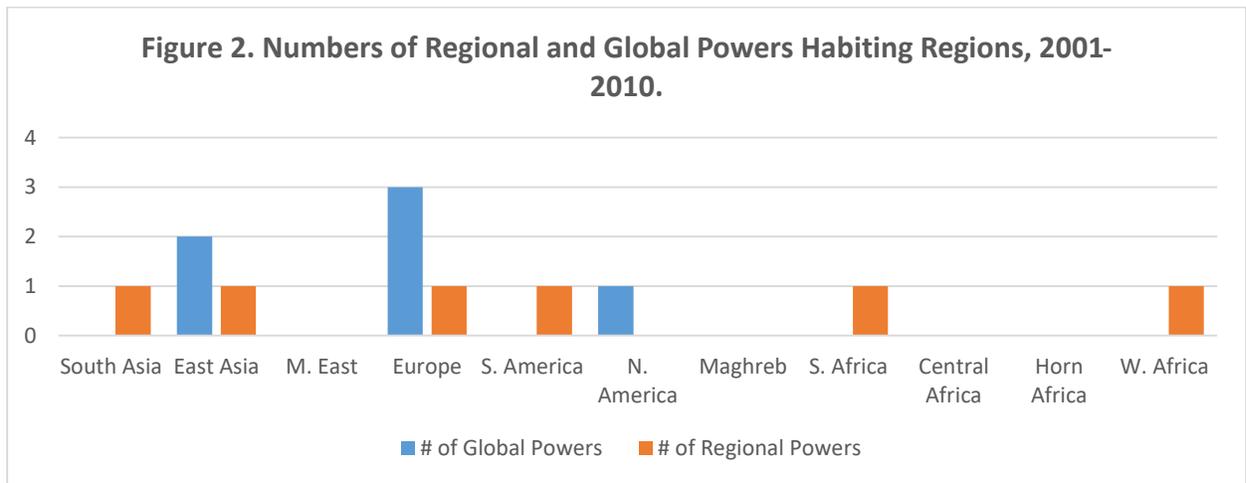
Using these procedures, we identify eleven regions for the 2001-2010 time frame (Appendix C and D). These include Northern America, South America, Middle East, Europe, West Africa, Southern Africa, Horn of Africa, Central Africa, Maghreb, East Asia, and South Asia. Within these regions, states fall into three classifications: core region members, peripheral region members, and “border states”. States that meet our criteria on both capabilities and foreign policy activity are labeled as core region members. Some states lack ties to others due to an absence of unique policy activity or capabilities (e.g. Vanuatu). Others have ties, but do not cluster in unique ways with three or more contiguous states (e.g. Australia). These states are divided into the remaining two groups: peripheral region members and “border states”. Those that, while lacking ties, are surrounded by a region, such as Paraguay, are classified as being within the region albeit not a part of the core region members actively clustering in their foreign policy activity. 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. Often these states, such as Libya or Kazakhstan, are pulled in their foreign policy activity in multiple directions, resulting in no clear pattern of consistent engagement with any one group. As Appendix D illustrates, 135 states (71 percent) cluster into one of the eleven regions, while 56 (29 percent) are classified as “border” states, belonging to no specific region. Of the so-called “border states” nearly half are small countries and micro-states. With a few exceptions, most of these states are relatively inactive in international and regional affairs.



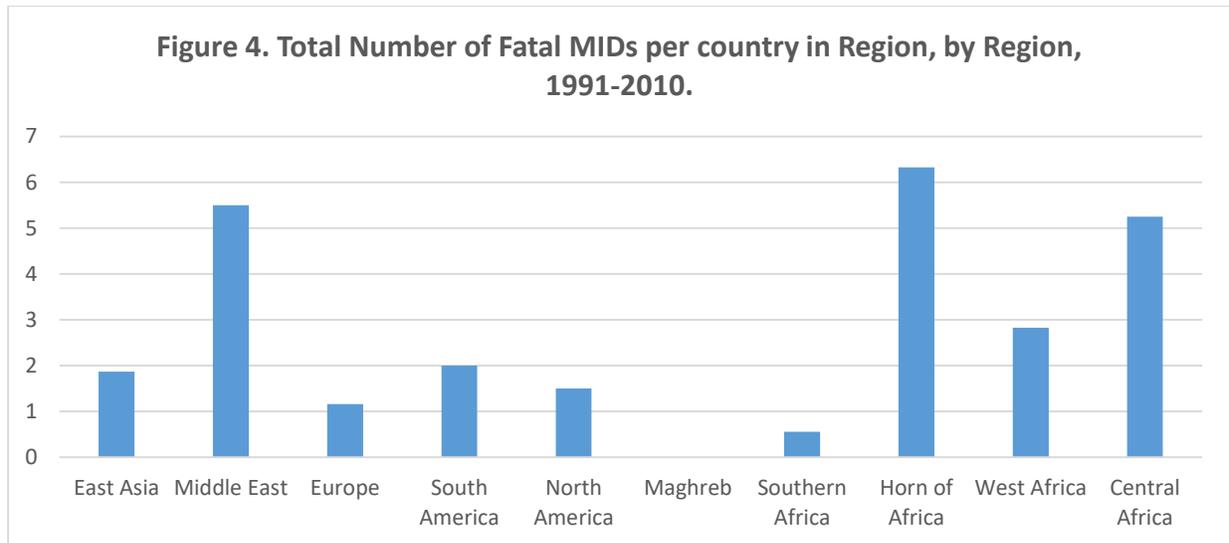
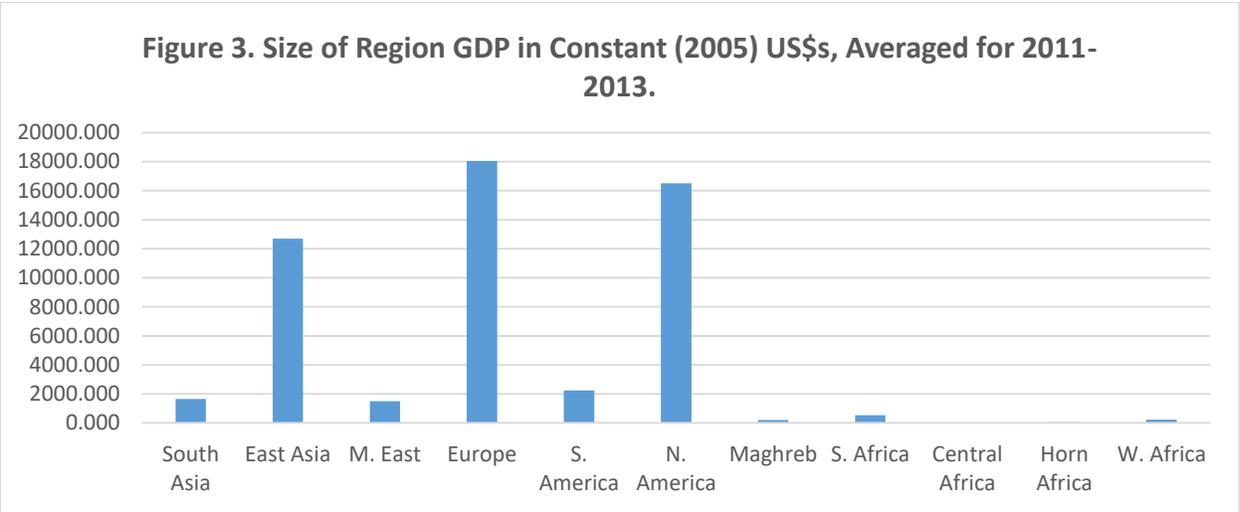
In order to illustrate the changes in regional composition over time, we note in Appendix E the movement of states and regional classifications in the European meta-region during the Cold War. The illustration reflects that classification is created only by the ability of contiguous states to reach each other and by higher levels of interaction with each other, regardless of whether that interaction is cooperative or conflictual. As the merging of Eastern and Western European states in the 1970s suggests, the boundaries of the region are not drawn by the development of a single security structure or by structured economic cooperative arrangements. In fact, the European region in the 1970s would be characterized as the very opposite: competing security and economic architecture, creating substantial conflicts within the region. However, our approach nevertheless identifies one European region of states focused upon each other.

