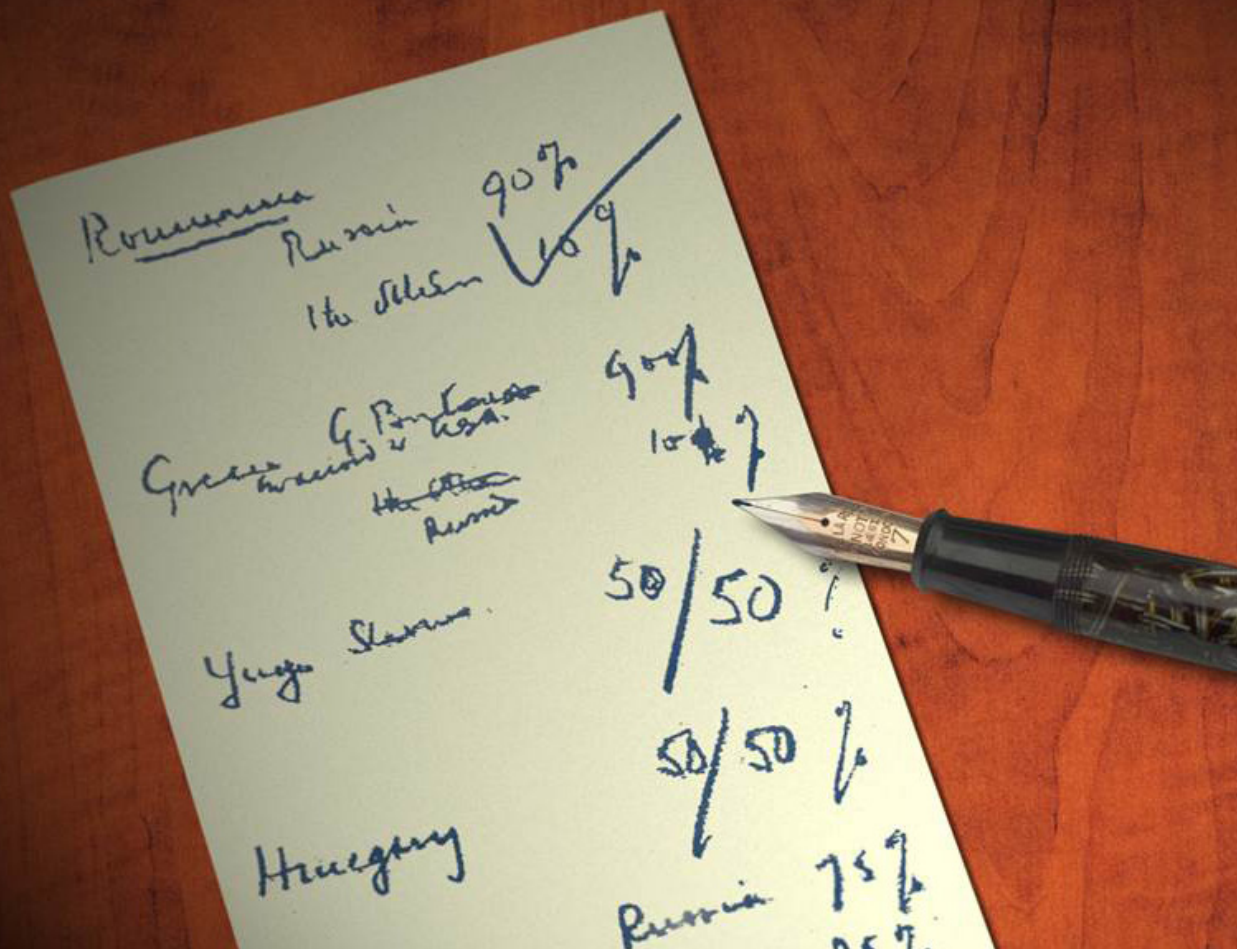


# WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL?

THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL  
AND GLOBAL SECURITY





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**WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL?  
THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY**

*The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS)*

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*On the cover:* rendition of the secret 'Percentages Agreement', detailing the post-WW2 partition of European states in Western and Soviet spheres of influence, concluded between Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin at the 4th Moscow Conference, October 1944. (UK government, Public Domain )

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*"The strategic functions of small powers emanate from various factors, political, geographical, economic and military which are not always easy to identify or disentangle, and a change in the constellation of power may fundamentally alter the position of a small state."*

~ Trygve Mathisen, 1971

*"Spheres of influence we have never admitted, Spheres of interest we have never denied."*

~ Lord Balfour, 1898

# WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL?

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IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Contemporary international relations are shaped by an intricate and to a certain extent uneasily co-existing mixture of liberal and realist logics. On the one hand, there are many signs pointing towards inexorably growing interdependencies between states that pave the way to prosperity and peace. On the other hand, there are similar signs that states seem not be able to escape realist logic: they persist in pursuing power. Moreover, states are increasingly drawing lines again, lines with respect to whom they talk to, whom they trade with, and whom they defend against.

Pivot states are states that possess military, economic or ideational strategic assets that are coveted by great powers. Pivot states are caught in the middle of overlapping spheres of influence of multiple great powers as measured by associations that consist of ties that bind (military and economic agreements and cultural affinities) and relationships that flow (arms and commodities trade and discourse). A change in a pivot state's association has important repercussions for regional and global security. States that find themselves in overlapping spheres of interest are focal points of where great power interests can collide and also clash. States located at the seams of the international system have at various moments in history been crucial to the security and stability of the international system. For approximately two dozen pivot states we have tracked how they have sat in and then shifted from one sphere of influence to another over the past thirty years.

Our analysis reveals the waxing and waning of the spheres of influence of China, Europe, Russia and the US over the past thirty years and proceeds with an examination of the security risks associated with pivot states. Unsurprisingly, pivot states do in fact play a very important role in regional and global security and stability.

Some of the security implications related to pivot states are rather straightforward, since they principally relate to the strategic goods of these pivot states. As such, shifts in the position of pivot states can, amongst other things, affect military staging rights, create new military - strategic perimeters, limit or open up lines of communications, and affect the world's energy supply dynamics. But beyond these fairly straightforward security risks pivot states harness plenty of perils and promise, which, if understood well, can be usefully leveraged by policymakers.

A few pivot states energetically mold their immediate security environment pulling considerable weight at the international stage. They are challengers of existing norms of regional orders and cause wider ideological ruptures in the system. Shifting pivot states can dramatically upstage the regional balance of power and upset regional peace and stability. Hence, differences in ideological orientation continue to create strategic opportunities, that carry a wide range of security ramifications for old and new powers alike.

There are also states that actively try to position themselves as crucial mediators and that build bridges and gateways between different great powers, or even across perceived civilizational chasms that cleave through the international system. The UAE in the Middle East, Kazakhstan in Central Asia, and Indonesia in South East Asia fulfill or attempt to fulfill such a role in the international system. Relations with these states can be cultivated, if the aim is to affect change beyond the bilateral relationship.

Other pivot states are more passively pushed around and pressured into associations with great powers. Trapped in 'crush zones', or 'shatterbelts', these states are indeed fragile, needy and occasionally capricious. As a rule, they feature political instability and low levels of social and economic development. Not seldom are they also endowed with plenty of natural resources. From Venezuela to Uzbekistan down to Iraq: they are found scattered around the world. Whatever the policy aim – whether it is the promotion of good governance or the uninterrupted access to their resources – before setting down on any policy path, it is worth asking whose sphere of influence these pivot states belong to.



Intrastate cleavages often divide pivot states. Such cleavages can be religious, ethnic, linguistic or cultural in nature, and more often than not they are a combination of all of the above. And it is precisely when these pivot states are caught in the middle, when opposing great powers push and pull in opposite directions, that they are torn apart. Hitherto weak centrifugal forces might suddenly become unleashed. Ukraine is currently succumbing to divisive forces, and Iraq is at real risk of falling apart.

Conflict in pivot states caught in overlapping spheres of influence proves in many cases difficult to resolve. On top of the active meddling of outside powers, these outside powers are hardly ever able to come to arrangements that they can mutually agree to. As a result, conflicts turn into stalemates that have a real risk of metastasizing. Syria is a contemporary case in point, where the strategic interests of Russia and the US, as well as of regional powers like Iran, have produced a deadlock with, as yet, no end in sight.

Then there is also the risk of abandonment when great powers fully withdraw from pivot states, leaving them behind in isolation. Before long, as has happened on numerous occasions, the pivot state comes back to haunt us with a vengeance. Afghanistan, for instance, was abandoned in the 1990s only to be used by Al Qaeda as a terrorist training ground, and, subsequently, top the international security agenda following the 9/11 attacks of 2001. The answer is simple: do not leave such countries to their own devices.

In some cases there is an increased likelihood of great power conflict when pivot states fall victim to great powers encroaching on each other's spheres of influence. Great powers competing over respective spheres of influence sometimes employ what is commonly called brinksmanship, either to change or, alternatively, to uphold the status quo. But brinksmanship can be exercised by pivot states, too. These pivot states can be moral hazards or 'rogue pivots' if they behave recklessly while betting on the opposing great power to come to their rescue. Georgia in the run up to the 2008 war with Russia is a case in point. Georgia had been keen on bolstering ties with the West and was betting on Western assistance in its conflict with Russia, while the latter did not materialize in the end. Brinksmanship of pivot states also introduces a real risk of direct or indirect confrontation between great powers. The solution seems simple: do not let a rogue pivot state pull you into a great conflict.

Beyond the security implications we also examine the plethora of immediate and diverse security risks that emerge in connection with them. Pivot states have different security roles in the international system. Some pivot states are spoilers, others are flag bearers. Some are frail vassals, others are weak but surely not meek. Some should be kept at a safe distance from, others, despite being in dire straits, should not be abandoned. All these roles are crucial for understanding how pivot states can, if not necessarily will, shape the security environment. And it is these roles that policymakers should take a closer look at before formulating policies that will shape our security environment.

# WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL? THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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# WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL? THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

*Tim Sweijts, Willem Theo Oosterveld, Emily Knowles, and Menno Schellekens*

## 1.1 Introduction

Throughout modern history, great powers have been the paramount players in international security on the basis of their constitutive, distributive and coercive power. This has always translated into rights and rules concerning state conduct which include “simple understandings regarding spheres of interest.”<sup>1</sup> Over the past two decades, the international system experienced a process of fundamental political and economic transformation. This process spurred unprecedented degrees of interconnectedness of societies worldwide and contributed to similarly exceptional low levels of interstate war.<sup>2</sup> It also marked the dawn of a multipolar system in which both great and small powers play pivotal roles. In last year’s HCSS Strategic Monitor, we concluded that “in a multipolar system pivot states – countries that are at the interface of different spheres of interest – gain in importance.”<sup>3</sup> A key trend here is that rather than pinning their economic and security interests to one particular great power, countries nowadays tend to interact with multiple great powers on multiple levels. Relationships are far less securitized than in heavily polarized international systems where great powers perceive switches in cooperation as a direct menace to their critical national security interests.<sup>4</sup> This in turn renders today’s system of international relations more fluid. States have diversified alliance portfolios and engage in important military, economic and ideological partnerships with different great powers.

Conflict over overlapping spheres of interest of great powers are more likely to occur in times of changing power configurations, whether globally or regionally. Power shifts occur for instance when the relative military, economic or diplomatic advantage of a leading power over other states is eroding.<sup>5</sup> In addition to direct military confrontation, competition over other, more subtle, areas of great power influence can occur.<sup>6</sup> Under

these conditions, states that find themselves in overlapping spheres of interest are focal points where great power interests collide and may clash.<sup>7</sup> The process of a state moving from one great power's sphere of influence into another can be extremely destabilizing, with a great risk of escalation.<sup>8</sup> From Armenia to Afghanistan, from Iran to Indonesia, from Serbia to Syria: states located at the seams of the international system have at various moments in history been crucial to the security and stability of the international system. We call such states pivot states. Here we will elaborate this notion and assess the security implications associated with pivot states in the contemporary international system.

This study is organized as follows. Section 1.2 introduces the concept of a pivot state. Based on our understanding of the concept, in section 1.3 we identify what we consider pivot states. In doing so, we first identify great powers and examine which non-great powers possess strategic goods; then we assess the evolving spheres of influence of great powers specifically regarding the states with strategic goods over the past three decades; and finally we single out those states in the international system that are *de facto* caught in overlapping spheres of influence of great powers. These states are – according to our definition – pivot states. We subsequently offer a brief assessment of each pivot state in section 1.4, including its position vis-à-vis great powers and its potential relevance for regional and global security affairs. Finally, in section 1.5, we conclude with the key security implications from our analysis as well as an assessment of various security roles of pivot states.

