

## **Regional Power? Yes, but What Kind?**

A sizable scholarly literature focuses on regions and regional powers, yet it has been noted in this literature that there is a lack of a consensus on these very basic concepts, most notably the idea of a regional power. This research takes up the question of how we identify regional powers and understand variations among them, by presenting an analysis that de-centers the state centrism and material factors that pervades much of this literature and places an emphasis on the role of transnational actors and ideational factors. India is used as illustrative case that demonstrates how an understanding of regional power that incorporates a neo-Gramscian conceptions of power/hegemony alters conventional understandings of these states' status as regional powers.

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Perhaps given less attention than other topics in the study of regions – which can in part be attributed to the difficulty in trying to define regional power – is the subject of how we identify or define a regional power (Hurrell 2010). This is problematic because within the literature on regions, state power is understood to matter in the development of regions, although there are different beliefs regarding how important (Fawn 2009; Hettne, Inotai, and Sunkel 2001). Powers and Goertz (2011) who argue that regions come to be defined as states form economic institutions, stress that regions are not defined exogenously, but are the conscious choice made by states to address a functional problem. If this is accurate, there is a critical link between regionalism – where regions are seen as the policy or project by states – and regionalization – which is a process of regional formation (Fawcett 2005). Schulz, Söderbaum, and Öjendal (2001) assert that regionalization is both a top-down state driven process and a bottom-up market and society process comprising a variety of actors, such as social network, NGOs, transnational corporations, social movements, etc..., which from their perspective serves to define the “new regionalism approach”<sup>1</sup>. This means then it is important to understand how all these actors and processes converge in the development of the region, particularly on understanding regional powers – meaning sovereign states – as they are a critical component in region formation, but to accomplish this it requires an ability to accurately identify or define these actors. At a very basic level the value in better understanding how we define regional power is critical to our ability to

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussions of “New Regionalism” see: Väyrynen, Raimo (2003) “Regionalism: Old and New” *International Studies Review* 5(1), 25-51; Philippe De Lombaerde, Fredrik Söderbaum, Luk Van Langenhove, and Francis Baert (2010) “The Problem of Comparison in Comparative Regionalism” *Review of International Studies* 36, 731-753; Schulz, Michael, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Joakim Öjendal (2001) *Regionalization in a Globalizing World: A Comparative Perspective on Forms, Actors, and Processes* (London: Zed Books); Mary Farrell, Björn Hettne, and Luk Van Langenhove (2005) *Global Politics of Regionalism: Theory and Practice* (London: Pluto Press).

judge the states position and relative to other states and how the state's capabilities will shape their foreign policy (Gardini 2016).

More focus is required to better specify what we mean by regional powers and how they function, given that we know the ability of states to cooperate or integrate requires the role of a powerful leader (Mattli 1999). As Nolte notes, there has been a general “general lack of analytical instruments to identify and compare regional powers and to differentiate regional powers from great and middle powers” (Nolte 2010, 882). This has been very much complicated by the very complexity of regions, which have been heavily shaped or influenced by the restructuring brought on by globalization. Regions are developed by multiple actors at multiple levels of aggregation that does not always privilege the state (Hurrell 2005; Wunderlich 2007). This deficiency should not be confused with an entire absence of effort to better understand what a region power is, as a number of scholars, who will be discussed, sought to address this fundamental issue of identifying regional powers. Our understanding of how we define a regional power has in fact evolved despite the minimal focus given by scholars, thus the task is not to build, but refine our interpretations. The argument being advanced here is that existing typologies and frameworks have moved the study of regional powers in the right direction, but what is required is an understanding of regional power that accounts for the historical context in the form of global restructuring , non-state actors, and a critical understanding of power. The utility of the typology will be illustrated by an examination of the case of India.

This study understands that there is not one type of regional power and develops a typology of regional power that accounts for a variety of factors beyond material capability. The starting point in constructing this typology is to historically contextualize the state and state power in an era of globalization. Although globalization can be characterized by various

processes, which often produce contradictory effects, the processes are shaped or given direction by various actors of which the state still remains prominent. Putting aside earlier debates of the demise of the state in the face of globalization, it is the leadership by key states that are vital to global restructuring. Paradoxically, globalization can be seen as a hegemonic world order where political, economic, and social processes transcend state relations, however this order necessitates the state for this order to emerge. As Bieler and Morton (2004) argue, “there has been a rise in the structural power of transnational capital supported by forms of elite interaction that have forged common perspectives, or an ‘emulative uniformity’ between business, state officials and representatives of organizations favoring the logic of capitalist market relations.” In the neo-Gramscian sense this order arises and is sustained by states and transnational forces bound by ideological hegemony. While this approach to thinking about world order has focused on the international community as a whole, it can and should be applied on the regional level and the development of regional order. Regional orders develop in a broader world order and they equally rely on state leadership that to varying degrees seek to exercise their own hegemony. It is the varying levels of hegemony and counter-hegemony that have emerged at this point in history in the relationship to world order that contributes developing regional powers, which is a departure from traditional International Relations theorizing on power.

Traditional International Relations theorizing has rooted power in material capabilities, typically drawing on some combination of military and economic capability with some other variables like population size (Organski 1980, Mearsheimer 2003; Lemke 2010). Interpreting power in terms of capability is obviously a necessary aspect of a state establishing itself as a power, but it is not sufficient for identifying powers at the regional level or even systemic levels. Yet, scholars working on regions have continued to overly rely on the idea that power is a form

of material capability and, in effect, they have applied the theorizing traditionally applied at the system level and transposed it onto states in the context of the region. For example Lemke (2010) draws on the Correlates of War definition of hard power to explain regional propensity for conflict. Within the literature on Regional Security Complexes, Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll (2010; 2012) argue that in order for a state to be a regional power it must account for a “significant share of the regions power capabilities in order to qualify as a regional power” (2012). They acknowledge their understanding of regional power is influenced by Kenneth Waltz and agree with Waltz that this significant power translates into influence relative to other states in the region. Similarly, Buzan and Waever (2003), although acknowledging the limitations of the Neo-Realism in regional analysis, argue that regional powers define the polarity of any regional security complex. It is these states’ capabilities that allow them to exercise influence over the states in the regional complex, yet at the same time it limits their ability at the systemic level vis-à-vis global powers. Buzan and Waever accept that the power of the state is more than material capabilities, but by relying on a conceptualization of regional security complexes that are wedded to power distribution; their analysis is still dependent on material capability. Furthermore, this theorizing on regional powers that works within the confines of traditional neo-realist theorizing, is potentially trapped by its state-centrism that limits our understanding of how states develop power by not accounting for the changing nature of power and the role of non-state actors and how they shape state power. In brief, the traditional approach is too limited in how it conceives of power and is ahistorical in nature. To improve how we think about regional power, this study draws on neo-Gramscian and critical thought and by doing so brings in to the analysis historical context, hegemony and counter-hegemony, transnational actors, and leadership.