There are of course a variety of costs to this approach to regional delineation. One is that the definition and operationalization minimize cultural and ideational components of regions. However, we assume (and recognize that 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 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 in empirical models. Yet, these costs should be offset by a substantively more satisfying classification.



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 21<sup>st</sup> century, Figures 1-4 indicate the rich diversity of regions and both regional differences and similarities, creating substantial theoretical complexity for comparative regional analysis. Of course, an even richer diversity in the number of states, as well as shifting borders and composition, has not retarded analyses based on the state level.



22

The conceptual and measurement strategy we suggest is based on both our theoretical approach and as well our substantive research concerns (conflict and cooperation dynamics, diffusion processes). We recognize that it may be less suitable for those operating with dramatically different theoretical lenses or those interested in research questions substantially

<sup>22</sup> Fatal MIDs are disputes involving fatalities, rather than simply threats or shows of force. These disputes are coded as either a “4” or “5” on a five point scale depending upon their severity.

different from our own. 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. Furthermore, the rich history of cultural determinations in area studies may provide reasonable designations for most-similar comparative case designs. Alternatively, for certain types of research questions<sup>23</sup> some may define regions in terms of the existence of formal structures of cooperation, and create regions possibly both larger and smaller than ours, with membership driven by the extent to which regional structures capture the states in the region.

We would quarrel with none of these other approaches and we recognize their utility. We offer ours with the hope that it has primary value for the questions we raise and for the prospect of further theoretical development in comparative regional analysis around issues of conflict and cooperation within and across regions over time. Hopefully, we should be able to assess at a later stage whether theoretical insights and empirical findings can be integrated across these conceptual differences and theoretical approaches, and if not, at least uncover the extent to which one approach may trump other approaches depending on the major research question at hand.

### *A Theoretical Framework*

We are interested in three puzzles concerning international relations.<sup>24</sup> First, what accounts for variation in intra-regional cooperative relationships between states? Clearly some regions contain far more extensive cooperative relationships, and structured cooperative relations

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<sup>23</sup> For instance: Which types of institutional designs in regional organizations facilitate sustained cooperation among members? Under what conditions does regional architecture endure or atrophy?

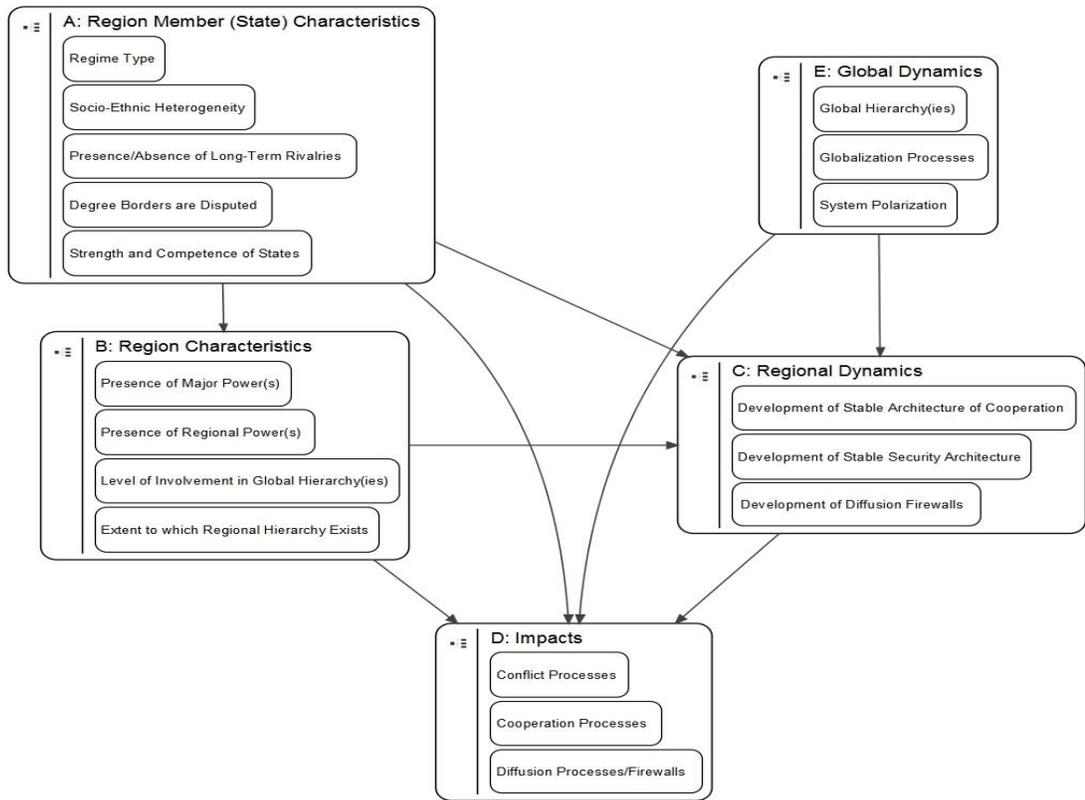
<sup>24</sup> We have not focused here on a region's impact on relations between states across regions, nor on relations between regions, although those considerations are increasingly addressed in the literature, and especially among scholars who focus on European integration and the outreach efforts of the EU toward other regions.