## 1.2 The Concept of a Pivot State

The term pivot state was first coined in the early 1900s when Halford Mackinder published a study in which he argued that for reasons of geography, all states “rotate round the pivot state.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, in Mackinder's rendering, the pivot is not a state as much as it is a region, occupied by an important power “with limited mobility” relative to “the surrounding marginal and insular powers.”<sup>10</sup> Since Mackinder, the term appears in different incarnations to designate different security roles played by regions and countries which are caught both physically and politically in the middle of great power disputes.<sup>11</sup> These incarnations include “shatterbelts”, “belts of political change”, “crush zones”, “lynchpin states”, “asymmetrical states”, “gateway states”, “cleft countries”, “hinge states”, “middle tier states” and “second-order states”. “Shatterbelts” are “strategically important regions of small and weak states which are experiencing substantial inter- and intrastate cleavage and which have become immediately important to the interests of rival major powers.”<sup>12</sup> Countries in these regions have often been victim of invasions by powers encroaching on their

territories through particular geographic routes. “Cleft countries” are countries that host groups belonging to different civilizations.<sup>13</sup> States in “crush zones” are “weak, antagonistic, dependent states caught within the interests of outside larger nations.”<sup>14</sup> “Lynchpin states,” then, “surround a rival power, so that controlling these areas is seen to be advantageous.”<sup>15</sup> Attaching a greater degree agency to these states, other authors speak of “asymmetrical states” which create “turbulence by challenging the norms of hegemonic regional structures.”<sup>16</sup> Gateway states are “embryonic states which can accelerate exchanges that will stimulate the evolution of larger nations from which the gateways have spun off.”<sup>17</sup> “Hinge states,” similarly, are “key states in gateway regions that “take the lead as economic or social mediators in opening up the region in both directions.”<sup>18</sup> They can be and often are “change agents” as they exercise excessive “influence over regional and global patterns.”<sup>19</sup> Great powers quarrel over these “middle tier states” because they are “strategic territories” that they seek to monopolize in order to prevent them from entering into alliances with other powers.<sup>20</sup> But “while often overshadowed by a great power, second-order states try to avoid satellite status, sometimes by playing off one major power against another.”<sup>21</sup> In the latest contribution to this debate the term ‘pivot’ was reintroduced in order to describe “regional heavyweights” that possess the flexibility and maneuverability to leverage their position in the current international system. Instead of being satellite states or “shadow states” (i.e., those states that “remain frozen in the shadow of a single power”) pivot states will be able to “take advantage with opportunities to form one-on-one relations with multiple other governments, playing one off [against] another to secure the most profitable terms of engagement.”<sup>22</sup>

Building on this rich literature, we define pivot states as follows:

Pivot states possess military, economic or ideational strategic assets that are coveted by great powers. They are caught in the middle of overlapping spheres of influence of these great powers as measured by associations that consist of ties that bind (military and economic agreements and cultural affinities) and relationships that flow (arms and commodities trade and discourse). A change in a pivot state’s association has important repercussions for regional and global security.

This definition purposively relies on the dual meaning of the term ‘pivot’, both as a noun and as a verb.<sup>23</sup> In the former meaning, pivot states are critical points around which great powers’ actions revolve. In the latter meaning, pivot states can ‘pivot’, or

swing round, from one great power to another, which they can do passively – merely as pawns in the schemes of great powers – and actively – in that they autonomously shape the security environment through policies of their own.

### 1.3 Identifying Pivot States

#### Great Powers

Great powers play a defining role in global politics. Their global reach in terms of interests, military capabilities and economic strength mean that their actions have a significant impact on the international security environment. They are disproportionately engaged in alliances and wars, and their diplomatic weight is often cemented by their strong role in international institutions and forums.<sup>24</sup> This unequal distribution of power and prestige leads to “a set of rights and rules governing interactions among states”<sup>25</sup> that sees incumbent powers competing to maintain the status quo and keep their global influence. In today’s international system, there are four great powers that fit this definition: the United States (US), Russia, China and the European Union (whereby the EU is considered to be the sum of its parts). If we distil from this description of great power attributes and capabilities a list of criteria, it is clear why these four powers dominate the international security debate (see Table 1.1). The possession of superior military and economic capabilities can be translated into measurements such as military expenditure and GDP, and nowhere are the inherent privileges of great powers more visible than in the voting mechanisms of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where five permanent members have an overriding veto. The top ten countries ranked on the basis of military expenditures (the US, Russia, China, France, Britain, India, Germany, Italy, Japan and Saudi Arabia) correspond almost exactly with the top ten countries ranked on the basis of GDP, with the exception of Saudi Arabia which is surpassed by Brazil. Notably, each country with a permanent seat on the UNSC also finds itself in the top ten military and economic powers. When taken as the sum of its parts, the EU scores highest in terms of economic wealth and diplomatic weight in the UNSC. This is followed closely by the US, which tops the military expenditures ranking, and then Russia and China, both of which exert strong military, economic, and diplomatic influence in the international system.

#### Pivot States: States with Strategic Goods

To identify the key states whose pivoting movements could have the greatest consequences for international security and affect Great Power interests, we created a composite measure whereby the strategic importance of states is assessed by counting the number of military, economic or ideational strategic goods in their possession (see Table 1.2: Strategic Goods).<sup>26</sup>

Great Power criteria	Proxy measurement	USA	Russia	China	EU	France	Britain	India	Germany	Italy	Japan	Brazil	Saudi Arabia
Military Power	Top 10 countries: military expenditure (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	•	✓
De facto identification as a Great Power by an international conference or organisation	Permanent members of the United Nations Security Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		•	•	•	•	
Economic Wealth	Top 10 countries: GDP in USD (2012)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	•

TABLE 1.1: GREAT POWERS BASED ON CAPABILITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

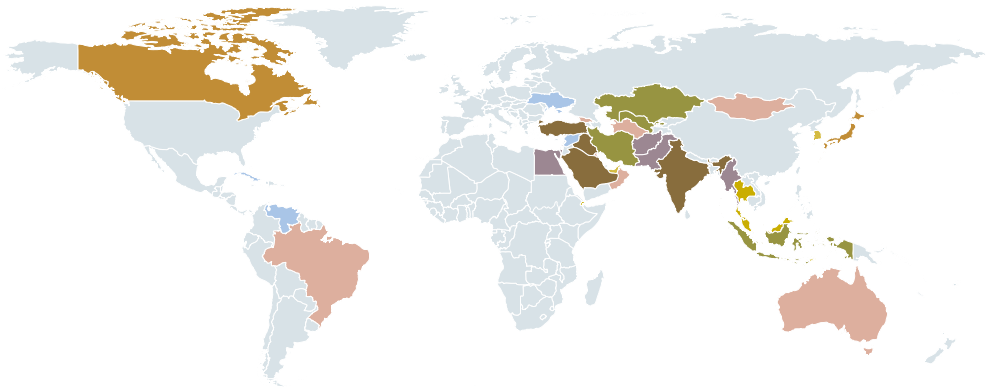
MILITARY GOODS	ECONOMIC GOODS	IDEATIONAL GOODS
Adjacent to great power	Adjacent to SLOCs/LLOCs	Secular sites of importance
Adjacent to theatre of conflict	Governs a key (air)port	Religious sites of importance
Military expenditures	Foreign Direct Investment	Religious battleground
	Foreign Direct Investment as % of Gross Domestic Product	Political battleground
	Resource Rents	Secular leadership
	Resource Rents as % of Gross Domestic Product	Religious leadership

TABLE 1.2: STRATEGIC GOODS

With regard to military strategic goods, the key characteristics that sets a state apart as strategically important to the great powers is their proximity to the border(s) of the great power itself, their strategic location close to theatres of conflict, and their military strength. We score countries on the basis of these three goods. With regards to economic strategic goods, we include resource rents as an absolute figure in US dollars, and resource rents as a percentage of GDP where recorded for each country. A similar technique is used to calculate whether a country has high stocks of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a proxy of its economic importance. In addition, we also look at whether these countries harbor a key port or airport (in the top 30 of the world). With regard to ideational goods, we consider a series of attributes, namely the presence of 1) sites of secular ideational significance, 2) sites of religious significance, 3) a secular/political ideational battleground, 4) a religious ideational battleground, as



well as whether they display 5) secular ideational leadership, or 6) religious ideational leadership. The final scores for each country is the number of strategic goods a state possesses. The cut-off point for our selection of strategic states is three. This cut-off yields a sample of 33 states, which includes states that are strategically important in only one dimension. Based on this scoring system, countries with particularly high economic, military or diplomatic value in today's system are depicted in map 1.1 and Figure 1.1.



MAP 1.1 STATES WITH STRATEGIC GOODS, EXCLUDING THE GREAT POWERS

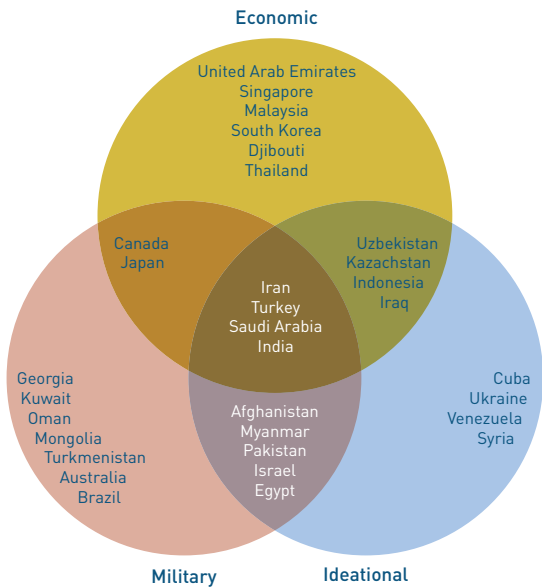


FIGURE 1.1: STATES WITH STRATEGIC GOODS

## Association between Great Powers and States with Strategic Goods

Great powers seek to attract or coerce states with strategic goods into their spheres of influence, with an eye towards leveraging, if not controlling, their strategic assets. Although it is rarely said so explicitly, this is far from a novel phenomenon. At the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Balfour, who would later become a Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, said that “spheres of influence we have never admitted, spheres of interest we have never denied.”<sup>27</sup> Over a century later, US President Obama remarked that progress in the Asia-Pacific region depends on “cultivating spheres of cooperation – not competing spheres of influence.”<sup>28</sup> Obama was specifically referring to reinvigorating treaty alliances with key states in the region not as “historical documents from a bygone era, but [as] abiding commitments to each other that are fundamental to our shared security.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, as nicely illustrated by his remark, great powers employ various instruments to invite or pressure states into their spheres of influence, including trade, aid and investment; economic and military agreements; but also diplomatic “talk.”<sup>30</sup> We thus use the phrase “association between states with strategic goods and great power(s)” to put sphere of influence on a more exact and (objectively) measurable footing. We conceptualize the association between states with strategic goods and great powers as a combination of what we call *ties that bind* and *relationships that flow*. Ties that bind consist of military treaties and trade agreements, as well as structural similarities in language, religion and regime type.<sup>31</sup> States use military treaties and trade agreements to forge durable and close-knit relationships. These ties that bind can often be the basis for relationships that flow between great powers and states with strategic goods, which are manifested in the exchange of military equipment, economic commodities, and diplomatic discourse. While arms and commodities both require buyers and markets, strong verbal cooperation between states can both facilitate and indicate close ties. Dialogue plays an important role in both building and consolidating a relationship: walking-the-walk is important, but so is talking-the-talk.

### Ties that Bind

Ties that bind express the structural bonds between states with strategic goods and great powers. On the basis of long-term ties, much can be said about whether countries are likely to enjoy a positive relationship with each other or not. In essence, if countries do not trust one another, they are neither likely to engage in close military cooperation, nor to provide privileged economic access to their domestic markets. In addition to agreements, polity (= regime) type, language and religion are also assumed to be indicative of the potential for good bilateral relations. As a rule, countries with similar regime types are likely to enjoy more mutual trust. One of the ‘laws’ of political

science that democracies do not fight one another is partially a derivative of this.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, shared religion and language are also factors that in general engender mutual trust. The precise proxies for each of the three dimensions are listed in Table 1.3.