First, the problem with the traditional ways of thinking about regional power and state power is not just the over focus on material capability, but its failure to account for how power may have different meaning as it relates to historical context. Our understanding of power has been fixed and simply identified by measuring qualities of the state; however the sources of power both originate inside and outside of the state cannot be treated as having a fixed quality. For example, in a world where we only conceive of economic power as being a function of an enclosed domestic economy, an ahistorical interpretation of power might suffice, but in a period where economies and markets have evolved, our understanding of economic power must do so as well. Globalization has been a long historical process, but the post-World War II period – that we can describe as the contemporary era of globalization – has been characterized by increasing levels of political and economic integration led by the United States and other core industrial states, as well as other transnational actors. At its core, globalization is a neo-liberal project in its economic form designed to eliminate barriers to capital to trade and finance. From this view, globalization advances the economic interests of those actors, both state and non-state that economically benefit from this global restructuring. Politically, the same actors have sought to complement the economic transformation with political change that would emphasize the movement to democracy and the establishment of international norms and institutions based on liberal principles. The ability to develop this world order was very much reliant upon the military and economic power of leading states that could use coercive measures to force or protect change. In short, material power was most certainly central to the emergence of a new global restructuring.

However, as neo-Gramscian theorists advance, coercion tied to material capability is only one half of the states' power to shape a new global order, the other half requires consent given to

what is seen as a legitimate source of authority. As Anthony Payne (1994) notes, there is an important distinction being made here in that material capability in the form of coercion allows for domination over others, but it is coercion combined with ideology *that changes simple domination to hegemony*. Consequently, we can think of state power ranging from simple forms of domination by way of capability to hegemony whereby those who are dominated also give their consent or are complicit in their domination. States are operating in a broader historical context under which the states behavior and development is shaped by numerous global forces. To develop an explanation of regional power that fails to take into the broader social forces and structures would mean the development an understanding of regional power that would leave out or ignore important contextual variables.

A second major point that we can take from the neo-Gramscian perspective that has implications for how we understand regional power are the actors that are the source of the hegemony. While the contemporary era of globalization has been significantly shaped by the power of the United States, the structuring of the world order on neo-liberal lines has necessitated the support of other states that have shared a commonality of interests or have conformed through dominance or hegemony. The important point here is that regardless of motivation state interest and behavior has been shaped by the broader regional order, which means that states at the regional level have made decisions about how they will engage the global and sub-global environments. MacCartney (2009) has argued that even with the emergence of a consensus on neo-liberalism among “fractions of capital” conflicts or differences emerge from “competing hegemonic projects rooted in the respective historical accumulation strategies”. Thus, while neo-liberalism has been established as a global norm, it has evolved into different variations as there are variations among the interests within the global and regional markets.

But while the formal ideology of neo-liberalism holds out the promise of benefits for all who are able efficiently engage the global market, the reality has been that not all states have benefited to the same degree and this discrepancy has caused states, notably in the developing world to resist neo-liberalism and advance forms of alternative political and economic relations. Andreas Bieler (2005) in an analysis of European Union integration identifies that labor unions mobilized transnationally to shape and influence the EU policies. The BRICS or IBSA are global examples of this, while the formation of ALBA or the development of an Asian Development Bank are regional variants. So while, contemporary globalization has given rise to a particular form of world order, it has been responded to by to states at the regional level to either conform or resist. This idea is compatible with Nel (2010) who has argued that current leaders in the global south question the operation of the global order and seek recognition for their equality as states and their distinct interests. Yet, the choice made by each state is not simply a calculation of how they are positioned in relation to those leading states in the global order, but how they are positioned in relation to states in their region. This means that we cannot develop an understanding of regional power without understanding that regional power is tied to the broader world order and region. Both have implications for states' ability to be dominant or to be hegemonic. A state may in fact have a preponderance of material power, however it may be in a region where it has to contend with another extra-regional power that is hegemonic or regional actors may reject its efforts at hegemony, which would undermine its power status in the region. Under these conditions we would have to rethink what this state would be able to do regionally. Krapohl, Meissner, and Muntschick (2014), for example, argue that both Brazil and South Africa's efforts to develop regional integration has been weakened when they were compelled by extra-regional powers to focus on inter-regional trade as opposed to further intra-regional trade.



A third issue introduced into this discussion of globalization and regional power is the role of transnational interests. Traditional studies on regional power have primarily been exclusively focused on the state and in accordance with rationalist theories have tended to assume the state is a unitary actor, thus all power is centralized and commanded by the government. While this might make sense in the realm of security affairs – although in some accounts one might want to question this assumption – in regard to the operation of the economy and markets, state power is separate but coextensive with economic interests. Solingen (2008) has found that in the Middle East and East Asia that domestic coalitions between countries, under the correct circumstances, can influence the formation, functioning and effects of regional institutions. This study highlights the role of domestic actors whose interests cannot be assumed to coincide with the state's interest. The liberalization of the global economy has been driven by transnational economic interest that have utilized the state to create a global markets that involve the movement of capital for the purposes of market access, and most importantly, the globalization of production. In this era of globalization the state functions not simply to protect domestic producers, but to facilitate trans-national capital's activities.