between states than others. From a longitudinal perspective, regions also appear to go through cycles of greater or lesser cooperation over time. Are these differences already explained by state level and dyadic findings, or, are there regional dynamics that may provide additional insights into such differences? Second, regions also appear to vary in terms of the extent of conflicts between their members; what accounts for those differences, and can regional dynamics help to explain variation and fluctuation in intra-regional conflicts? Third, we are interested in the growing literature on diffusion processes and especially diffusion firewalls that may retard or enhance diffusion of a variety of phenomena, including conflicts and cooperation (Solingen 2012). We wish to probe the extent to which regions vary in creating such firewalls, their relative effectiveness, and if variation across regions in terms of effective firewalls is partially explained by region level considerations.

Figure 5 illustrates some of the plausible linkages in a theoretical framework we propose for a comparative analysis of regions. It seeks to integrate state, region, and system level considerations.

The framework suggests a number of salient relationships regarding the manner in which a focus on regions may impact conflict, cooperation, and diffusion phenomena. Note however 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 represent an aggregate of considerations at the state level (A-D in Figure 5). If, for instance, democracies do not fight each other, regions rich in democratic polities 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.

Figure 5. A Theoretical Framework for Assessing Regional Comparative Effects on Conflict, Cooperation, and Diffusion Processes



Second, a comparative analysis of regions may identify Type II effects: processes at the region level that result from aggregate state characteristics or from dyadic interactions (A-C-D or A-B-D variety, in Figure 5).<sup>25</sup> For instance, certain state attributes, or state-to-state interactions may create conditions in regions that act as firewalls to retard diffusion effects either emanating locally or globally (Solingen 2012). If one can identify the conditions around which diffusion effects are minimized through the creation of regional firewalls, then such regional characteristics as stable firewalls can be integrated with phenomena that are otherwise approached at the state level of analysis. Rather than simply counting the presence or absence of

<sup>25</sup> As Lake (2009: 44) notes, separating Type I from Type II effects in large N based empirical models can become quite difficult.

ongoing rivalries in a region, one would focus on conditions in regions that would magnify or minimize diffusion effects stemming from ongoing rivalries (Thompson 2015). Rather than counting the mix of democracies and non-democratic polities in regions, 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 minimize regional firewalls against globalization processes (outward looking regimes) or collaborate to maximize regional firewalls (inward looking regimes) against the diffusion of democracies (A-C-D impacts). The focus here then is not simply on the characteristics of states that lead to variation among regions, but the manner in which certain characteristics (or interactions between states) create conditions that have region-wide consequences.

Another illustration concerns the robust finding in the literature regarding the salience of unresolved territorial/border issues for interstate conflicts. The resolution of such border conflicts dramatically reduces the prospects of war and militarized interstate disputes between states. In regions where such contentious borders are at a minimum, we should see substantially fewer regional conflicts (Type I, A-D effects). However, moving from aggregated state level impact to regional impact, regions with broadly accepted borders may also contain favorable conditions for the creation of stable institutional development that further facilitates cooperation between states (and particularly in regions where similar political regimes dominate), with those institutional arrangements reducing conflicts further in the region (Type II, A-C-D effects).<sup>26</sup> This type of

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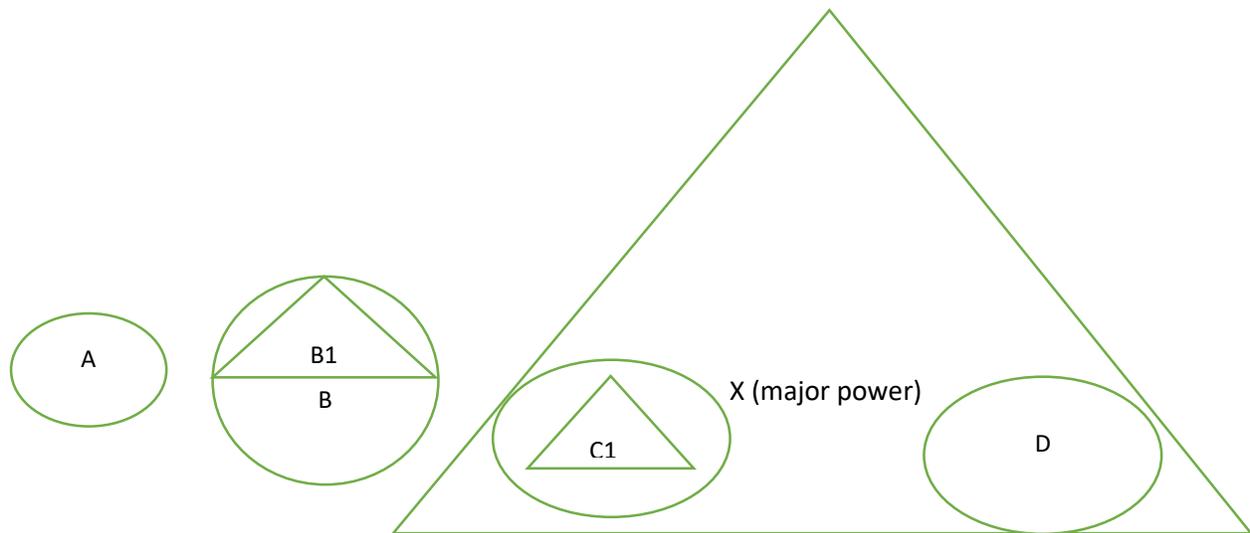
<sup>26</sup> As many have observed, it may be the combination of elimination of border disputes, the prevalence of democratic polities, the end to ongoing rivalries, and incentives (especially security incentives) provided by a major global power (the U.S.) that may help account for the emergence of the Western European peace after centuries of intra-regional conflict.