DIMENSION	PROXIES	SOURCES	DEFINITIONS	SCORING
MILITARY	Military Alliances	Correlates of War Military Alliances database (v 4.1)	Formal agreements between states for when conflict might arise	Defense pact: 1 Nonaggression pact: 0.66 Entente: 0.33 No alliances: 0
ECONOMIC	Trade Agreements	Hand-coded based on classification by the World Trade Organization	Customs Union and Free Trade agreements between states	Customs Union: 1 Free Trade Agreement: 0.5 No agreements: 0
IDEATIONAL	Polity, religion, language	Polity IV, CIA World Factbook, Correlates of War World Religion Data	Factors of cultural and social similarity between nations	Similarity in all three areas: 1 Only in two areas: 0.66 Only in one area: 0.33 No similarities: 0

TABLE 1.3: TIES THAT BIND<sup>33</sup>

To measure ties that bind between great powers and states with strategic goods, we add up the scores of the ties that bind across the three dimensions (military, economic, ideational).<sup>34</sup> The scoring is outlined in Table 1.3. We then plot states with strategic goods on a distance chart in relation to the great powers on the basis of the strength of their ties that bind and compare changes in their association over time (1980, 1995 and 2012).<sup>35</sup> Each of the four great powers occupies a side of the square: the United States on top, Europe on the left, China on the right and the USSR / Russia at the bottom. (see Figure 1.2, Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4)

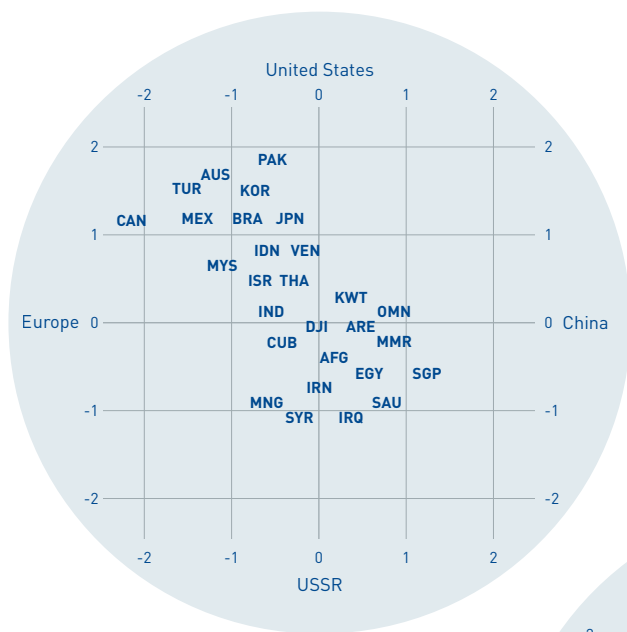


FIGURE 1.2: TIES THAT BIND IN 1980.<sup>36</sup>

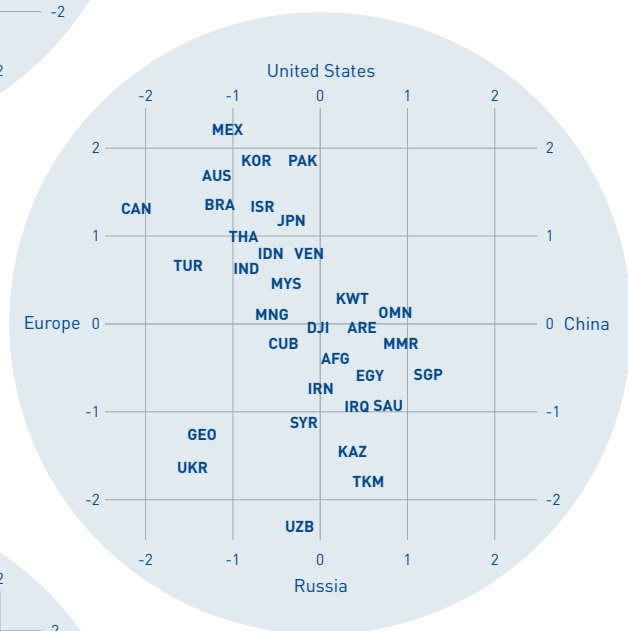


FIGURE 1.3: TIES THAT BIND IN 1995.<sup>37</sup>

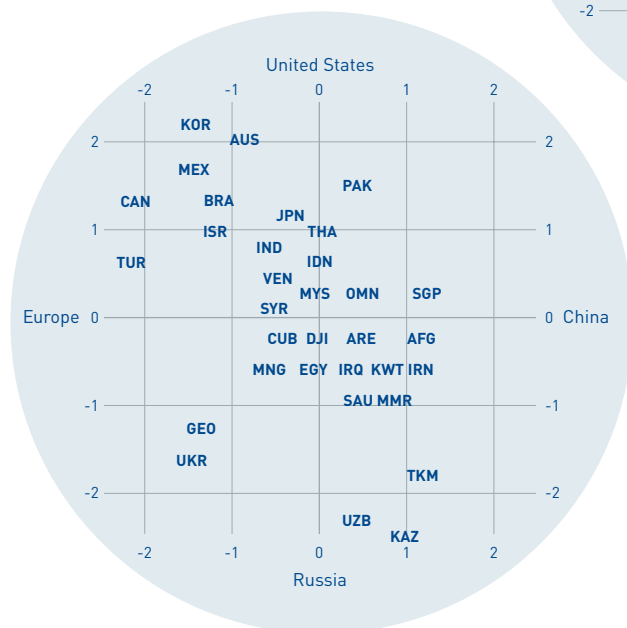


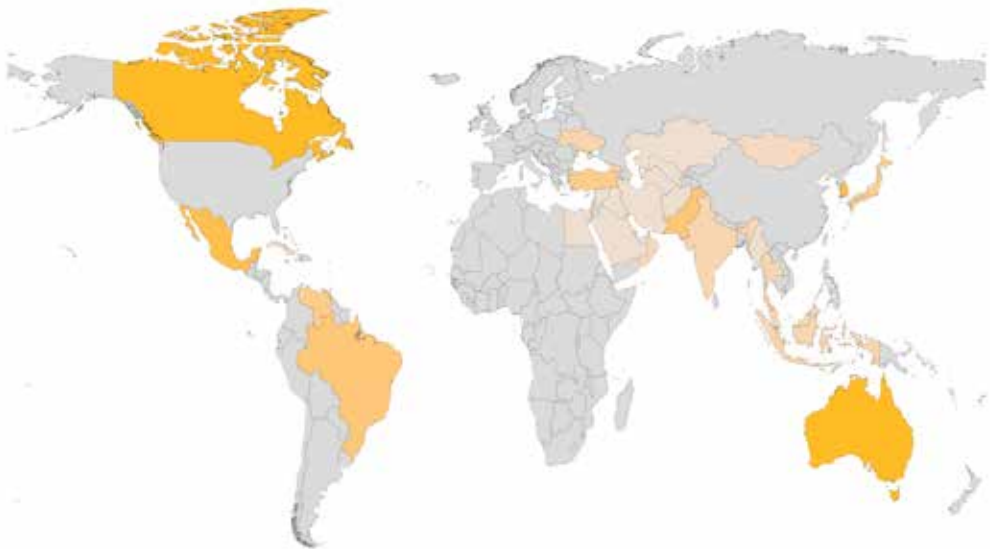
FIGURE 1.4: TIES THAT BIND IN 2012.<sup>38</sup>

A number of interesting shifts in the structural ties between great powers and states with strategic goods can be observed. One is that on average, there is a certain division between those states that gravitate towards the 'Western' great powers and those that have closer ties to Russia and China. Secondly, it appears that the pull of these two blocs – if one can call them such – has only become stronger over time, since states with strategic goods are somewhat more broadly spread in 2012 compared to 1980. Not surprisingly, the exceptions to this general pattern happen to be “shatterbelt” states, those states wedged between Russia and the EU – Georgia and Ukraine – as well as between American and Chinese interests – Pakistan. With respect to Georgia and Ukraine, their relatively strong integration with both great powers is striking, and goes a long way to explaining why they vacillate so dramatically between the EU and Russia. At present, Russia's seizing of Crimea and actions in eastern Ukraine have led to serious tension with the EU. Pakistan's unique situation is explained by the fact that it has great strategic importance for both the US (in relation to Afghanistan) and China (outlet to the Indian Ocean and adversary of India).

In general, where the EU and the US are concerned, the striking development is that they have been able to tie some significant free-trade nations to them, notably Canada, Mexico and Australia, thus creating a bit of a chasm between liberal democracies and autocracies or anocracies.<sup>39</sup> Specifically, Turkey has moved towards Europe due to stronger trade relations between the two neighbors since 1995. Something similar can be noted for South Korea, which concluded a trade agreement with the United States.

China made only modest headway in the period 1980-2012 in terms of states with strategic goods moving in its direction. The only significant countries having moved towards Beijing are Iran, Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, Turkmenistan.<sup>40</sup> Russia was able to consolidate its formal ties with Georgia and Ukraine, but saw Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan slowly move towards China. The one exception here is Kazakhstan, which entered into a customs union with Russia in 2010.

The overall trend is that, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, states have become generally more tied to great powers than they were in 1980, when they were more concentrated around the center of the chart, signifying that they were less dependent on any of the great powers.



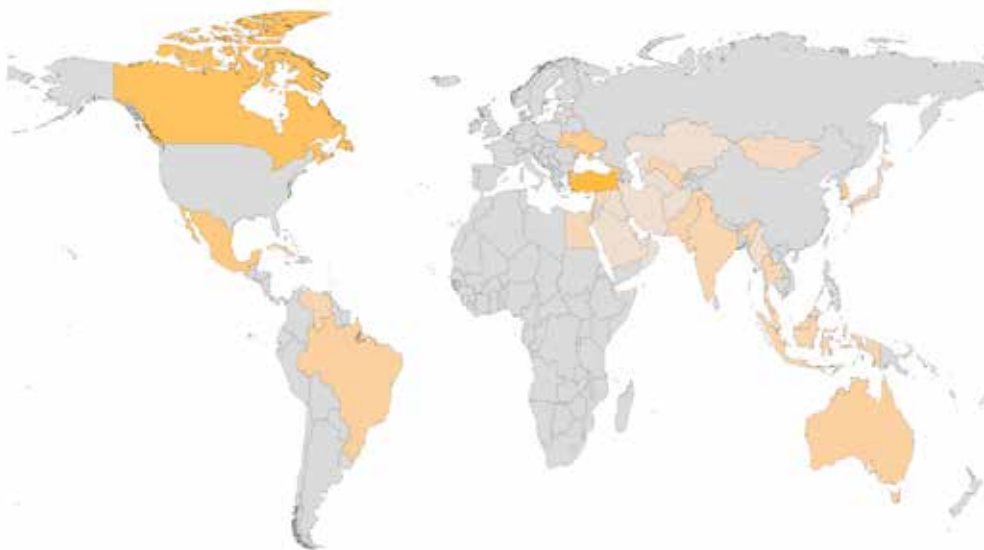
MAP 1.2: TIES THAT BIND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES IN 2012 (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF TIES)

Standing out for the US are the ties with its North American partners as well as with Australia (see Map 1.2). The most important structural binding factor for the US is shared regime type. As far as countries in volatile regions are concerned, the ties with Pakistan, Turkey and Japan look to be particularly important. The first two are going through a phase of drift whereby all great powers can gain or lose critical influence. In Pakistan, overall influence between the great powers is quite evenly balanced. For Japan, building tension with China could create a volatile situation.



MAP 1.3 TIES THAT BIND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RUSSIA IN 2012 (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF TIES)

Russia has particularly strong ties with former Soviet satellite states (see Map 1.3). The fact that many states in the Middle East happen to be autocracies or anocracies gives Russia a small edge over the EU and the US. Concretely, Russia (and China) have explicitly set up cooperation structures to align partner countries, with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as the most conspicuous example. In general, Russia tends to emphasize military cooperation in order to forge ties with states with strategic goods, as it lacks both economic clout and soft power instruments. However, it is seeking to expand its regional economic clout as well through the Eurasian Union – a regional economic agreement – which in some ways is another attempt on the part of Russia to tie various former satellite states closer to it.



MAP 1.4 TIES THAT BIND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EUROPE IN 2012 (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF TIES)

Europe's strongest relationships based on structural ties are with Canada, Ukraine and Turkey (see Map 1.4.) Polity type is giving the EU an edge when it comes to countries such as India and Japan. Unfortunately however for the EU, its overall links with the Middle East and Central Asia look to be relatively weak (except for Syria and Israel). In Central Asia, it has to cede ground to Russia and to China in particular.





MAP 1.5 TIES THAT BIND FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHINA IN 2012 (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF TIES)

China has its strongest ties with Central Asia, which are built on several factors; military agreements and polity type in particular. Overall, Chinese ties with East Asian nations such as South Korea, Japan and Indonesia look to be weaker (see Map 1.5). China's solid structural ties with countries such as Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran gives it some crucial strategic pathways towards the Arabian sea and oil supplies in the Middle East. In some years from now, this could mean that the existing maritime silk road through the seas of Southeast Asia could be complemented by a veritable terrestrial silk road running through central Asia.