The important point here is that the state is not the sole economic agent, nor does it dictate economic activity. Whether under conditions of dominance, but more specifically of hegemony, state power is inextricably tied to capital. Hannes Lacher (2003) in better trying to understand the place of the state in globalization drew on neo-Marxist literature to identifying a fundamental political economic understanding of the state and markets:

“In fact, Justin Rosenberg suggests that sovereignty should be defined as the social form of the state in a society where political power is divided between public and private spheres'. Simon Bromley similarly argues that 'the historical spread and social reproduction of these new types of social relations . . . accounts for both the national form and for the universal interdependence of global capitalism'. Moreover, Bromley suggests that this simultaneously national and

global existence of capital was no more threatened by the nation-state at the end of the nineteenth century than it is today by 'globalization'." (page)

So, when thinking about states we have to come to terms with the reality and role of the state and state power, but that capital and economic actors can act independently or in concert with the state. Even among states that retain a heavy role for the state in the economy, they have increasingly liberalized elements of their economies or alternatively are engaged with transnational capital. At the same time the state serves the interests of transnational capital, transnational capital still relies on the state to protect interests. The implication of the relationship between the state and a regional power is that the state's ability to develop as a power will be tied to the ability of transnational capital. Hägel and Peretz (2005) challenge the view that states and transnational actors are autonomous from one another in their analysis of Israel and its diaspora community and the way in which these autonomous organizations enhance state power.

Transnational capital is the means by which economic and political power is extended throughout the region and, significantly, with the synchronization of ideology between the state and transnational capital, it becomes a critical tool in exercising hegemony or counter-hegemony. The particular form of hegemony established by the state may be a challenge to the established world order and be the source of regional counter-hegemony against the world order. But since states are not the sole actors from this approach, counter-hegemony can emerge from sub-state actors throughout the region. Miller 's (2005) study of Zambian workers demonstrates the relationship between the state and transnational actors in advancing hegemony. South African supermarket are sites that cause Zambian workers to identify with what they see as privileged South African workers. The shopping malls developed by South African retailers are seen as symbolic of "modernity", which is promised by the African Renaissance brought about by South

African leadership. At the same time this identification can be the source of resistance to their new work environments as the Zambian workers recognize that their working conditions do not always approximate that of their South African peers. If that counter-hegemony is in response to the capital interests tied to a particular state, then it undermines the power of the state by diminishing its ability to be a hegemon, but not precluding it from being a dominant state.

Fourth, it is important to address the relationship between power and leadership. A state can distinguish itself from others purely based on its material capability, however, this does not necessitate that this can translate into the ability to influence and structure regional arrangements. Brute force can be marshalled to compel other actors to conform to a preferred behavior, yet this is not made explicit in most accounts of power. The assumption is that raw power capability can be utilized to build cooperation or win the support of others. In these instances, power is not capability, but power is the ability to influence and lead. Leadership requires that others accept the legitimacy of one's lead and a willingness to support a putative leader's actions; in short, leadership is the product of a social interaction that is only partially reflective of one actor's superior material strength (Jesse, Lobell, Press-Barnathan and Williams 2012). If the interest in studying regional powers is ultimately to explain and understand their effect on the interactions, order, structure, and institutionalization of regions, then an interpretation of power that is connected to an ability to engage in effective leadership is essential. This means in defining a power we must account for capability and how a regional power leads.

A starting point to account for the leadership dimension of power is to require that other actors recognize a state as a power (Buzan and Waever 2003; Destradi 2010; Nolte 2010; Schirm 2002). Recognition of one state's power capability, however, can mean any variety of things to other states ranging from indifference to balancing, thus accepting the state's leadership or

developing the will to follow is not automatic. Power then requires that there is an influence over the preferences and beliefs or an intellectual leadership (Nabers 2010). Lake (2009), similar to Pedersen (2002), argues that hierarchies form within regions based on a social exchange whereby a dominant state provides some value for the region and in exchange subordinate states return “compliance” and “legitimacy” and because of this cooperative relationship, peace comes to characterize the region. From this perspective, “power can be exercised indirectly by presenting a particular view as compatible with communal aims” (Nabers 2010, 61). The leader-follower relationship is not a simple optimizing exchange, rather leadership uses socialization by way of a dominant discourse(s) that sets norms and becomes institutionalized. Stephen Gill, although not addressing regional power, argues “leaders must not only seek to define what is unique and specific about a current conjuncture in their communications with those they lead and organize, but they must also find ways to justify a course of action and mobilize resources to act effectively on it” (Gill 2012). Here is where hegemony becomes crucial as it encapsulates leader’s justification and mobilization of resources. By situating the discussion of regional power in historical context forces us to address a range of factors that need to be accounted for when defining a regional power. Regional power needs to account for hegemony, states operating in a broader structural context beyond the region, and the role of non-state actors and their relationship to the state. The next section will pull these elements together to develop a typology of regional power with the assistance of existing typologies.

### **Varieties of Regional Powers**

Both Nolte and Prys in their studies on regional power account for some of the dimensions of power discussed above but not all. Nolte provides an extensive list of criteria for,

as he describes it, the identification and comparison of regional powers. This set of criteria draws on previous research and is quite comprehensive - perhaps too comprehensive. Nonetheless, Nolte (2010; 2011) accounts for some critical variables, notably, perception held by other actors inside and outside the region; leadership in regional institutions, the influence the regional power exercises over the region; material capability; and the possession of ideological resources. It is the last dimension that speaks to the idea of hegemony discussed by critical political economy, as an ideological dominance exhibited by the regional power. Nolte points us in the right direction, however, he only provides a broad framework and he does not provide us with the basis to judge the relative weight of these dimensions of regional power – which he explicitly acknowledges – nor any understanding of how these characteristics might manifest themselves differently across states. Are these characteristics the same for a newly established power versus a more mature power? What does it mean if some of these characteristic apply to a state while others do not? This is left for further research.

Miriam Prys (2010; 2013) has taken us quite far in specifying a typology of regional powers that is more parsimonious than Nolte's criteria and it has the added benefit of explaining how variations in the different dimensions of power produce different types of regional powers. This provides us with a more precise base for identifying regional powers, but also for conducting further research because the typology gives indications of how these regional powers will behave. Prys identifies four dimensions of regional power: self-perception of the regional role, the perception by other states in the region that the regional power has a special role, the provision of public goods, and the influence of preferences and values of other states in the region. Collectively these variables yield three types of regional powers: the detached power, the regional hegemon, and the regional dominator. Prys further adds a conditional variable, the

openness of the region to extra-regional influence, because external influences, while not defining the regional power, have the ability to place constraints or limit the behavior available to regional powers.