inquiry moves beyond the aggregate characteristics of states by linking those characteristics to region-wide dynamics as significant explanatory variables.

Finally, a comparative analysis of regions should focus on those Type III effects that are our primary concern: regional differences based on hierarchical relationships (Lake 2009, Fawn 2009) 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 such 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, and doing so in different ways (Katzenstein 2005). States (and indirectly, regions) will also vary from negotiating and accepting such hierarchical arrangements to resisting them (Acharya 2007, 2014). Under what conditions major powers press for such 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). Realist, liberal institutionalist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives provide contending hypotheses regarding these questions.

Additionally, global hierarchies may co-exist with regional hierarchical arrangements (Lemke 2002, Nolte 2010). Of interest to us are regional powers seeking to create hierarchical ordering in their regions. As Figure 6 illustrates, a comparative regional analysis can differentiate regions by a) whether or not one or more regional powers exist in a region; b) if in existence, whether or not they have the capability and willingness to seek a hierarchical ordering of affairs in the region; and if they seek to create hierarchical orders, c) are such attempts supplemental to or independent of relevant global hierarchical arrangements.

**Figure 6. Hypothetical Illustration of Global and Regional Hierarchical Relationships.**



In Figure 6 regions range from those without either regional or global hierarchies (Region A) to those where both regional and global hierarchies co-exist (Region C). Despite the recognition of the salience of global and regional powers in ordering political relationships, the extant literature is far from clear about the effects of these global and regional contextual considerations on conflicts within regions, on cooperative relationships, on diffusion processes, or on the utility of diffusion firewalls erected by either major powers or regional powers.<sup>27</sup>

The extent to which major powers and/or regional powers can create stable structures of cooperation also depends on a wide range of factors including those that stem from Type 1 propositions: the characteristics of states in the region (e.g., the absence of ongoing rivalries, resolution of border issues, predictability and affinity brought about by similar political regimes, and a minimal amount of ethnic conflicts that can spread across political systems). In addition to

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<sup>27</sup> Although there are exceptions in the literature that have actively pursued these questions, and to whom we owe intellectual debts, including Acharya (2007), Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson (2008), Miller (2007), Rasler and Thompson (2014), Hurrell (2007), Lake (2009), Lemke (2002), Nolte (2010), Solingen (2011) and Thompson (2015).

these, and even assuming favorable conditions, regional or major powers cannot fashion such architecture unless they have the capacity to create them, a capacity that in significant part depends on the relative competence of their political institutions<sup>28</sup> and the relative competence of other states in the region to accept or negotiate such architecture.

In addition to the relationship between order and structure, the success or failure of any given phenomena to diffuse is likely to be influenced by a combination of Type I, II, and III effects. Regions may provide a rich diversity of settings for diffusion processes (Elkins and Simmons 2005, Solingen 2012) and thus represent a promising area of inquiry for comparative regional analysis. There is a substantial and growing literature in IR focused on the diffusion of a vast array of subjects of interest (e.g., democracies, terrorism, civil wars, trade, nuclear weapons, human rights, etc.) and a significant amount of work acknowledging intra-regional and inter-regional diffusion<sup>29</sup> processes at play. Yet, there has been virtually no scholarship that has focused systematically on a comparative regional level to ascertain the existence and quality of firewalls that may reduce or accelerate such diffusion processes.

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 (either globally or from other regions). For instance, the diffusion of democratic regimes appears to involve both regional and global diffusion processes (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). Likewise, other liberal peace variables like trade interdependence and institutional membership may follow similar patterns

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<sup>28</sup> How much capability is needed by a regional power for such a successful enterprise is unclear. Certainly India in South Asia, the Republic of South Africa in Southern Asia, Nigeria in East Africa have all been relatively unsuccessful in generating such stable cooperative institutions. Brazil in South America has been more successful (MERCOSUR and UNASUR), but that success has faded with challenges from more radical South American states, and a weakening of Brazilian political institutions.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent summary of works and the issues they raise, including issues about firewalls, see Solingen (2012).

(Rhamey 2012). Yet, the diffusion of these variables in some regions but not in others may be linked to some critical mass of intra-regional political arrangements (Type 2 effects) or to the creation of firewalls restricting such effects by regional powers (Type 3 effects). Similar firewalls may exist to minimize global diffusion effects, and with variable utility across regions.

We propose that a good start would be to focus on the combination of internal characteristics helping to create firewalls, along with the existence in the region of powerful regional or global actors seeking order and stability. Buhaug and Gleditsch (2006) demonstrate for instance 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. Yet, to what extent can strong regional powers erect workable firewalls to prevent such diffusion when it threatens the regional order favoring them? And under what conditions have they sought to do so? These questions have not been adequately addressed in the literature, and certainly not using a comparative regional perspective. We believe that considerable first steps might be taken towards answering these questions by applying the outlined framework and focusing on regional membership, characteristics, and dynamics as well as global dynamics and their resulting impacts.