### **Relationships that Flow**

Under relationships that flow, we look at dynamic factors that change year-by-year. Inherently, there is more fluidity in relationships that flow, which are not necessarily bound to existing formal ties. This is not to say of course that ties that bind do not matter. Indeed, countries are more likely for instance to engage in arms sales if they are members of a military alliance, and trade volumes are likely larger for countries that are part of an economic bloc than those that are not.

To measure relationships that flow between great powers and states with strategic goods, we add up the scores of the relationships that flow across the three dimensions (military, economic, ideational). The scoring is outlined in Table 1.4.<sup>41</sup> We then again

plot states with strategic goods on a distance chart in relation to the great powers on the basis of their association score and compare changes in the association over time (1980, 1995 and 2012).<sup>42</sup>

DIMENSION	PROXIES	SOURCES	DEFINITIONS	SCALING
MILITARY	Arms Transfers	SIPRI Arms Transfers database	Number of purchases of military arms and equipment	Arms imports from Great Power to State divided by All Arms Imports State. Normalized with 0 as minimum and 1 as maximum, scale 0-1.
ECONOMIC	Commodities Trade	United Nations COMTRADE database	Total volume of commodities trade between states	Commodities exports & imports to/from Great Power from/to State divided by Total Volume Commodities Trade State. Normalized with 0 as minimum and 0.5 as maximum, scale 0-1.
IDEATIONAL	Media discourse	Global Database of Events in Language & Tone (GDELT)	(Discursive) events between states, mined from over a billion news stories	(Positive discursive events between GP and State minus Negative discursive events between GP and State) divided by Total positive discursive events of State. Normalized with 0 as minimum and 0.25 as maximum, scale 0-1.

TABLE 1.4: RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW<sup>43</sup>

There has been a significant evolution over time in relations between great powers and states with strategic goods. In the past 30-some years, the US has been able to largely consolidate its relations with key states with strategic goods. The EU saw its overall relative influence dwindle, although it is still in the lead. Over the same period, Russia has been stagnant and China rising. But these trends have not necessarily translated into strategic states more firmly aligning with the Western powers, the EU and the US (see Figure 1.6, Figure 1.7 and Figure 1.8). In fact, more states have moved or are increasingly moving into a pivoting position, as is illustrated in figure 1.5 by the lines gradually converging over time. In this respect, the declining influence of the EU is reflected in the fact that countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey moved away from Europe. The most poignant development however is the rise of China, which is mostly because it has dramatically increased its trade volumes with several states with strategic goods, in particular some close neighbors in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and, to a lesser extent, the Middle East.

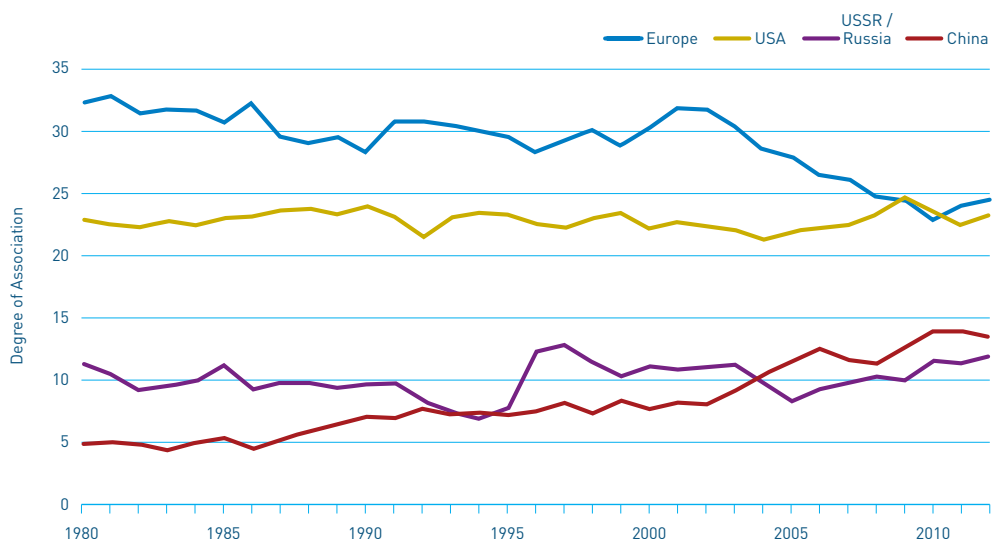


FIGURE 1.5: DEGREE OF ASSOCIATION OF THE GREAT POWERS WITH STATES WITH STRATEGIC GOODS.<sup>44</sup>

In various respects, relationships that flow provide a different picture of the associations between great powers and states with strategic goods compared with the ties that bind. The first is that, compared to 2012, China's relationships that flow look to be in poorer shape than its ties that bind. For instance, whereas under ties that bind, countries such as Singapore, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Oman and Turkmenistan are relatively close to Beijing, under relationships that flow, these countries are decisively oriented towards the EU and the US, with the exception of Turkmenistan, which is closer to Russia. The same difference between these two perspectives applies to Russia, albeit to a lesser extent. For instance, under ties that bind, Russia has relatively strong connections with countries such as Egypt, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and – very significantly – Georgia and Ukraine. However, looking at relationships that flow, all of these countries happen to be closer to the EU and the US than to Russia, the exception being Ukraine, which is only somewhat closer to the EU in this regard. Conversely, several strategic states happen to be closer to Russia on the basis of relationships that flow than ties that bind. Significantly, these include India, Indonesia and Syria.

Multiple states with strategic goods underwent a significant evolution in their relationships that flow with the great powers between 1980 and 2012. The most significant pivoted states include Georgia, which moved resolutely away from Russia towards the EU and the US, as well as Afghanistan, which pivoted from Russia towards the United States. Other states, such as Egypt and Turkey, have remained fairly stable in their relations with both the EU and the US. A significant pivot away

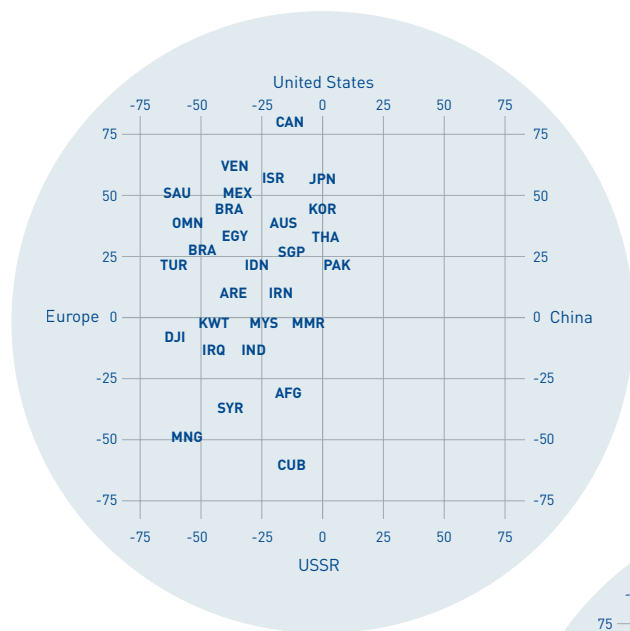


FIGURE 1.6: RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 1980.<sup>45</sup>

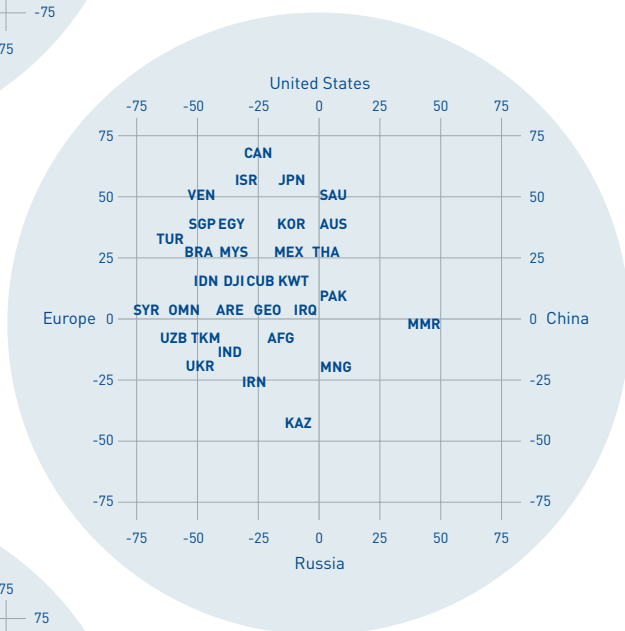


FIGURE 1.7: RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 1995.<sup>46</sup>

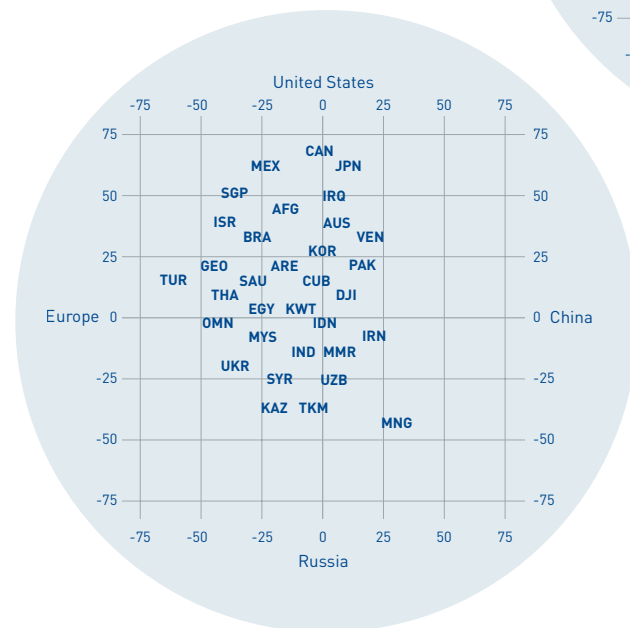
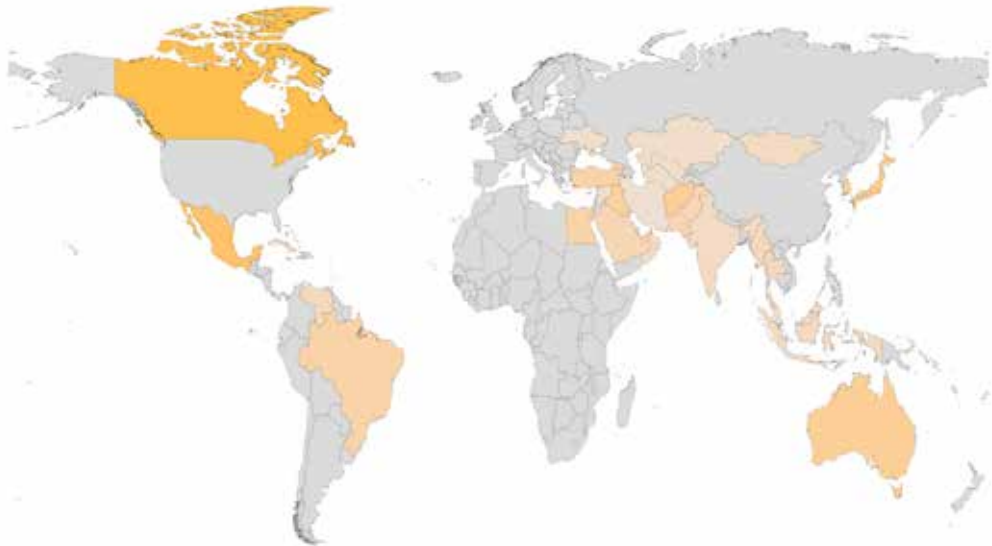


FIGURE 1.8: RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 2012.<sup>47</sup>

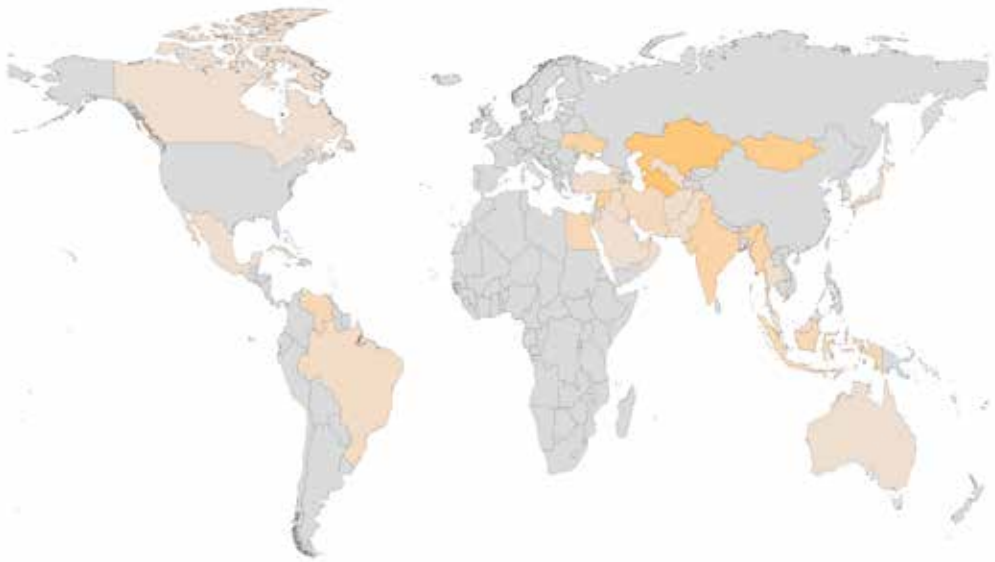
from the Western great powers was made by Iran, whereby it aligned itself first with Russia, and more towards China in particular.