While I agree with the fundamental elements of Prys' typology, I argue that it has some limitations and there are additional elements of the region and the global level-of-analysis that need be accounted, notably a more prominent role for hegemony. First, Prys' dimension, exercise of power, expresses itself in three ways across her regional types. Detached Powers have no impact on the region, while 'regional hegemons' influence preferences and values, and regional dominators impact through violence and force. The distinction made between the regional hegemons and regional dominators is a false dichotomy, because as previously addressed; hegemony as neo-Gramscians define it, involves both coercion and consent. States will use a combination of force and less "hard" forms of influence in order to impose themselves on other states. One could argue that states that had begun the process of establishing their influence over a region would need to use force to deal with rivals or states that undermine its agenda. However, there is no reason to identify the use of force with one type of power. Yet, Prys' identification of a variation is not entirely unwarranted as states might rely on varying mixes of force and other forms of influence.

An additional problem is also found with the description of the types of goods that the regional power provides to the region. Here Prys asserts that regional hegemons provide regional public goods while regional dominators provide private goods. Once again, the distinction created might in fact prove to be false, as hegemons at the global or regional level will provide and seek various goods simultaneously. The provision of public goods, although benefiting actors other than the regional power, does not negate the fact that the final goal of the regional

power is to advance its own interests or exploit some actors in the region. Destradi (2010) has critiqued authors like Nolte – she does include Prys in this group – who conceive of regional powers as “pursuing benevolent, leading, integrating strategies”. While Prys has not exactly done this, the construction of her typology creates the perception that regional hegemons are interested in providing public goods as an end, acting as if they were being beneficent, while regional dominators do not.

Nonetheless, the appeal of Prys’ approach is that it makes an effort to incorporate an understanding of hegemony that moves beyond traditional rationalist explanations and incorporates a critical/neo-Gramscian definition. However, in doing so, Prys seems to stress the persuasion and the influence on preferences, but does not incorporate the role of transnational forces within or beyond the region in constituting state power, which is a central concept in neo-Gramscian thought. There has to be an accounting for the role that the historical forces extant in a region and how these coalesce to constitute the state’s power. These forces may exist within the state, but may also be found in transnational forces without. Moreover, hegemony is never complete and the forces of opposition are always present, thus forces of counter-hegemony must also be involved in the development of the typology of regional power (Gill 2012). This could potentially fall within the parameters of Prys’ argument where she identifies openness of the region as a conditional variable. This, however, is not sufficient since counter-hegemonic forces may emanate from within and beyond the region. In short, the presence or strength of counter-hegemonic forces, as well as any extra-regional forces will *always* contribute to the constitution of the regional power. This means that what Prys treats as a conditional variable needs to be an essential dimension in the definition of regional power. This contradicts to some extent individuals like Amitav Acharya (2007) who argues that regions are constructed more from

within than without because of regional powers. While not false, this assertion maybe incomplete.

Using Pys' typology as a starting point and drawing on the ideas addressed in the previous section, I develop a new typology that accounts for globalization and hegemony, including the role of transnational actors that help defines the regional power (see Table 1). Like most of the research on regional powers, it is assumed that these states have a preponderance of material capability. Unlike the treatment by neo-realists or analyses influenced by them, material power is necessary but far from sufficient and as will be described below material power is not just possessed by the state alone. Three dimensions contribute to a state being a regional power (centrality in foreign policy, level of hegemony, level of counter-hegemony) and variation in each of these dimensions results in four types of powers (Regional Competitor, "nascent" Regional Power, Incipient Regional Hegemon, Hegemon). Although treated as ideal-types, states find themselves exhibiting the characteristics that fall in between types, which means we can think of regional powers existing on a continuum. However, it is not assumed that the different categories should be treated as stages in the development of regional power, even though some states could progress from one type of regional power to another. In the following sections, each dimension that defines a regional power will be discussed as well as how they are operationalized. This will be followed by an illustration of the typology using the case of India.

Centrality of the Regional Power. Instead of considering the perceived acceptance by other regional actors of the regional power, which is Prys' approach, I reframe this as the centrality of the regional power in the foreign policy of other states in the region. Prys'



**Table 1. Regional Power Typology**

	<b>Regional Competitor</b>	<b>“Nascent” Regional Power</b>	<b>Incipient Regional Hegemon</b>	<b>Regional Hegemon</b>
Centrality of Regional power in foreign policy of states	Many states view power as important, yet not vital to economic/ political interests. Low levels of dependence. Low centrality to major non-state actors outside of state	Regional states interested in deepening ties, Enhancing integration.	Centrality of the state for regional actors. Political and economic relations dependent on regional powers policies. Collaborate with regional power to advance interests.	Centrality of state. Political and economic relations heavily determined by regional power. Regional states ideologically align with regional power.
Level of Hegemony	Hegemony is non-existent. Use of bilateral and some multilateral mechanisms to shape relations based on material interests. Occasional resort to coercion to defend vital state interests.	Initial efforts to extend hegemony. Has limited effect, but there is some development of institutions and agreements to extend influence. Hegemony is contested.	Propagates ideology based on national articulated values sustained by non-state actors. Driving force behind the creation of various institutions.	Ideological domination supported by regional “constitutional” arrangements. Regional control relies less on direct coercion. Consolidation of a transnational bloc that supporting state hegemony.
Counter-Hegemony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic – Domestic actors have a variety of interests that do not necessarily align with the interests of the state.</li> <li>• International – extra-regional/hegemonic forces influence regional politics -</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic – Alignment between interests of economic elite and the state. Some divisions exist from political competition.</li> <li>• International – Extra-regional forces are still present, but cannot ignore interests of regional power. Often must negotiate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic – Alignment of public and private interests in regional power. Domestic stability enhances power of the state.</li> <li>• International – state has the ability to limit or negate influence of extra-regional forces, particularly states. Non-state actors accommodate the interests of the state.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic – Alignment of public and private interests in regional power. Domestic stability enhances power of the state.</li> <li>• International – extra-regional forces play minimal role without support or acquiescence of regional power.</li> </ul>