### **A Theoretical Bet**

The framework we have sketched out 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 patterns of order impacting on both conflict and cooperation process 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 (global and/or

regional) relationships (Lake 2011, Lemke 2002, Katzenstein 2005, Kugler et al. 2011, Modelski and Thompson 1996) when major powers have the capacity and the will to exercise such relationships. When such hierarchies are not sustainable (or fail to become applicable to certain regions), states in regions will experience—all other things 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.<sup>30</sup> Such regional orders may emerge when a region is irrelevant to global orders, or when regional powers seek to complement or contest global orders. We leave it as an open question the substance of those orders being sought and the mechanisms used by regional powers to create them.<sup>31</sup>

Third, we assume that the impacts by either major powers or regional powers on regions are heavily conditioned by different types of regional and global conditions 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 are well known in the literature on interstate conflict and cooperation. They would include for instance territorial disputes (e.g., Gibler 2007; Huth 2009), regime types (e.g., Dafoe 2011; Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002), ongoing

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<sup>30</sup> We do not assume this to be the case for altruistic reasons. Motivations will be diverse, including both domestic political ones and others related to myriad foreign policy objectives. The order these regional powers will likely seek would be ones consistent with their own interests.

<sup>31</sup> Those mechanisms may range from coercion through a combination of positive and negative inducements, consistent with Ikenberry's (2001) discussion regarding the trade-offs involved in buying into the American blueprint for order following the end of World War II.

rivalries (e.g., Colaresi and Thompson 2002; Goertz and Diehl 2001), and/or the extent of dissatisfaction with the status quo (e.g., Kugler and Lemke 1996; Schweller 1994) at the interstate level. 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 as well) to create order within their regions.

Outside of the region, and as part of a region’s environment, a variety of global conditions are likely to create additional fault lines, or conversely, dynamics that may stimulate regional cooperative arrangements. These include conditions such as exposure to globalization processes (e.g., Gartzke, Li, and Boehmer 2001, Russett and Oneal 2001), geopolitical location between competing major powers (Rhamey et al. 2015), 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 power and regional power attempts at imposing order and stability in regions.

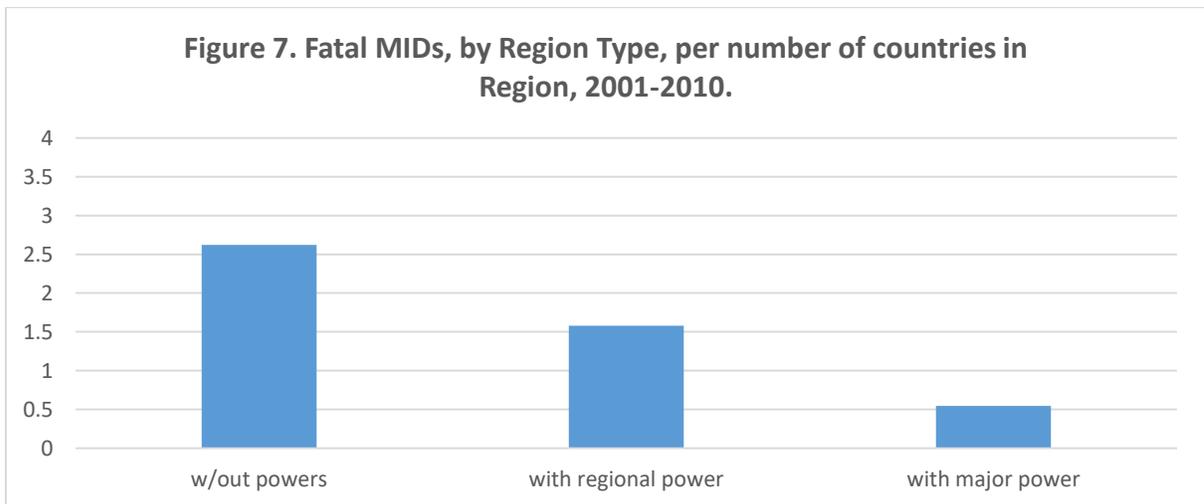
The key to transforming our framework to a useful theory of regions and its application to our phenomena of interest requires three steps. The first is the need to revisit the conceptualization and measurement of regional powers, a task that appears to be at least as complex as the conceptualization and measurement of regions.<sup>32</sup> Second is the delineation of specifications under which major powers and regional powers are able to and willing to demark conditions for the operation of interstate politics in a region. The third task is to clearly specify the types of regional and global conditions (and their relative salience) that would comprise the

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<sup>32</sup> For the difficulties involved with delineating regional powers and the literature that has attempted to do so, see Nolte (2010), Neumann (1992). The conceptualization of regions and the identification of regional powers used here follows Cline et al. (2011).

most powerful effects conditioning major power and regional power attempts at imposing order and stability in a region.

These three challenges constitute formidable obstacles for theoretical development and empirical analysis. Yet, we believe the payoffs would offset these costs. Consider at the simplest level the following relationship: whether or not major or regional powers are domiciled in a region appears to be associated with patterns of regional conflict. Figure 7 represents the level of fatal MID (levels 4 and 5) 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 types of powers are most conflictual, regions inhabited 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 appears to be least conflictual.



Yet, it is clear as well that there are other regional dynamics operating, as the range of MIDs across the first two categories is substantial<sup>33</sup> 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 (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 levels of intra-regional conflicts begin to approximate those in regions populated by major powers (.74 versus .55 per number of states in the region).<sup>34</sup>

#### *A Short Propositional Inventory*

As a starting point, we suggest two central propositions:

*Proposition 1: 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 likely result in the development of security and economic arrangements designed to maximize cooperative relationships in the region.*

*Proposition 2: All else being equal, the presence of a single regional power in a region will diminish intraregional conflict and facilitate intraregional cooperation.*

The first proposition is clearly suggested by not only our framework but as well the extant knowledge regarding the salience of regional order for major powers. Minimizing regional

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<sup>33</sup> The South Asian region experiences the highest number of MIDs, even with India as a regional power presence. Conversely the Maghreb region, lacking either a major or regional power is by far the least conflictual of that group.