For each of the great powers, spheres of interest can be illustrated on the basis of relationships that flow in 2012 indicating the strength of bilateral association with each of the states with strategic goods.



MAP 1.6 RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 2012 FOR THE US (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF RELATIONS)

For the United States, its strong ties with NAFTA counterparts stand out (see Map 1.6). Overseas, American relations with Iraq (despite its withdrawal towards the end of 2011) and Afghanistan catch the eye in the greater Middle East region, as do its relationships with Egypt and Israel, both of which owe much to arms transfers. Otherwise, the US enjoys strong relations with Japan and Australia, confirming the solidity of their respective associations. In some respects, the US has an opportunity to make significant strides when it comes to countries such as India and Indonesia. The two south Asian giants, both among the largest economies and democracies in the world, prove to be studiously non-aligned. However, the game changer from the American perspective would be Iran. A change of government in Tehran could not only lead to vastly improved relations with the US, but also give it a solid foothold at the crossroads of the Middle East and Central Asia, in particular in view of its relatively strong ties with Iraq and Afghanistan.



MAP 1.7 RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 2012 FOR RUSSIA (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF RELATIONS)

Russia enjoys singularly strong relations with the former Soviet satellite states (see Map 1.7). For countries such as Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan, this is a clear reflection of the comparably strong ties that bind. However, relations with countries such as Ukraine and Georgia are much more ambivalent, in the sense that on the basis of relationships that flow, they are further removed from Russia than one would expect. Indeed, Georgia has effectively pivoted away altogether. However, beyond the former Soviet sphere, Russia has managed to create relatively strong relations with both India and Indonesia, much of it based on arms transfers.



MAP 1.8 RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 2012 FOR THE EU (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF RELATIONS)

For the EU, no clear pattern of relations with states with strategic goods emerges in the sense that its relations with immediate neighbors are not stronger than those in, say, South America or Asia (see Map 1.8). At present, the states tied most closely to the EU on the basis of trade and verbal cooperation are Turkey, Oman and Israel. However, the even spread of relationships that flow also gives the EU an edge in other states. For instance, the EU is the strongest partner with Malaysia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Georgia, in spite of the fact that its ties that bind to these countries are on average weaker.



MAP 1.9 RELATIONSHIPS THAT FLOW IN 2012 FOR CHINA (COLOR INTENSITY = STRENGTH OF RELATIONS)

China's relationships that flow are the weakest of all the great powers, and the few countries with which it does enjoy decent relations all happen to be neighboring countries with the exception of Iran (see Map 1.9). This demonstrates that in spite of the strong forays of China beyond its own neighborhood, it is yet to enjoy strong trade relations and verbal cooperation with countries such as Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Australia. However, there are many indications that China is on its way to achieve exactly that, and it is thus likely that China will soon be catching up with the EU and the US in forging solid relations with states with strategic goods across the world.

To conclude, trade ties between Europe and strategic states in Latin America appear to be stronger than one would think when looking only at ties that bind. Secondly, in Asia ties that bind appear to be a rather good reflection of where goods are being traded between states with strategic goods and the great powers, in particular where Russia and China are concerned. Taken together, a comparison of ties that bind and the relationships that flow perspectives shows that while on average, the influence of the great powers in the states with strategic goods is fairly evenly balanced in terms of formal ties, when it comes to exchange of goods and verbal cooperation, the Western powers clearly have an edge – and indeed, have enjoyed such an edge ever since 1980.



The changes in great power-strategic state relations harness a variety of security implications, which are elaborated upon in section 1.5. For the Western great powers, while they still have the upper hand, their combined influence and ability to maintain strong ties with the identified strategic states has diminished. At the same time, their loss of influence has not necessarily translated into a commensurate increase in influence on the part of Russia and China. This shows that there is not a zero-sum dynamic at work here, but that strategic states likely benefit from each other's growth and that of emerging economies across Africa and South America in particular. In all, it can be concluded that in spite of the rhetoric about the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia, the US and the EU remain in the strongest position in terms of relations with key states with strategic goods. Even if some of them, such as Egypt and Indonesia, have moved into overlapping spheres of influence, the fact that Russia and China have – historically speaking – been able to entice few states with strategic goods to their side on the basis of good trade or verbal relations bodes well for the Western powers.

### From States with Strategic Goods to Pivot States

Having established the most important countries in terms of possessing strategic goods, we now turn to examining the different kinds of behaviors that states with strategic goods can make in their associations with multiple great powers. When states with strategic goods are caught in overlapping spheres of interest of great powers, they have a greater likelihood of becoming a source of friction between great powers. Both deductively (on the basis of alliance literature) and inductively (on the basis of our data) we distilled four archetypes of association which describe the behavior of strategic states in their relations with great powers over the past thirty years. These four behaviors are *aligning & distancing*, *pivoting*, *pivoted*, and *non-aligned*. (see Figure 1.9)

*Aligning & distancing* refers to strategic states that are predominantly aligned with one great power. One possibility would be for these states to move closer to (aligning) or further away from (distancing) a great power without necessarily approaching another great power. Because in terms of security implications, alignment with either the EU or US does not make a lot of difference in practice, there are numerous states with strategic goods which we consider to be effectively aligned with both of the Western great powers.

*Pivoting* can refer to a range of situations, all of which have in common that they concern a state with strategic goods which is not clearly aligned (anymore) with any

one great power, and is moving, or being drawn, into the sphere(s) of influence of another great power (or multiple great powers). This makes a state with strategic goods a pivot state. In this situation, a pivot state might remain in overlapping spheres of influence for an indefinite period, or a pivot state might be moving into the sphere of one great power in particular.

*Pivoted* means that a pivot state has completely transitioned from the sphere of interest of one great power into that of another. To ensure that this category is topical, only pivots that have been completed in the last five years are considered. Hence, pivots that might have occurred in the wake of the end of the Cold War are not considered as such. Finally, in considering the pivoting and pivoted category, little to no emphasis is put on possible pivots between the EU and the US, since for a number of countries, such pivots are rather meaningless because the EU and the US are as a rule not in direct competition in the same way that they are in competition with China and Russia.

Finally, *non-aligned* corresponds – as implied in the term – with a situation in which the strategic state cannot be considered to be associated with any great power. For our purposes, India is the only country in this category.

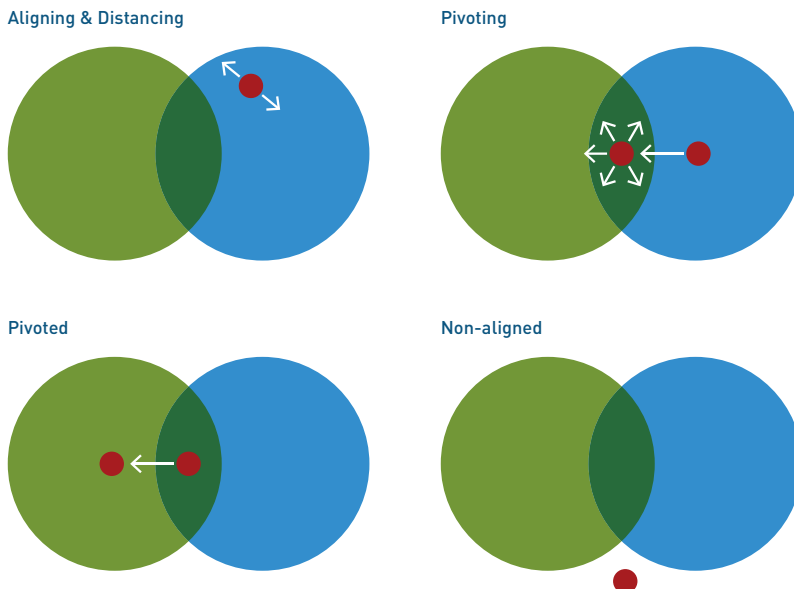


FIGURE 1.9: ASSOCIATION AND BEHAVIOR

On the basis of our dataset of relationships that flow between states with strategic goods and great powers, we subdivide these states into one of these four categories (see Table 1.5). We are particularly interested in those states in the pivoting and the pivoted categories, which together make up our list of pivot states.

ALIGNED	PIVOTING	PIVOTED	NON-ALIGNED
	Afghanistan		
	Australia		
	Cuba		
	Djibouti		
	Egypt		
	Indonesia		
Brazil	Iran		
Canada	Kazakhstan		
Israel	Kuwait		
Japan	Myanmar	Georgia	India
Mexico	Mongolia	Iraq	
Malaysia	Oman		
Singapore	Pakistan		
South Korea	Saudi Arabia		
Turkmenistan	Syria		
Turkey	Thailand		
	Ukraine		
	Uzbekistan		
	Venezuela		
	United Arab Emirates		

TABLE 1.5: STATES WITH STRATEGIC GOODS AND BEHAVIOR

Some interesting patterns emerge here. In the aligned category, we find a good number of politically stable strategic states which have not been involved in a long-term pivoting process. Prime examples include Brazil, Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Singapore and South Korea – all of which, incidentally, maintain solid ties with the US. However, this is not a reason for complacency on the part of the US, given that China in particular is making significant economic inroads in a number of these countries. Because of the stability of these aligned countries (both in terms of domestic politics and their international relations), the security implications associated with these

countries are generally limited. In fact, countries such as Canada, Brazil, Singapore and even Turkey have frequently sought to play the role of middling powers in international conflicts. Turkey finds itself in this category due to the fact that in spite of its generally different religious orientation, it is still closely wedded to the Western great powers. Given the turmoil in the Middle East, Turkey as a member of NATO is still among the more stable countries in the region, even if it is slowly leaning towards China in some respects.<sup>48</sup>

The countries in the 'pivoting' category are very diverse and are often confronted with political and economic volatility at home, affecting great power interests. The reasons why these countries are pivoting are manifold. Countries such as Afghanistan, Egypt, and Syria find themselves engulfed in conflict or suffer from severe political instability. Other countries that are important for economic reasons such as Australia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are pivoting because the great powers seek access to their natural resources.

Some countries have begun to function as a pivot as a result of their strategic location (think of Myanmar, Oman and Uzbekistan). Others function as a pivot also in ideological terms, examples being Cuba, Iran and Ukraine. In practice, countries can be pivoting for multiple reasons. For instance, Ukraine is not only experiencing a civilizational conflict, but is also subject of great power interest for economic and military-strategic reasons. What is more, there is no uniform way of pivoting. For instance, while Afghanistan has been in pivoting mode for several years, a country like Indonesia shows convergence of interests of all great powers, and is thus unlikely to move in any particular direction for some time to come.

The only two countries that have made a pivot from one great power towards another are Georgia (from Russia towards 'the West', i.e. the US and the EU) and Iraq, which in recent years completed a pivot from Russia towards the US. This latter pivot did evidently not occur at the country's own volition, as the country had been invaded in 2003 and hosted a large presence of US forces on its territory until the end of 2011.

The only truly non-aligned – though still coveted – country is India, which has studiously steered a neutral course between the great powers. While overtly, its relations with Russia remain very cordial; with China very tense; and those with the US and the EU rather lukewarm; in reality it maintains solid ties with all four. Due to its size and given that it was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, India is not likely to choose to align itself with any of the current great powers anytime soon. As a result, it

is in a category of its own. In fact, it is more likely that in the near future, India will itself graduate to the category of great powers, and tie pivot states around it, beginning with some key states around the wider Indian Ocean and in Central Asia.