usage of acceptance is not meant to imply approval of a regional power's status or position; instead it suggests that states recognize the "special role" for the regional power. Important to this conceptualization is the understanding that it does not matter if states believe that the status of regional power is right or correct. Rather than place the focus of this dimension of regional power on the perception of "acceptance", I reframe this variable as the centrality of the regional power in the foreign policy of other states in the region. In other words, how big of a role or what level of dependence does the regional power play in political or economic policies enacted by other states. The advantage of this reframing in these terms allows us to still address the same issue, but it is less reliant on perception and also captures the implications of material capability. A leader's perceptions or beliefs may not always align with the reality of the relationships that they maintain. A stronger sign of a state's status as a regional power would be the extent to which other states by necessity orient their foreign policy toward the regional power. This could vary from practically non-existent to having a foreign policy that is fully integrated with the regional power. Prys cites Lake who argues that failure to diversify an economy away from a dominant state is an indicator of acceptance. I would argue that this is an indicator of the centrality of the regional power, which transcends mere perception and may be more based on necessity. A state that consulted with the regional power before signing an international agreement or taking military action would also indicate that the regional power was a priority in a state's foreign policy.

In the case of regional competitors, regional states and their sub-state actors have low levels of dependence on the regional power and economic and political ties are not vital. Nascent regional powers on the other hand find their ties with regional states as deepening with a number of states economically or politically tied to the regional power. In other words, states in the

region find a desire or need to benefit from the power of the “nascent” power. Incipient regional hegemony and regional hegemony are central to the political and economic foreign policy of the states in the region. States in relation to an incipient regional hegemon are dependent on their power’s policies and they prioritize collaboration with the regional power to advance their interests. For states in regions with regional hegemony, their foreign policy is heavily determined by the regional hegemon and states build foreign policy around their relationship with the regional power.

Level of Hegemony. Hegemony addresses the non-material aspects of power, but it also introduces the multi-level aspect of the construction of power. The establishment of hegemony is not solely a state-centric project, as transnational capital and political leadership collaborate to propagate a dominant ideology and will use coercion, but also institutions, formal and informal, as a means to establish and maintain its dominance. The state is one of many mechanisms by which a hegemonic ideology can be spread, however transnational actors, specifically capital, are not entirely placeless and the state performs a valuable function in protecting the interests of domestically located capital. While transnational capital has global interests, they are advantaged by powerful state apparatuses and will attempt to use these mechanisms to their benefit.

Transnational economic interests influence state foreign policy in order to achieve economies of scale with other firms within the region (Reed 2014). Regional competitors are powers where ideological hegemony originating in the regional power is non-existent. However, these states will use bilateral and multi-lateral mechanisms to shape relations based on material interests, but might struggle to consolidate control. Hegemonic discourses at the global level will be resorted to in order to build cooperation. There will be the occasional resort to the use of force to defend vital interests. Nascent regional powers, incipient regional hegemony and regional hegemony

possess varying degrees of ideological hegemony. Nascent powers extend to limited effect an ideology, which will be manifested by the creation of some institutions at the regional level used to regulate and discipline the region. Transnational actors are active in the region and begin to work to consolidate interests under a common ideological perspective. The ideology may not be unique to the nascent power, but will draw on existing dominant ideological currents. For incipient regional hegemonies, a hegemonic ideology is articulated and a discourse of national values is propagated by state and non-state actors within the region emergent in the state. The state is highly active in collaborating with institutions to advance hegemony. The regional hegemon differs because there is the consolidation of a transnational bloc within the region that supports the hegemony that originated in the regional hegemon. This is supported by an extensive network of “constitutional” arrangements of formal institutions that are political and economic. Coercion is used at times to preserve the hegemony, but dominance is primarily sustained by indirect influence.

Level of Counter-hegemony. The level of counter-hegemony identifies the resistance or opposition to the state’s hegemony domestically and/or regionally. Just as hegemony is in part defined by actors and processes beyond the state, it is important to also account for regional and extra-regional actors, particularly great powers, but also the influence of domestic political actors and their level of opposition to hegemony. Domestically, the state may be characterized by a high level of instability as various groups challenge the authority of the state and markets or impede their ability to extract and harness the resources of the state, which undermines the state’s material capability (Jesse, Lobell, Press-Barnthan, Williams 2012). This is also often the basis from which counter-hegemonic forces emerge. It is assumed that the more powerful a regional state and the greater the level of hegemonic consolidation, the less domestic opposition should

exist, enhancing state power. Among regional competitors there is dominance in the region, however there is no development of hegemony around which a consensus exists and there are various forms of opposition domestically, from the region, or from outside of the region, preventing the emergence of hegemony. With nascent regional powers hegemonic ideology may emerge, however the alignment between the state and other elite interests is incomplete, which exists alongside opposition with which the state must contest. Both incipient regional hegemons and regional hegemons see an absence of meaningful political and economic challenge from opposition groups that could amount to instability.

Equally, the more powerful the state the lower level of extra-regional forces influence should be. Note that influence on state power need not come solely from extra-regional state power projecting power directly into the region, but it could also come from hegemonic forces that are not strictly state-based and they may be tied to domestic opposition. Regional competitors are confronted with a variety of extra-regional forces that place the region beyond the control of the regional power. Nascent powers experience the presence of extra-regional forces, but these forces are in engagement with the regional power negotiating their role in the region. In contrast, incipient regional hegemons have the ability to negate the influence of extra-regional forces, particularly states. International actors often accommodate interests of regional powers. For regional hegemons, extra-regional counter-hegemony plays a minimal role.

Once again, the inclusion of domestic and international counter-hegemony is necessary because the presence or absences and the activities of these actors places limits on the power of regional states. In this respect these actors help constitute the power status of the state and are not separate or conditional. To demonstrate the utility of the regional power typology, the next

section will examine the case of India as an illustration of how the typology can be used to identify regional powers.