<sup>34</sup> Whether these differences are due to the absence of a regional power or the absence of ongoing regional rivalry and the interaction between regional powers and ongoing rivalries cannot be separated here, but are matters worthy of further attention. Note for instance that the absence of both a regional power and a major power does not “guarantee” a high level of intra-regional conflict, as attested by the very low level of conflict for this period in the Maghreb region.

conflict and creating regional stability appears to be a precondition for a state to emerge as a major power. With very rare exceptions, major powers first develop as regional powers and do not migrate to the global stage until they have imposed sufficient order in their regional environment (Volgy et al 2011, 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, over the last decade the following regions contain a single regional power: South America (Brazil), West Africa (Nigeria), Southern Africa (Republic of South Africa), and South Asia (India). Of the four regional powers, the two with the most extensive capabilities are Brazil and India, and of the two, Brazil has demonstrated the greater success in addressing issues of order in its region. India, still engaged in a long-term rivalry with Pakistan, and with substantial domestic issues to address, including the competence of its political institutions, has fared far worse in creating regional order in South Asia (Carranza 2014). However, the region with the most conflictual interactions on average, the Middle East, possesses no regional powers whatsoever.

Of course, in reality not “all else” is equal, and we suggest a number of 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 type of qualification is about the extent to which there is a competitive environment for the power seeking to order regional relations. The second type of qualification regards the extent of the aforementioned “conflict

fault lines” that need to be managed by such powers within their regions. Related to the second is a third type: conditions under which a regional power<sup>35</sup> is capable and willing to act to impose regional order.

*How competitive is the power environment?*

We suggest several further bets concerning the regional power environment and the prevalence of competition:

- If a region contains more than one major power, the creation of regional order may become problematic. However, 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 arise sufficiently to deter the development of regional order.

When two or more major powers co-exist in the same region, the prospects of developing a stable regional order will be quite low if the major powers do not share a common perspective on the status quo. We guess that in no small part the very slow evolution of a regional order in East Asia is in part a function of two major powers in residence (China, Japan) and a third (U.S.) 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.

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

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<sup>35</sup> We create this condition primarily for regional powers since we assume, as we had noted earlier 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.

arrangements among the states of the European Union, housing two major powers (the U.K. and France), with a third (U.S.) constituting an ongoing presence since the end of World War II. Of course, much of that major power collusion took place in the aftermath of a global war, a huge security threat to the region from another major power (the Soviet Union), and substantial underwriting by the U.S. Once the region expanded (see Appendix C) to cover all of Europe, the larger region now contained two sub-regional orders, and conflicts over the status quo with first the Soviet Union and now the Russian Federation preventing the expansion of western European regional order to encompass all of the region. In fact, the “troubles” over Ukraine are a testament to the fragility of order in regions where multiple major powers are simultaneously operating and maneuvering to define 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 expect that the intensity of such regional rivalries will substantially curb the ability of a regional power to create order in the region.
- A third type of power competition may stem from the intrusion of major powers in a region inhabited by a regional power. While such interactions could be reflective of a major power seeking to supplement a regional power’s resources to establish order, it is much more likely that it will be a manifestation of different policy preferences and interests in the region, retarding the development of regional order.

*How extensive are the fault lines to be managed?*

As we noted earlier, the difficulty of managing regional order depends on a variety of conflict fault lines on the region, phenomena that have been researched extensively at the monadic and dyadic levels of analysis. These include:

- Regime similarity across the political units constituting the region. We would anticipate that a region primarily composed of democratic or autocratic polities would be easier to manage than a mix of the two regime types.
- The extent of territorial disputes in the region. The task of creating regional order in regions rife with territorial disputes may provide enormous challenges to a regional power; few or no unresolved border disputes should increase the likelihood of developing stable architectures of cooperation within the region.
- The persistence of broad ethnic conflicts (or societal heterogeneity, see Rasler and Thompson 2014) within and across states in the region. We anticipate that especially the potential spillover of ethnic conflicts and competition across state boundaries is likely to create substantial challenges to powers seeking to create stable regional order.
- The persistence of substantial economic inequalities between states in the region. This condition has been relatively unexplored in the literature. Yet, the growth of inequalities between states (separate from intra-state inequality) suggests that this may become a substantial fault line as well to be considered in managing regional orders.

While the list of fault lines is substantially greater than these listed here, we project from the extant literature that these may serve as the strongest obstacles for the development of regional order.

*When are regional powers capable and willing to create regional order?*

This qualifying condition has been relatively unexplored in the literature,<sup>36</sup> and especially as it pertains to regional powers. We expect however that three conditions are likely to be pivotal:

- Regional powers will require substantial capabilities with which to effectuate regional order. What levels of capabilities are needed may depend on the size of the region and the number of fault lines it contains. Thus, we assume that the task of regional order construction, and the capacity needed for its successful pursuit requires different capabilities in West Africa (Nigeria), South America (Brazil), or South Asia (India).
- Regional powers will vary in terms of their domestic political competence to translate their capabilities to developing effective strategies for creating world order. Some major powers have substantial political/bureaucratic efficiency with which to extract societal resources and apply them to foreign policy pursuits, others less so. Similar arguments can be made about the degree to which these states can create innovative strategies for enhancing regional order, and the extent to which domestic political pressures may minimize their commitment of resources to regional order building.
- The first two conditions are related to the opportunity 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 triggers that stimulate such activity. One possible trigger is the pursuit of major power status by a regional power. Others include potential security threats from outside of the region. Plausibly, there may be a variety of domestic political motivations creating similar triggers. These would need to be specified in a comparative assessment of regions.

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<sup>36</sup> For exceptions regarding the importance of state strength in regions, see Miller (2007) and Rasler and Thompson (2014).