#### 1.4 Caught in the Middle: Pivot States by Region

Distinguishing those strategic states that are pivoting or have pivoted from those states that are firmly aligned or non-aligned, yields the following picture of pivot states in the contemporary international system (see Map 1.10).



MAP 1.10 PIVOT STATES IN THE CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The 22 pivot states in our set – i.e., those states that possess strategic goods and are caught in overlapping spheres of influence – are spread out geographically in clusters throughout the system. There are five principal zones of pivot clusters: the Caribbean (Venezuela and Cuba); Europe's Eastern Borders (Ukraine and Georgia); the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Oman and Djibouti); Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mongolia); and South East Asia (Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia). Below we describe how these pivot states are wedged in between different spheres of influence of great powers and assess potential security risks.

## The Caribbean

**Cuba** is pivoting, although its pivot direction remains unclear. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba made the quickest pivot in our dataset, when cooperation with Russia fell to record lows, whilst association with Europe jumped considerably. Prior to 1990, the Russian (Soviet)-Cuban relationship was based mostly on high levels of arms transfers. Interestingly, none of the superpowers has engaged in arms transfers to Cuba since the early 1990s. The EU has strong trade ties to the Caribbean island yet prospects of thawing of the US-Cuban relationship should not be ruled out at this point. Moreover, China is ascending. Despite Xi Jinping's early snub of Cuba by not visiting the island on his inaugural Caribbean tour, China is increasingly cultivating closer relations with Cuba, principally in the area of trade. In due time, the US might then face another competitor establishing a strategic foothold in the region, as was the case with the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Nevertheless, this is not likely to happen in the near future.

Whereas **Venezuela** was aligned with both the US and Europe as key partners between 1980 and 2000, it has moved towards a pivoting position in recent years and is cultivating relationships with all four great powers. The US relationship has been based mainly on trade as Venezuela is one of the key oil suppliers to the US. The Russian relationship is rooted in arms trade. Cooperation with the Chinese has increased since the mid-2000s, and is comprised partly of trade, and partly of arms transfers. Venezuela holds the largest proven oil reserves in the world, ahead of Saudi Arabia, and more than Iran and Iraq combined. Under the banner of the 'Bolivarian revolution', Venezuela and its late leader Hugo Chavez played a major role in mobilizing anti-American sentiment in Latin America. Chavez' successor is continuing this foreign policy course. In spite of the rhetoric, Washington remains Caracas' most important partner, ahead of Russia and China. However, recent rioting as a result of discontent over the government's socio-economic policies portends further instability in the coming years, possibly leading to regime change.

## The European Periphery

**Ukraine** is pivoting. In the wake of the Crimea Crisis and major political and social instability in the capital and the east of the country, its overall trajectory remains very uncertain. Its historic ties with Russia are increasingly matched by newly established ties with Europe, both mainly based on trade. The US and China have little material cooperation with the country. The tug-of-war between the EU and Russia has dominated Ukrainian politics since the 2004 Orange revolution. In the first decade of the 2000s, gas deliveries to Ukraine were cut off no less than three times by Russia

for several weeks at a time, leaving large swathes of Eastern Europe with a lack of energy. Tensions flared up in 2013 after President Yanukovych delayed signing a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU in favor of a large loan from Russia. Meanwhile, Russia wants Ukraine to join its Eurasian Union. Ukraine is currently being torn by different centrifugal forces, directed towards Europe and Russia. The popular revolution that ousted President Yanukovych in the first quarter of 2014 was followed by a silent takeover of Crimea by Russia and the destabilizing of regions in eastern Ukraine. The current crisis vividly illustrates the security risks associated with pivot states whose relations with great powers are in greatly in flux.

**Georgia** has pivoted in a dramatic fashion from Russia to the West. A former Soviet Republic, Georgia traditionally lay within Russia's sphere of interest with strong historic ties between the two states. Since the early 2000s Georgia has 'looked to the West' and set out on a path towards democracy. In 2008 Georgia fought a brief war with Russia which, despite close cooperation between Georgian and Western militaries, did not draw other great powers into the conflict. Earlier that same year, NATO had promised that Georgia would become a member of the alliance once it would meet the accession criteria. Following the war, cooperation with Russia has all but evaporated. Meanwhile, Russia continues to deploy forces in the Georgian breakaway territories South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgia is principally considered to be important for ideational reasons, and is a key example of how pivot states in overlapping spheres of influence can strain great power relations.

### The Middle East

**Egypt** has had a longstanding association with the United States, mostly grounded in military relations. This association has been slowly changing since the mid-2000s, with Russia recently stepping up its efforts to cultivate closer ties with Egypt through arms trade. Historically, Egypt has occupied a leadership position in the Middle East, particularly in the establishment of pan-Arabism, in Arab attitudes towards Israel and more recently also in the Arab Spring. One former US secretary of state aptly underlined Egypt's centrality to the Middle East, saying there can be *"no war without Egypt and no peace without Syria"*.<sup>49</sup> The current domestic instability means that the country is less able to play its traditional leadership role in the region. However, its strategic significance has not diminished, and the eventual political settlement that will transpire will have important repercussions for the region and great power relations alike.

While **Syria's** historically strong relations with the EU have been waning, Russia is emerging as its key great power backer. The Syrian-Russian relationship is mainly based on arms transfers. The Syrian port of Tartus is Russia's sole outlet to the Mediterranean Sea. The bloody civil war that fractured Syria since 2011 is partly fuelled by arms transfers from the great powers, with Russia supplying weapons to the government, and Europe and the US (albeit reluctantly and in a very limited way) providing weapons to some oppositional factions. Regional players such as Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia also play a significant role in this regard. The inability of these powers to settle on a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict in this pivot state is one of the key factors prolonging the conflict. Now in its third year, it has turned the country into a training ground for European jihadists who travel to Syria to join the fight against the Assad regime. If they manage to return alive to their home countries, these radicalized and traumatized jihadists, endowed with skills honed in a deadly conflict, can pose a domestic security risk to various European countries. Further spreading of the Syrian conflict to other countries of the Middle East, including Lebanon, Turkey, and Northern Iraq, can definitely not be ruled out at this moment.

**Iraq** has pivoted to the United States following the latter's invasion of the country. During the 1980s the country maintained equal trade relations with the US, Europe and Russia. After the US invasion of 2003, Iraq became firmly entrenched in the American camp. The country was initially seen in some circles as a vital strategic partner for the West, as it is large and oil-rich, and based in a region of growing instability. Yet, the country is in real danger of breaking apart: persistent ethnic and religious tensions could lead to a *de facto* and *de jure* tripartite division of Iraq. The Kurds have already effectively carved out the northern part of the country. In the south and center of the country, Iran, through its investments in the Shiite parts of the country, is seeking to consolidate its influence in Iraq to the point where it can determine the outcome of key strategic decisions.

**Iran** has maintained relations in one form or another with all the great powers except with the United States. The toppling of Saddam Hussein tilted the regional balance of power in the Middle East in a favorable direction for Iran. For military equipment, Iran depends largely on Russia and China. Historically, it used to trade much with Europe, but the economic embargo implemented in the middle of the 2000s significantly dented trade volumes. In recent years, great powers have been tightening the screws and expanding economic sanctions in order to pressure Iran's regime to give up its nuclear weapon program. Iran, meanwhile, is actively shaping its immediate security environment. Amongst other things it has been providing weapons to Hezbollah in



Lebanon; steering the policies of Shiite factions in Iraq; and staunchly supporting Assad's regime both before and after the start of Syria's civil war. The broader ideological schism between Shiites and Sunnis continues to shape relations with Iran's arch-nemesis across the Gulf, Saudi Arabia. Any solution to the conflict in Syria and the fragile situation in Lebanon, runs, as they say, through Tehran. Iran's ideological orientation and its future associations therefore have much broader ramifications. Meanwhile, if recent progress in the nuclear talks would lead to a change of tack in Tehran, this could constitute the largest strategic game changer in the Middle East since the 1979 revolution.

**Kuwait** is pivoting, albeit between the US and the EU. Following the 1990-91 Gulf War, Kuwait became aligned with the US. Kuwait's relationship with the US is based on arms transfers as well as trade – as are its relations with the EU. Kuwait is the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest oil producer, and the third largest within OPEC. With the end of the war in Iraq, Kuwait's strategic importance as supply base for American troops greatly diminished. Today, Kuwait plays a modest but important role in channeling funds towards various rebel groups engaged in the Syrian civil war.

**Saudi Arabia** has kept its close association ties with the US and Europe, but has been moving significantly closer towards China and Russia as well. Both Europe and the US account for the lion's share of the arms supply to Saudi Arabia, but both also have seen shares of trade with Saudi Arabia fall. Since 2011, Saudi Arabia has been voicing its great displeasure with US policies vis-à-vis Egypt, Syria and Iran, which culminated in its declining to take up its seat in the UN Security Council. It has been cultivating ties with Europe (France) and China, in order to gain more leverage and freedom of maneuver from its powerful ally. Whether this is more than talk remains to be seen. It is noteworthy though that in 2010 China became the largest oil importer from Saudi Arabia while in 2013 the US overtook Saudi Arabia as the largest oil producer in the world. On the basis of its sheer size, wealth and role as custodian of the two holiest sites in Islam, Saudi Arabia is a key security actor in the region. It disperses massive funds to (Sunni) armed groups in Syria and spearheads the anti-Iran coalition also through its leadership in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia, even more so than other states in the region, will be an indispensable actor in how the regional fabric will develop.

The **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) are pivoting. Although they have remained firmly associated with the West, the UAE have shifted from Europe towards the US, particularly in the military dimension. Historically, they used to trade heavily with

Europe, but as of recent, these ties have decreased significantly in strength. Nonetheless, the country remains a key energy provider to the world economy, and is among the top-5 petroleum exporters. Meanwhile, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are seeking to become the Singapore of the Middle East as a transit hub and a center for business. At the ideational front, the UAE seek to exert influence beyond their borders, vying for influence with Qatar and Bahrain in regional conflicts, for instance through the financing of rebel groups in Syria.<sup>50</sup>

**Oman** has traditionally enjoyed close ties with Europe. These ties have waned considerably, with the US and China increasing cooperation over the past decade. The rise of China is visible in ever closer trade relations. Oman is geo-strategically important as it is located across from Iran on the Strait of Hormuz, where as much as 20% of the world's oil passes. The country has moderate oil reserves, though nowhere near as high as its neighbors on the Arab peninsula. Diplomatically, the country punches above its weight, also because of its predominantly neutralist stance. In addition, the country has been very stable throughout the reign of Sultan Qaboos (since 1970), with only minor protests occurring in 2011. Just as in the case of the UAE, no acute international security risks are associated with Oman, but the country will be of key importance both for military-strategic and economic reasons.

**Djibouti**, as a former French colony, has been aligned with Europe ever since it became independent, but in recent years has been in pivoting mode as EU influence has steadily declined. The decline of EU influence can principally be attributed to declining trade flows. Strategically, Djibouti is significant because of its location on the edge of the Bab el-Mandeb strait. It also hosts a major US military basis at Camp Lemonnier, now part of US AFRICOM. Chinese influence in Djibouti remains modest, and is mainly driven by increasing trade.

## Central Asia

**Kazakhstan** is aligned with Russia but moving towards a pivoting position; in terms of economic relationships that flow it is becoming less dependent on Russia. The ascent of Europe is noteworthy, especially in economic terms, as it is Kazakhstan's single largest trade partner. Moscow, however, remains the country's principal arms supplier and the 2010 customs union may reverse this economic trend. Similarly, the slight rise in Chinese influence is interesting, as Kazakhstan together with Mongolia are the only states bordering both China and Russia. At present, almost half of its imports come from China. Indeed, Beijing is investing heavily in the country.<sup>51</sup> Kazakhstan controls large oil reserves. Only recently, Kazakhstan opened up new railways connecting

China and Europe, fuelling much talk about reviving the ancient Silk Road.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, Russia is trying to tie the country into a full-fledged economic union (the Eurasian Union) to replace the current customs union. Kazakhstan is also a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Given its position in Mackinders heartland, Astana also wants to play a mediating role in promoting peaceful relations in Central Asia. However, it is also possible that Kazakhstan will be a lynchpin for future economic antagonism between the great powers.