### **India's Status as Regional Power**

In the public and popular media, India's status as an emerging economy has inevitably and, perhaps mistakenly, translated in to discussion of India as an emerging power (Cohen 2001; Buzan 2002; Ganguly 2003; Kapur 2006; Nadkarni 2011; Nayar and Paul 2003). What this focus obscures is a deeper analysis of what it means to say that India is an emerging or even a great power. In addition these commentaries have focused on capability as equating with power and overlooked the ability to influence (Mistry 2009). Perhaps more lost in this discussion is whether or not India is a regional power and what does that exactly mean. Scholarly discussions of Indian foreign policy point out limitations on Indian power, despite its disproportionate capability relative to its neighbors, which include internal conflicts, instability in neighbors, and the on-going rivalry with Pakistan (Mittra and Schöttli 2007). The implication of these analyses is that India remains a regional power, despite these challenges. Given, the preceding discussion on regional power, this section will seek to identify what type of regional power India is employing the developed typology. The analysis focuses on Indian after the liberalization reforms of 1991, when discussions of Indian and its power have been most relevant after it began its process of liberal reform and increased opening to the international economy.

Centrality of India in regional foreign policy. The centrality of India in its neighbor's foreign policy is mixed. If one has to characterize the post-1991 period, it is one where India's centrality is limited both politically and economically, as the relationship varies dramatically across countries. Economically, India is important, but not as central to the economic foreign

policy of its neighbors. India is the major regional trading partner for the states of South Asia, however the level of intra-regional trade is extremely small (more than 50% of total trade are with industrial powers in Europe, North American and East Asia) when compared with the trade of many states in relation to the rest of the world (Sahu and Patra 2012). The low levels in the post-WWII history are as a result of import substitution policies and, in the period of liberalization, lingering protectionism. The exceptions to this are the high levels of bilateral trade with Nepal and Bhutan, while India is among the top twenty trading partners for Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Bangladesh (Batra 2007). The other state considered a power in the region, Pakistan, has negligible levels of trade with India (Malone 2011). So even though India has increased its economic engagement in the region, for example providing one billion in credit to Bangladesh and increasing trade with Myanmar, the states in the region as a whole are not economically dependent on India and their foreign policies and are tied in important ways to actors in neighboring regions or further afield.

Politically, India's centrality to members of the region also varies. Obviously, India is highly central to Pakistan's foreign policy, however this centrality is not one that is a positive contribution to Indian power. Despite this fact, the rivalry is an indication of India's power status because, as T.V. Paul argues, the on-going rivalry is the product of a "truncated" asymmetry in power (Paul 2005). India's superiority is truncated, because even though India has greater power, it has been increasingly limited by a variety of developments, notably Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons. The power dynamic between the two is one where power differential fuels the Pakistani perceptions of India as threat, which is one factor that sustains the rivalry.

The relations with the other states have been more complex in terms of centrality. India's "smaller" neighbors have historically been wary of India, because of its material capability

(Mukherji 2010; Nadkarni 2012). This is what in part inspired the creation of the Gujral doctrine, so at this basic level all states in the region have given special attention to India<sup>2</sup>. However, once one moves beyond this general orientation, important differences emerge in the extent to which India is a central priority to their foreign policy. Bangladesh's relationship with India is emblematic of the tensions that exist between India and its neighbors, yet because of a variety of factors including sharing borders, cross-border migration, terrorism, and control of the Ganges, India is a central pre-occupation for Bangladesh. Malone (2011, 113) cites a former foreign minister who asserts that "Indo-centrism" is a key element in policy as a result of its power and that Bangladesh has needed to develop external ties to compensate. Nepal is another country where there are deep political ties yet wariness of India. There have been close ties between the two countries militaries and India was understood to be the guarantor of law and order (Malone 2011). Nepal, like Bhutan, is landlocked with India bordering on three sides and due to the boundary created by the Himalayas India has been Nepal's main transit route. In addition to its weak economy, geography has contributed to Nepal's dependency on India (Rajagopalan 2005). The relationship can be tense as Nepal has been aggrieved by what has been perceived as Indian interference in Nepalese politics and treaties and agreements dating back to the 1950s that have benefited India at Nepal's expense (Chaturvedy and Malone 2012). Bhutan's geographic location, as already noted, has helped foster its dependency on India, aside from economic asymmetry. But India's centrality goes further, as the Indian military has troops stationed in the

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<sup>2</sup> The perception of playing a leading role in the protection and development of the region manifested itself more formally in the 1996 with the enunciation of the Gujral Doctrine, which was less concerned with external threats, but with a desire to foster stability in the region. The doctrine stipulates a "hands-off" policy whereby no nation will interfere in the affairs of others, disputes will be settled peacefully with respect for each state's sovereignty, and most importantly the basis for India's relations was one where India did not require reciprocity. The latter point is important because it stems from the belief that if India is going to be an effective regional leader that it needed to generate goodwill by not making demands on its neighbors.



northern part of the country. Bhutan has been deferential to India on foreign and defense policy in relation to China (Malone 2011).

Sri Lanka's political engagement with India has been primarily by way of the connections with the Tamil community in southern India, that culminated in a brief military intervention in Sri Lanka by India to end the civil war and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassinations by the LTTE. Subsequently, India played less of a central role in the conflict until 2004 when Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse requested Indian assistance in resolving the conflict with India later providing military assistance to the government (Rajagopalan 2005). Yet, it was Norway which became most central in attempting to broker a settlement to the conflict and in recent years China has become a primary trading partner and has moved to base Chinese naval assets in Sri Lanka. In the Maldives' foreign policy, India has been most central politically and economically as India has become a more important actor contributing increasing levels of development assistance.(Rajagopalan 2011). Myanmar (which some do not necessarily include in South Asia) has shared a similar relationship with India. China has become central to Myanmar's foreign policy as the Chinese offer economic incentives and has provided support for the government. Myanmar's view is that India lacks a clear policy or long term strategy for building deeper ties (Zhao 2014). Trade with India is less than half that of China and much of Myanmar's trade is routed first through third party states.

There is significant variation among the state's in India's region as to how central India is to their foreign policy. India matters to them all, but the extent varied significantly and there is little evidence that they are dependent on relations with India. A number of the states have established important relations with China, which gives these states options in terms of the development of economic and foreign policy. Aside from Pakistan that is hostile to India – but

where India still remains central – the state's in the region are wary of India's influence and are often apprehensive about a rising India.