## **Conclusion**

The conditions we list here and the theoretical bets about global and regional powers, we believe, constitute important first steps in the development of comparative regional analysis. We hope to pursue further analysis along these lines. Underlying this project is the increasingly recognized and empirically validated linkage politics approach, demanding a more nuanced analysis of international politics that includes variables across levels of analysis. Given the frequency of its use in recent literature, the region as a locally relevant geographic space constitutes one such level of analysis between the domestic and international, modifying our understanding of not only country and dyadic processes. We anticipate that these inherently multilateral processes that characterize the interactions of such groups will be of increasing importance in international relations scholarship.

The theoretical framework provided uncovers linkages not only between levels of analysis, but also theoretical approaches. The mid-range theories centering primarily on dyadic (mostly conflictual) processes that so dominate most international relations research may be (re)united with broader systemic considerations and hierarchical theorizing through the arena of the regional sphere. By properly specifying the constituency of that sphere, the characteristics of its component units, and the multilateral nature of that sphere's internal engagement, a greater understanding of the dominant findings in international relations is made possible. Our understanding of international politics is hopefully left improved by contextualizing and modifying the salience of our findings, whether the focus is on the democratic peace or the importance of relative power, by the regional and global context within which the existence of such powerful causal variables are located. While we have long developed the technological

sophistication to analyze international processes using a multi-level lens, we believe the regional unit can complement methodological sophistication with an appropriate theoretical backdrop upon which these multi-level processes can be analyzed.

Finally, while the regional level of analysis may be an important backdrop for re-engaging and contextualizing the geographic clustering behind many of the dominant international relations findings, approaching the regional level in a cautiously analytical fashion, as we propose here, provides a workable solution to problems associated with theorizing in the subfield of comparative regionalism more broadly. Many have sought to provide theories about what characterizes regions, yet the foundational element of defining precisely a region is either glossed over or completely ignored. Providing an analytical backdrop for comparative regional theorizing offers a means of evaluating existing regional theories and bolstering the formation of innovative new ideas. For example, theories of diffusion processes will require an identification of the region itself to evaluate the extent to which those processes, and their causes, are present or absent.

Perhaps the most ambitious possibility suggested by our approach is that by determining what a region is, we may be able to determine the nature of its transformation over time as a discreet unit rather than as an afterthought of changes within and between its component parts (states). To the extent regions have an important impact on the behavior of both state and non-state actors, the rise and fall of regional spaces is likely a fruitful avenue of future research.

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## Appendix A: List of Regional Categories Used in Quantitative Studies of Conflict and Cooperation.

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"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
Asia (East) and Pacific	Yugoslavian Countries

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*Each entry is recorded in its corresponding article as a single region*

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## **APPENDIX B: Literature Focused on Region as the Level or Primary Unit of Analysis in Studies of International Politics, 2005-2015.**

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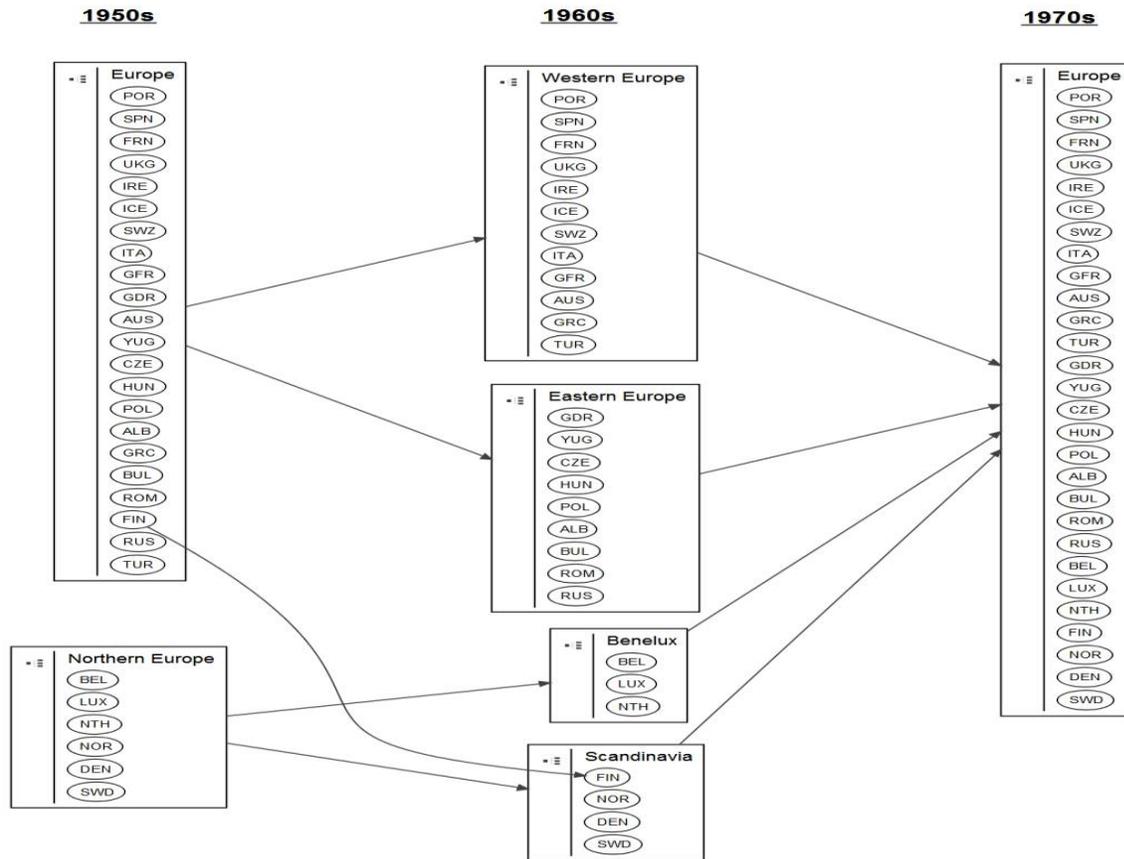
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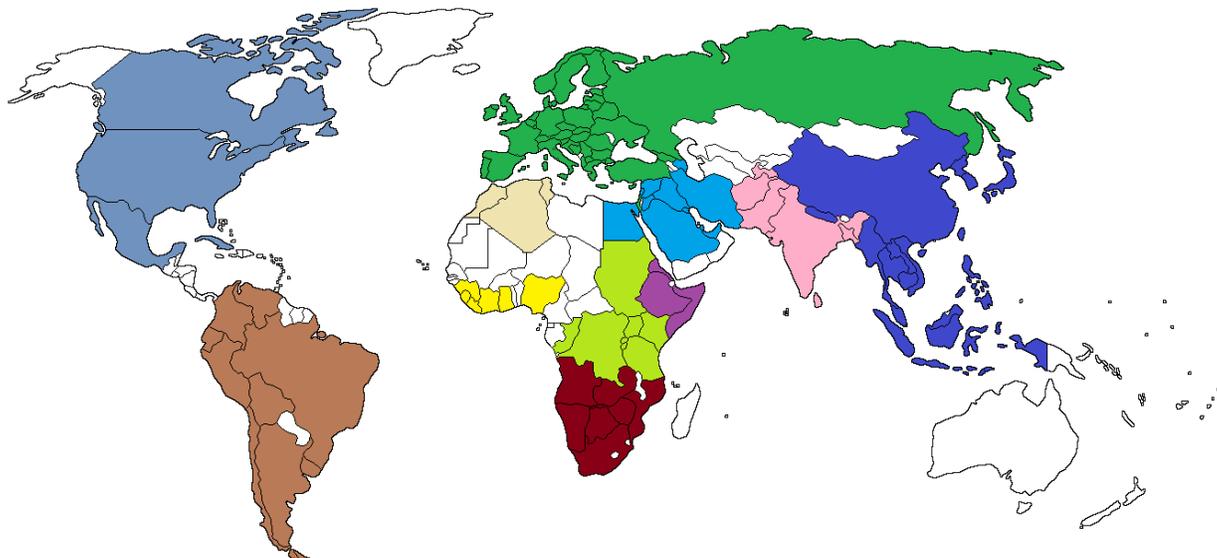
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**APPENDIX E: Changes in European Regions, Shown by Decades, 1950-1980.**