**Uzbekistan** is pivoting but its overall trajectory remains unclear. A former Republic of the USSR, it has strong historic ties to Russia. However, Uzbek-Russian relations have waned in recent years, with Europe and China taking over from Russia as Uzbekistan's most important trade partners. Uzbekistan was of military-strategic value to the US Operation Enduring Freedom in the early years of the Afghan conflict, as the US leased part of the Karshi-Khanabad air base in the south of the country. Following American criticism of the Uzbek authorities concerning the Andijan massacres, the US was forced by president Karimov to close this base. Nonetheless, Uzbekistan continued to play a role in the Afghan conflict as part of the Northern Distribution Network improving supply routes into Afghanistan. In 2012, the country left the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Whether this signals a shift towards the EU and US remains to be seen, since it continues to be a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

**Afghanistan** pivoted towards the United States, both militarily and diplomatically as a result of the 2001 invasion. Yet it has no major trade relations with the US. The graveyard of nations, Afghanistan continues to play a key role in international affairs, this time because its territory was used by terrorist organization al-Qaeda. Its geographical position as potential transit country for fossil fuels from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean gives it added importance. However, plans for TAPI pipeline, that was to run from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India, have been shelved for now. At present, the country's most important trade partners are the US and the EU. China has only made a little headway in recent years. Its strategic importance is underlined by the fact that China, the US, India, Pakistan and Iran all have a stake in the eventual outcome of the domestic conflict, and because of the potential of Afghanistan to become an alternative Land Line of Communication.

**Pakistan** is pivoting, with its overall trajectory unclear. It has maintained delicate relationships with Europe, the US, and China, each fluctuating but overall showing similar flows. There is practically no Pakistan-Russia relationship to speak of. Pakistan's

critical security role derives from a variety of factors. A nuclear power, the country has been politically very unstable for decades, veering back and forth between democracy and dictatorship. In addition to being subject to persistent intrastate conflict, elements within the state's security services are reported to cooperate with religiously extremist factions, both in and outside its own borders. Pakistan has also been a known proliferator of nuclear weapon technologies. Its territorial integrity has been at stake for decades, in particular in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, in the north-western territory and in Kashmir. In the latter, Pakistan has been engaged in a military standoff with neighboring India, also a nuclear weapon state, for over half a century now. At present, the country is subject of American drone strikes against al-Qaeda and Taliban figures, with or without the connivance of the local authorities. Because of its position wedged between Afghanistan and India, as well as its Indian Ocean coastline, Pakistan will continue to be a lynchpin state both for the US and for China.

**Mongolia** is pivoting between China to Russia. Economically, Mongolia has developed strong trade ties with China, while arms trade keeps helps to solidify relations with Russia. Mongolia's strategic importance for Russia and China lies in that it has important coal and gold deposits, as well as some crude oil. In addition, Mongolia's strategic location between Russia and China makes it a buffer state between these two great powers.

### South East Asia

**Myanmar** is pivoting. For a very long time the country was closed off to the West. It depended almost entirely on China for military equipment and economic commodities. In recent years, the military government has started to open up the country, toying with democratic principles and engaging in international business, in addition to releasing the government's long-time critic and nemesis, Aung Sang Suu Kyi. While China remains a key partner, levels of cooperation with Russia, Europe and the US are indubitably rising. The past five years have seen some of the highest arms transfers between Russia and Myanmar. In spite of Chinese concerns over ethnic tension in northern border areas of Myanmar, Beijing remains the dominant economic player in the country. Rendering Myanmar with additional geo-strategic importance is its position along the shores of the Indian Ocean, coveted especially by China as a way to bypass the Malacca Straits. In these regards, Myanmar plays a very important role in the China-India strategic relationship. This, together with its future political trajectory, will ensure that Myanmar will be an important pivot state in the years to come.

**Thailand** has slowly been pivoting away from the West towards China since the late 1990s. The most important factor accounting for China's rise is the dramatic increase in trade. Meanwhile, trade flows with Europe have slowly decreased. At present, Thailand's trade portfolio is fairly evenly spread. Yet, Thailand has been moving away from the US on the military front, edging towards the EU and China.<sup>53</sup> Thailand is an active participant in many regional organizations. As such it is a diplomatic actor which is able to exert considerable diplomatic leverage in the nascent regional economic fabric. However, recent domestic political unrest could undermine Thailand's regional leadership position. In general, it could be difficult for Thailand not to get caught up in the regional round of armaments underway at present.

**Indonesia** is pivoting, although its overall trajectory is as of yet uncertain. Until recently it maintained strong links with European countries; however the current trend shows that these are diminishing significantly. There is general consensus that Indonesia today is in a class of emerging powers. Current relations with all four great powers are relatively even, albeit up to 70% of trade is done with Asian countries. Indonesia's core strategic concerns relate to the securing of key sea lanes that cross the archipelago, and resolution of its territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In due time, Indonesia could play a mediating role between China and other ASEAN members. A balancing of military purchases between the EU and Russia and Jakarta's interest in US and Chinese overtures in supplying military wherewithal may indicate that Indonesia is looking to promote a position of non-alignment. Finally, Indonesia plays an important role at the ideational front, as the largest Muslim country in the world, one that overall is seen to present a moderate (and democratic) face of Islam to the world, in contrast with some countries in the Middle East. In recent years, that image has been sullied by domestic Salafist fringe groups. In sum, Indonesia is a pivot state *pur sang*, that in one way or another, will be vital to the future security regional environment.

**Australia** is pivoting from Europe to the US, while its ties with China are steadily increasing. Australia is the only truly 'Western' nation in Asia. Economically, Australia has moved towards Asia, mostly due to raw material exports. In the military security area, Canberra continues to have strong ties with the US. In 2011, the Obama administration decided to station 2500 marines in order to balance China in South-East Asia.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Australia is a member of the 'five eyes' intelligence-sharing coalition, thus sustaining privileged cooperation with the US. In terms of security, Australia has an interest in keeping Sea Lines of Communications through Southeast Asia secure. In that context, it is yet to resolve a maritime dispute with Indonesia and

East-Timor that revolves around potential fossil fuel deposits in the Timor Sea. Because of the ambivalent position of Australia wanting to take advantage of strong economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region but still relying on US security pledges, Australia will continue to play a key 'bridging' role between the United States and China.

## 1.5 Security Implications

Contemporary international relations are shaped by an intricate, and to a certain extent uneasily co-existing mixture of liberal and realist logics. On the one hand, there are many signs pointing towards inexorably growing interdependencies between states that pave the way to prosperity and peace. On the other hand, there are signs that states seem not be able to escape realist logic: they persist in the pursuit for power. States, moreover, are increasingly drawing lines again; lines with respect to whom they talk to, whom they trade with, and whom they defend against.

But in both the liberal and the realist logic, pivot states are the metaphorical pivotal points in the tectonics of international relations. And they are also – in keeping with our metaphor – where countries and interests diverge, converge or overlap. Pivot states and great powers enter into associations that consist of ties that bind and relationships that flow. These associations are the tangible manifestations of spheres of influence of great powers that slowly evolve over time.

For approximately two dozen pivot states, we have tracked how they sit inside, and then shifted from one sphere of influence to another over the past thirty years. We found that pivot states, situated as they are at the seams of the international system, play a very important role in regional and global security and stability. We then gauged various aspects of their role, in the process of which we have unearthed various security implications. Some of these implications are, albeit not always neatly disentangled, rather straightforward since they principally relate to the strategic goods of these pivot states. For example, shifts in the position of pivot states can, amongst other things, affect military staging rights, create new military-strategic perimeters, limit or open up Lines of Communications, and affect energy supply dynamics.

### Shifts in the position of pivot states can:

- affect **military staging rights**. For example, ongoing public outcry against US aerial attacks in Pakistan might prompt if not force the Pakistani Government to prohibit US use of drones in its border territories. Afghanistan is still dragging its feet with regards to concluding US basing agreements. Non-renewal of a status of forces agreement in Iraq prompted a full US withdrawal from the country, completed in 2011.
- create new **military-strategic perimeters**. The pivot of the Baltic States in the 1990s from the remnants of the Soviet Union to Europe and to NATO marked a drastic reconfiguration of the strategic landscape in eastern Europe. The future direction of Ukraine and Syria – as of now still undecided – will seriously affect the makeup of their respective regional environments.
- limit or alternatively open up states' **access to Lines of Communication**. Noteworthy examples here are the Silk Road highways that are currently constructed throughout Central Asia (Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) enabling Chinese access to the oil resources of the Caspian Sea, which in turn will impact the future direction of many of the Middle Eastern States, Ukraine (again) and Indonesia.
- significantly alter the **world's energy supply** dynamics. Saudi Arabia and Venezuela are pivotal players that are currently caught between different spheres of interest.

But beyond these rather straightforward implications, pivot states harness plenty of perils but also plenty of promises which, if understood well, can be usefully leveraged.

A few pivot states energetically mold their immediate security environment pulling considerable weight at the international stage. They challenge existing norms of regional orders and can cause wider ideological ruptures in the system, as for instance Iran has been ever since Khomeini assumed power at the end of the 1970s. But behavioral change can also pave the way to more peaceful and cordial relations between many of the key security actors in the region. Iran's current President Rouhani at times seems to be steering towards such change—certainly in words, if not yet in deeds. Another prominent example is the relationship between Saudi Arabia

and the US, which has recently begun to fray. For decades, the vast civilizational gap between the countries had effectively been denied for the sake of their strategic relationship, but the profound differences in outlook are now emerging as the two countries increasingly differ over strategies to be pursued in Syria and vis-à-vis Iran. Shifts of these pivot states can dramatically upstage the regional balance of power and upset regional peace and stability. Hence, differences in ideological orientation continue to create strategic opportunities which carry a wide range of security ramifications for old and new powers alike.

There are also those states that are actively trying to position themselves as crucial mediators that build bridges and gateways between different great powers or even across perceived civilizational chasms that cleave through the international system. The UAE in the Middle East, Kazakhstan in Central Asia, and Indonesia in South East Asia fulfill or attempt to fulfill such a role in the international system. It is relations with these states that can be cultivated in aiming to affect change beyond the direct bilateral relationship.

Other pivot states are more passively pushed around and pressured into associations with great powers. They are part of 'crush zones' or 'shatterbelts', and are indeed fragile, needy, and occasionally also restless states. As a rule they feature political instability and low levels of social and economic development. Not seldom are they also endowed with plenty of natural resources. From Venezuela to Uzbekistan down to Iraq: they are found scattered throughout the world. Whatever policy aspired for – whether it is the promotion of good governance or the uninterrupted access to their resources – before setting down on any policy path, it is worth asking whose sphere of influence these pivot states belong to.

Intrastate cleavages often divide pivot states. Such cleavages can be religious, ethnic, linguistic or cultural in nature, and more often than not, they are a combination of all of the above. And precisely when these pivot states are caught in the middle, when opposing great powers push and pull in opposite directions, are they torn apart. Hitherto weak centrifugal forces might suddenly become unleashed. Ukraine is currently succumbing to divisive forces, and Iraq is at real risk of falling apart. Needless to say, such intrastate conflicts have fallout effects far beyond their own borders. Great powers can intervene to protect their interests which in turn causes friction in the international system. At the time of writing, the Ukraine crisis is still unfolding. Russian interference in the Crimean peninsula already produced a significant deterioration in relations between Russia, the EU and the US, which will continue to



affect their relations for years to come. Conflict in pivot states caught in overlapping spheres of influence proves in many cases difficult to solve. On top of their active involvement, outside powers are seldom able to reach a mutually satisfactory solution as a result of which conflicts turn into stalemates. Syria is the best contemporary case in point, where the strategic interests of Russia and the US, as well as from regional power Iran, have produced a deadlock with as of now no end in sight.

There is also the risk of abandonment when great powers withdraw from pivot states leaving them behind in not-so-splendid isolation. Before long, as has happened on numerous occasions, the pivot state can come back to haunt us. Afghanistan, for instance, was abandoned in the 1990s only to be used as terrorist staging ground by al-Qaeda and subsequently top the international security agenda following the 9/11 attacks of 2001. The answer is simple: never leave such pivot states to their own devices.

In some cases there is an increased likelihood of great power conflict when pivot states fall victim to great powers encroaching on each others' spheres of influence. Great powers competing over respective spheres of influence, sometimes employ what is commonly called brinksmanship, either to change or alternatively to uphold the status quo. Russia's behavior vis-à-vis Ukraine is an obvious case in point. China's recent proclamation of an air identification defense zone over the East China Sea is another. The current standoff between several countries in the South China Sea, where overlapping sovereignty claims concerning the Paracel and Spratley Islands bring China into collision with Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and other nations, might lead to a larger confrontation, one that also involves the US. Acknowledging the escalatory potential of crises, de-escalation policies need to be deployed both before and during a potential crisis.