Level of Hegemony. In 1991 with the reform of the economy, India formally embraced neo-liberalism as an economic model, although it did not abandon government intervention in the market. Bava (2010) asserts that India in the 1990s adopted a western orientation on both domestic and foreign policy. Actually beginning with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the government began to divest from some public enterprises, enacted a floating exchange rate, and liberalized trade in services and goods. This continued under both the center-left Congress party and the center-right BJP. So by making these changes, India moved away from decades of economic policy that emphasized development and moved to deeply integrate itself into the neo-liberal global economy. India embraced the neo-liberal hegemonic discourse and practice that contributed to the restructuring the global economy. The impetus for the change was the stagnating import substitution policies and financial crisis, but also a domestic “technocratic conviction” driving for liberalization (Mukherji 2010). The latter point is important in that the change in India's economy and the norms underlying that change were influenced by the Indian business community that saw a comparative advantage for India in industries, such as high-tech services (Khanna and Mohan 2006). This was in turn supported by liberal reformers in government, such as then finance minister and later Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It is true that India at times has represented itself as a developing country challenging neo-liberal rules, for example in WTO negotiations, this is not a rejection of neo-liberalism though, but a desire to re-work its terms.

What was occurring during this period was the emergence of an Indian transnational class that was pulling India into the larger global economy. At the regional level, organizations in the

private sector formed to facilitate greater economic cooperation. The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) was formed in 1992 by private sector chambers of commerce from the region as a means to promote trade and Investment (Kelegama 2007). It has been argued that neo-liberalization has led to the individual states in India co-governing with the national government on economic policy as state chief ministers are engaging economic diplomacy courting other governments and firms to grow the local economies (Sridharan 2003). This is tied to businesses, particularly the technology sector, that has placed pressure on chief ministers to support their efforts to attract foreign business and investment. However, the Indian states have not slipped their leashes, because the national government has played a facilitating role in this kind of activity in terms of the regulatory policy that enables states to pursue investment and trade (Jenkins 2003). Either way, both arguments represent the formation of the transnational class guided by neo-liberal ethos and incentives, although with an Indian face.

Liberalization of the region has manifested itself in what Gill refers to “new constitutionalism”, which is the creation of agreements that are designed to manage and regulate the global economy. The main regional organization, created in 1985, is the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that was an idea that did not originate with India and did not initially have an economic focus. By the 1990s, economics took on a central focus and in line with the neo-liberal agenda, the SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) was created that put in place trade preferences for intra-regional trade. This was later complemented by the South Asian Free Trade Association (SAFTA) that specified the phased elimination of tariffs.

The elements to impose hegemony on South Asia are in place for India. There is the emergence of a transnational capitalist class that has formed a bloc with the government actors

and they have led to state and regional policies that are designed to sustain and institutionalize neo-liberalism. However, for a number of reasons India has not been able to effectively impose hegemony on South Asia. First, India has benefited from neo-liberalism, but the liberalization of India and South Asia has opened up the region to global economic forces. Thus, the ideology that India has adopted facilitates a political economy that does not necessarily enhance India's ability to impose itself and discipline the region. States continue to rely on bilateral agreements, including India, and they are also ensconced in other multi-lateral agreements connected to different regions (Kelegama 2007). Neo-liberalism opens the door to a global transnational community and extra-regional actors. This on its own would not preclude India from establishing a high level of hegemony, but a second problem has emerged that India's economy has not been directed toward the region in terms of trade and investment. The dominance of a state's currency is emblematic of their economic dominance of the region and, in the case of the rupee; it is of low significance because of lower levels of investment and trade (Kappel 2011). This is problematic, because regional powers need to establish the type of vertical integration among firms that would allow them to have oligopolistic domination of value chains (Kappel 2011). This undermines Indian capital's ability to disseminate an Indian hegemony.

The institutions and agreements that have been created have not been effective; in part because India's economic thrust has been elsewhere, but also because of resistance from its neighbors. Acharya (2011) argues, because of its history India suffers from a lack of regional legitimacy, while Malone (2011) asserts that most of India's neighbors have not accepted its "economic logic". What is possibly occurring is the development of "norm subsidiarity"<sup>33</sup> or the

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<sup>33</sup> Acharya (2011) defines norm subsidiarity as "a process whereby local actors create rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors." This was being used in a argument that regional orders among developing countries are shaped by norm subsidiarity in relation great powers.

emergence of counter-hegemony at the regional level. Third, progress and development of SAARC and other regional arrangements are continually hampered by regional political problems, particularly the conflicts that exist between the member states, most notably India and Pakistan. As it stands now Indian industry has not yet seen the value in the region relative to other regions, because of continuing tariff barriers limiting economies of scale (Gavin and Lombaerde 2005).

There are two additional elements to discuss in regard to hegemony in India. The first element is the promotion of democracy, which has been presented as the political parallel to economic neo-liberalism. Foreign Secretary Natwar Singh (2005) articulates India's approach to democracy by stating, "As a flourishing democracy, India would certainly welcome more democracy in our neighborhood, but that too is something that we may encourage and promote; it is not something we can impose on others". India has engaged a number of its neighbors with the intent of promoting democratization, but this has been balanced by a pragmatic view that India's interests require that it engage with non-democracies (Mehta 2011). This means that India has not sought to establish a complementary political hegemony over the region that would contribute to its power.

Second, hegemony is not ideology alone. Because hegemony is never complete and may be challenged in times of crisis, coercion may be required to preserve the established order. India has rarely resorted to the use of coercion in its relationship with its neighbors. The use of force has been most often used in a reactive manner and primarily in relationship to Pakistan. The exception to this are India's deployment of peacekeeping forces in 1987, which was driven by the ethnic ties to the south of India and the pressure of refugees, and the 1961 intervention in Goa ending Portuguese colonial rule. In fact intervention has been at odds with India's historical

beliefs about its role in the region and this is reinforced by policy, such as the Gujral doctrine that explicitly asserted non-intervention.

Counter-Hegemony. At the domestic level, the Indian state has experienced resistance by a range of actors. Foreign supported terrorists groups, separatist movements and Hindu nationalists have directly challenged the government and in the case of Maoist insurgents have undermined government control of areas of the country and undermined economic development as many of these groups operate in areas dependent on agricultural output. Persistent inequality, particularly in rural areas fuels insurgents and hostility toward the government. Complicating matters is the fact that these “domestic” threats have an international component, because they either receive foreign support or they operate across borders in the region. This often problematizes India’s relations with its neighbors because of disagreements about dealing with these groups.