**APPENDIX C: Mapping Regions, 2001-2010.**



## APPENDIX D: States and Regions 2001-2010 (N=138).

<u>Northern America</u> (N = 4)	<u>South America</u> (N = 9)	<u>Middle East</u> (N = 12)	<u>Europe (N=46)</u>	<u>West Africa</u> (N=6)	<u>Southern Africa</u> (N=9)	<u>Horn of Africa</u> (N=3)	<u>Maghreb</u> (N=3)	<u>Central Africa</u> (N=8)	<u>East Asia</u> (N=31)	<u>South Asia</u> (N=7)
United States	Colombia	Azerbaijan	U.K.	Finland	Ivory Coast	Somalia	Morocco	Rep. of Congo	China	Afghanistan
Canada	Venezuela	Iran	Ireland	Sweden	Guinea	Ethiopia	Algeria	D. R. of Congo	Taiwan	Tajikistan
Cuba	Ecuador	Iraq	Netherlands	Norway	Liberia	Eritrea	Tunisia	Uganda	N. Korea	India
Mexico	Peru	Egypt	Belgium	Denmark	Sierra Leone			Kenya	S. Korea	Pakistan
	Brazil	Syria	Luxembourg	Turkey	Ghana			Tanzania	Japan	Bangladesh
	Bolivia	Lebanon	France	Israel	Nigeria			Burundi	Myanmar	Sri Lanka
	Chile	Jordan	Switzerland					Rwanda	Nepal	
	Argentina	Saudi Arabia	Spain	<i>Periphery</i>				Sudan	Thailand	<i>Periphery</i>
		Kuwait	Portugal	Liechtenstein	<i>Periphery</i>				Cambodia	Maldives
	<i>Periphery</i>	Bahrain	Germany	Andorra	Lesotho				Laos	
	Paraguay	Qatar	Poland	San Marino	Swaziland				Vietnam	
		U.A.E.	Austria	Montenegro					Malaysia	
			Hungary	Kosovo					Singapore	
			Czech Republic	Moldova					Philippines	
			Slovakia	Iceland					Indonesia	
			Italy							
			Albania						<i>Periphery</i>	
			Macedonia						Brunei	
			Croatia						East Timor	
			Serbia						Australia	
			Bosnia						P.N.G.	
			Slovenia						New Zealand	
			Greece						Vanuatu	
			Cyprus						Solomon Is.	
			Bulgaria						Kiribati	
			Romania						Tuvalu	
			Russia						Fiji	
			Estonia						Tonga	
			Latvia						Nauru	
			Lithuania						Marshall Is.	
			Ukraine						Palau	
			Belarus						F.S.M.	
			Georgia						Samoa	

## Border States (N=56)

Bahamas  
 Haiti  
 Dominican Republic  
 Jamaica  
 Trinidad and Tobago  
 Barbados  
 Dominica  
 Grenada  
 St. Lucia  
 St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
 Antigua and Barbuda  
 St. Kitts and Nevis  
 Belize

Guatemala  
Honduras  
El Salvador  
Nicaragua  
Costa Rica  
Panama  
Guyana  
Suriname  
Monaco  
Malta  
Armenia  
Cape Verde  
Sao Tome y Principe  
Guinea-Bissau  
Equatorial Guinea  
Gambia  
Mali  
Senegal  
Benin  
Mauritania  
Niger  
Burkina Faso  
Togo  
Cameroon  
Gabon  
Central African Republic  
Chad  
Djibouti  
Malawi  
Madagascar  
Comoros  
Mauritius  
Seychelles  
Libya  
Yemen  
Oman  
Turkmenistan  
Kyrgyzstan  
Uzbekistan  
Kazakhstan  
Mongolia  
Bhutan