Brinksmanship is sometimes also exercised by pivot states themselves. These pivot states can exploit moral hazards and become 'loose pivots' if they behave recklessly while betting on the opposing great power to come to their assistance. Georgia in the run-up to the 2008 war with Russia is a case in point. Georgia had been keen on bolstering ties with the West and was betting on Western assistance in its conflict with Russia. While the latter did not materialize in the end, brinksmanship of pivot states also introduces a real risk of direct or indirect confrontation between great powers. The solution is simple: do not let a loose pivot state pull you into a great conflict.

Beyond touching on various security implications, we have also examined the immediate and diverse security risks that emerge in connection with them, as the bloody civil war in Syria, transnational terrorism in Afghanistan, the continuing standoff in Ukraine or the immediate danger of great power crisis escalation in the Pacific, all demonstrate. But more than this, in our analysis we have also shed light on the different security roles of pivot states in the international system. Some pivot states are spoilers, others are flag bearers. Some are frail vassals, others are weak but surely not meek. Some should be kept at arm's length; others, whether or not in dire straits, should not be abandoned. And so forth. These roles are crucial for understanding how pivot states can, if not necessarily will, shape the security environment. And it is these roles that policymakers should take a closer look at before formulating policies that will shape our security environment.



# ENDNOTES

## WHY ARE PIVOT STATES SO PIVOTAL? THE ROLE OF PIVOT STATES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

- 1 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 34.
- 2 Some observers even declare that we are actually 'winning the war on war'. Others already refer to the 'remnants of war'

- John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Cornell University Press, 2004). Joshua S Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011).
- 3 Frank Bekkers et al., *De toekomst in alle staten: HCSS strategische monitor 2013* (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2013). )
  - 4 Frank W. Wayman, "Bipolarity and War: The Role of Capability Concentration and Alliance Patterns among Major Powers, 1816-1965," *Sage Publications, Ltd.* 21, no. 1 (1984): 61–78. conceptualizes this as polarization
  - 5 Daniel S Geller and J. David Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict*, vol. 58 (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119.
  - 6 This can involve increasing diplomatic advances towards states which were previously strongly aligned with one great power. Indeed, "as its relative power increases, a rising state attempts to change the rules governing the international system, the division of the spheres of influence, and, most important of all, the international distribution of territory." see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24, 34, 187. Gilpin does not further specify relationship between spheres-of-influence and conflict
  - 7 See Daniel S. Geller and David J. Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119.: 'If the capability advantage of the leading state is small or is eroding, other states may choose to attempt to alter the hierarchy. The challenges may be directed against the leading state or lesser states within an increasingly unstable international order. (...) As the international system moves from a high concentration of resources in the leading state toward multipolarity (power diffusion), lower-order conflict among the set of major states will become increasingly probable, due to the weakening of the principal defender of the hierarchy.(...) This suggests that the erosion of the system-level power structure links lower-order wars among major powers to system shaping global wars.'
  - 8 Wars in which great powers is involved greater odds of escalation. John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 110 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Geller and Singer, *Nations at War: A Scientific Study of International Conflict*.
  - 9 H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 436–437..
  - 10 Ibid.
  - 11 Philip L. Kelly, "Escalation of Regional Conflict: Testing the Shatterbelt Concept," *Political Geography Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1986): 163.
  - 12 Ibid.
  - 13 See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Penguin Books, 1996).
  - 14 Ibid.
  - 15 Saul B. Cohen, *Global Geopolitical Change in the Post-Cold War Era*, 1991, 554. An example of lynchpin states in the context of the Cold War were those countries in the "region that spatially fits ambiguously within lines drawn in what Brzezinski and the like-minded call the "East-West struggle". Ibid., 564. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Game Plan: A Geostategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.--Soviet Contest* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).
  - 16 Cohen, *Global Geopolitical Change in the Post-Cold War Era*, 564.
  - 17 Ibid., 554.
  - 18 Cohen, *Global Geopolitical Change in the Post-Cold War Era*, 572.
  - 19 Ibid. : "politically motivated to take the lead in pan-regional activities... Much of a second-order state's strength as a political innovator lies in its ability to export innovations to other second-order powers (and to import others in return)... Second-order powers continually strive for economic, political and military independence from first-order states. While these goals are not fully attainable, independence in one sphere (e.g. technological or economic) may act as a counterweight to dependence in another sphere (e.g. military). Saul B. Cohen, "A New Map of Global Geopolitical Equilibrium: A Developmental Approach," *Political Geography Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1982): 231.
  - 20 Kelly, "Escalation of Regional Conflict: Testing the Shatterbelt Concept," 163.

- 21 Cohen, *Global Geopolitical Change in the Post-Cold War Era*, 564.
- 22 Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2012).
- 23 When used as a noun, it means “the central point, pin, or shaft on which a mechanism turns or oscillates.” And to pivot (verb) is to “turn on or as if on a pivot.” See “Definition of Pivot in English,” *Oxford Dictionaries* (Oxford University Press, n.d.), <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pivot>, last accessed 11 January 2014.
- 24 Jack S Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 10–19.
- 25 Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes Are High Deterrence and Conflict among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 104, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10395596>.
- 26 Some strategic goods are present in all states too some extent. In the cases of military expenditures, foreign direct investment (also as % of GDP) and Resource Rents (also as % of GDP), we scored that a state possessed a strategic good if they ranked in the top 10% of all states.
- 27 Quoted in Parliament, *Hansard Fourth Series* (29-30 Bouverie Street, London: Parliamentary Debates), 1582–83, <http://www.hansard-archiv.parliament.uk/>.
- 28 See Office of the White House Press Secretary, “Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall | The White House,” November 14, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall>.
- 29 Michael Fullilove, “Obama Shows Commitment to Asia,” *The Brookings Institution*, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2009/11/20-obama-asia-fullilove>.
- 30 See Paul Gordon Lauren, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Challenges of Our Time* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2013).
- 31 In Maoz, these three structural factors make up a measure for strategic affinity between a great power and a pivot state. See Zeev Maoz et al., “Structural Equivalence and International Conflict: A Social Networks Analysis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 5 (2006): 1–26. Brian Lai and Dan Reiter, “Democracy, Political Similarity, and International Alliances, 1816-1992,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 2 (2000): 203–27.
- 32 See the extensive literature on the democratic peace theory, e.g. Doyle, Michael W. “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs”. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (Vol. 12, Nos. 3 and 4, 1983); Levy, Jack S., “Domestic politics and war”. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988; Russett, Bruce & Oneal, John R. *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001)
- 33 Paul Hensel and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, “The Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) Project,” accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.paulhensel.org/icow.html>; Douglas Gibler and Meredith R. Sarkees, “Measuring Alliances: The Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Dataset, 1816-2000,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 2 (2004): 211–22; Mark S Copelovitch and Jon C. W. Pevehouse, “Ties That Bind? Preferential Trade Agreements and Exchange Rate Policy Choice,” *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (n.d.): 385–99; Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, “Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2012” (Centre for Systemic Peace, n.d.), <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>; CIA, *The World Factbook*, accessed December 11, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.
- 34 ‘Ties that bind’ associations between great powers and states with strategic goods were calculated as the sum total of the association score in each of the three main dimensions (military, economic and ideational) - which where all scored using a 0-1 scale (see table), with a total (possible) aggregate score falling between 0 and 3.
- 35 States with strategic goods were plotted on the X-axis by subtracting their association score with the EU from their association score with China, and on the Y-axis by subtracting the association score with Russia from their association score with the U.S.
- 36 The country-codes employed are in ISO-3166-1 alpha-3 (based on the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency), and are as follows: “SAU” = Saudi Arabia; “IND” = India; “IRQ” = Iraq; “IRN” = Iran; “EGY” = Egypt; “TUR” = Turkey; “ISR” = Israel; “KAZ” =

Kazakhstan; "MMR" = Myanmar; "UZB" = Uzbekistan; "SYR" = Syria; "BRA" = Brazil; "CAN" = Canada; "GEO" = Georgia; "JSPN" = Japan; "SGP" = Singapore; "KWT" = Kuwait; "OMN" = Oman; "TKM" = Turkmenistan; "MNG" = Mongolia; "VEN" = Venezuela; "ARE" = United Arab Emirates; "MYS" = Malaysia; "IDN" = Indonesia; "AUS" = Australia; "MEX" = Mexico; "UKR" = Ukraine; "CUB" = Cuba; "PAK" = Pakistan; "THA" = Thailand; "AFG" = Afghanistan; "DJI" = Djibouti; "KOR" = Korea, Republic of.

37 See endnote 36.

38 See endnote 36.

39 Anocracies are "are countries whose governments are neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic but, rather, combine an, often, incoherent mix of democratic and autocratic traits and practices." Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Global Report 2011: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility* (Vienna, VA: Center for Systemic Peace, 2011), 9.

40 Most likely, this development has to do with the fact that on average, more pivot states have become democratic in the period between 1980 and 2012, meaning that they were more inclined to move towards the West rather than towards China—or Russia, for that matter.

41 Relationships that flow associations between great powers and states with strategic goods were calculated as a sum total of the association score in each of the three main dimensions (military, economic and ideational). For relationships that flow, each association of a pivot state with a great power was scored on a scale from 0-100 based on their for each dimension, which was normalized through the formula (interdependency score / 3) \* 100. In each of the three dimensions the relationships that flow figures were transformed to a 0-1 scale, with the total (possible) aggregate score falling between 0 and 3.

42 States with strategic goods were plotted on the X-axis by subtracting their association score with the EU from their association score with China, and on the Y-axis by subtracting the association score with Russia from their association score with the U.S.

43 SIPRI, Sipri Arms Transfers Database Trade Register (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013), <http://portal.sipri.org/publications/pages/transfer/trade-register>; United Nations, UN COMTRADE Database. <http://comtrade.un.org/>; Kalev Leetaru, Philip Schrodt, and Patrick Brandt, Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) (Dallas: University of Dallas), accessed December 11, 2013, [gdelt.utdallas.edu](http://gdelt.utdallas.edu), presently available at [gdeltproject.org](http://gdeltproject.org)

44 The 'degree of association' for a given great power and all states with strategic goods in a given year is calculated by taking the average 'relationships that flow' score for that great power with all states with strategic goods in that year.

45 The country-codes employed are in ISO-3166-1 alpha-3 (based on the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency), and are as follows: "SAU" = Saudi Arabia; "IND" = India; "IRQ" = Iraq; "IRN" = Iran; "EGY" = Egypt; "TUR" = Turkey; "ISR" = Israel; "KAZ" = Kazakhstan; "MMR" = Myanmar; "UZB" = Uzbekistan; "SYR" = Syria; "BRA" = Brazil; "CAN" = Canada; "GEO" = Georgia; "JPN" = Japan; "SGP" = Singapore; "KWT" = Kuwait; "OMN" = Oman; "TKM" = Turkmenistan; "MNG" = Mongolia; "VEN" = Venezuela; "ARE" = United Arab Emirates; "MYS" = Malaysia; "IDN" = Indonesia; "AUS" = Australia; "MEX" = Mexico; "UKR" = Ukraine; "CUB" = Cuba; "PAK" = Pakistan; "THA" = Thailand; "AFG" = Afghanistan; "DJI" = Djibouti; "KOR" = Korea, Republic of.

46 See endnote 45

47 See endnote 45.

48 See e.g. Edward Wong and Nicola Clark, "China's Arms Industry Makes Global Inroads," *The New York Times*, October 20, 2013, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/21/world/asia/chinas-arms-industry-makes-global-inroads.html>; Julia Famularo, "Erdogan Visits Xinjiang," *The Diplomat*, April 14, 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/04/erdogan-visits-xinjiang/>.

49 The precise origin of the quote are contested, but it is frequently attributed to Henry Kissinger. See for instance Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), 2.

- 50 See e.g. Kenneth Katzman, *The United Arab Emirates: Issues for US Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 17, 2013), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=100294>.
- 51 See e.g. Mariya Gordeyeva, "UPDATE 4-China Buys into Giant Kazakh Oilfield for \$5 Bln," *Reuters*, September 7, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/07/oil-kashagan-china-idUSL5N0H302E20130907>.
- 52 Raushan Nurshayeva, "Kazakhs Launch 'Silk Road' China-Europe Rail Route," June 10, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/10/us-kazakhstan-railway-idUSBRE9590GH20130610>.
- 53 See e.g. Richard A. Bitzinger, "China as a Major Arms Exporter: Implications for Southeast Asia « ISN Blog," *ISN Blog*, November 11, 2013, <http://isnblog.ethz.ch/security/china-as-a-major-arms-exporter-implications-for-southeast-asia>.
- 54 See Jackie Calmes, "A U.S. Marine Base for Australia Irritates China," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2011, sec. World / Asia Pacific, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/world/asia/obama-and-gillard-expand-us-australia-military-ties.html>.



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