The main concern India has had in dealing with extra-regional actors has been China’s increasing role in the region. In recent years, China has deepened ties with Sri Lanka and Myanmar. The links with Sri Lanka are considered ominous as they are seen as a larger project of Chinese attempts at domination in the Indian Ocean region and effectively work to encircle India (Malone 2011). Critically, tensions between China and India have intensified in recent years regarding their on-going territorial disputes regarding Aksai China and Arunachal Pradesh, which does not seem to be close to resolution. Moreover, China maintains close ties with Pakistan. For China, the relationship with Pakistan serves a number of critical purposes, including, a buyer of arms, balancer against India, and providing assistance in maintaining control over Xinjian, and as a diplomatic ally (Malik 2011). So, China is very much engaged in the region and many states in the region see China as a hedge or a way to alleviate dependence

on India. As noted above, India's neighbors have not fully accepted its "economic logic" and do not accept an Indian ideology as the legitimate foundation of the regional order.

### **India the "Nascent Power"**

There is no doubt that India is the most powerful state materially in South Asia relative to all of its neighbors and that alone should permit to consider India a regional power, but it still leaves open ended the question of what kind. The material capability of any state is weak, or imprecise, measure of a state's ability within a region. It tells us very little about the nature of the state's status as a power other than it is greater or lesser in relation to other states. Going a step further, it is even weaker when discussing the issue of whether or not a state has come to dominate its region. Discussions that treat powerful states as "hegemons" based on their material capability alone are assuming that this capability then translates in to some kind of influence over the region, which is not necessarily the case. Knowing more about the nature a state's position as a regional power provides greater insight into what kind of power they are capable of exercising and what that might mean for the region as a whole.

What this typology means for our view of India is that India should be conceived as a "nascent" regional power. India does not fit this particular type perfectly, but it does mostly conform to specified dimensions. India continues to desire to play a positive leading role in the region. However, India's centrality in the foreign policy of other states in the region is mixed. None of the states in the region can ignore India and this is driven by apprehension about India's power. Some states like Nepal and Bhutan have politically and economically prioritized relations with India; however, Sri Lanka has not. Pakistan has India as a priority, but this is entirely driven by the perception of threat. India has sought to extend hegemony in the region and, with the

assistance of transnational actors, sought to spread neo-liberalism and democracy promotion. But India's promotion has not resulted in truly enhancing India's power. To regulate the region, India has been an advocate for the development of regional institutions, primarily by way of SAARC. However, the ideology being advanced is one that is not specific to India and serves the interests of a global bloc of actors that benefit from the liberalization of economies. This will benefit particular classes and industries in India and will in turn contribute to India's power, but it also undermines India as the region remains opened to outside actors and the demands of the global interests are empowered. In fact, India has been confronted by competing actors that are domestic and extra-regional. Domestically, the government confronts a range of domestic challenges. There are a variety of separatist movements and domestic terrorist threats that have hindered development. Economically, the Indian left has continued to challenge the reformist turn the state has taken and act to slow down liberalization. China has an influence with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Pakistan. Moreover, some of the states have adopted policies with other regions and states as a means to avoid dependence on India.

The typology presented above has established a way to do just this as it moves beyond account of material capability. It addresses how the state perceives its role in the region. Centrality in the foreign policy of other states is where there is a convergence between the idea of power as influence and capability, because the variable of centrality is identifying that the regional power has an impact on other states that forces them to place a priority on the regional power. A state that has power will have a gravitational pull on its partners in the region as they must concentrate on the regional power's political or economic actions. The second dimension of regional power is hegemony or the level of hegemony that the state exercises over the region. This hegemony is ideological dominance that ensures conformity and disciplines the behavior of



the region. To ensure this hegemony, the state may resort to coercion, but will rely on various forms of “constitutionalism” as a means to regulate behavior. The scope of the state’s hegemony requires that transnational actors cooperate to propagate and sustain it in the region. The last dimension focuses on the role of counter-hegemony domestically and extra-regionally. The assumption underlying this variable is that a state’s power is limited and defined by other actors in the state’s environment. A greater level of domestic opposition to the state absorbs state resources and undermines the state’s ability to focus on the region. The greater the ability of extra-regional actors to play a role in the region, the more constraints placed on the power of an ostensible regional power.

This analysis of India was based on a typology that was rooted in the work of Miriam Prys. In Prys’ analysis, India is a detached regional power – as she defines it – which means that we arrive at different conclusions and the main reason has to do with the view of India’s focus on the region. In defining, India as detached, Prys is arguing that India is playing a global role and seeking to exercise power internationally, which is true. India has, since its founding, sought to be a global power; however, India has also sought to establish itself as a regional power as well. The problem is not that India is disengaged; rather India is a weak or less developed regional power. As discussed above, India has seen itself as a regional leader and it has sought to exercise hegemony over the region, but it does not have the power to do so effectively. But based on this new typology, Prys’ judgment is not unwarranted as India does have characteristics that it shares with a detached power. Both studies reject simple formulations that overly rely on material capability and take for granted the complexity of power and the way in which power is ideological and power is the product of variables at different levels-of-analysis, which results in various forms of regional power.

The next step for this research is to continue to test the typology in application to other regions, which would then allow for cross-national comparisons of regional powers. This would be particularly informative in explaining the variations we see in regional powers. It would permit us an ability to engage in comparisons in the rise and decline of regional powers. For example, even though a state may begin to decline in military and economic capability, it remains a regional hegemon. This might be accounted for by the fact that the regional hegemon's ideological domination remains in place and has not yet been challenged by counter-hegemonic forces, even though other elements of its power has weakened. We can address how regional powers contribute to the strength and stability of regional institutions? How do different regional powers contribute to the propensity for conflict in a region? With a better understanding of regional powers, we can chart their behavior over time and not only know what defines them, but also identify likely behaviors on a range of issues. The study of regions is necessary as the restructuring of global relations elicited by globalization fosters regional groups or as security threats emanate from particular regions in the world. But the study of regions needs to avoid assuming regional powers or providing simplified definitions that do not provide sufficient insight into complexity and variation.

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