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Article

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Manjeet S. Pardesi
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract
The region known as South Asia today emerged as the locus for order-building only in the early modern period (~1500–1750) as a "region" of Islamicate Asia. I demonstrate this through a cognitive-strategic process based on the interactions between polities and resources within and outside of South Asia. While the practices associated with the primary institutions of warfare, great power management, diplomacy, and political economy did not meaningfully differentiate South Asia from Eurasia in the pre-Mughal millennium, the deep rules associated with them marked South Asia off from Islamicate Asia after the rise of the Mughals. The practices of these four primary institutions were co-constituted with Mughal hegemony. Unlike recent scholarship, I show that the regional level existed before the emergence of a global-scale international system. My analysis has two major theoretical implications. First, I clarify the distinction between hegemonic and imperial orders, and argue that coercive hegemony must be understood as a primary institution of an international/regional society. Since all hegemonies are not alike, I explain why some hegemonic orders are based on coercion while others mix coercion with legitimacy/acquiescence by elucidating the structural differences between Mughal and Ming/Qing hegemonies. Second, I advance the debate on balance of power versus hegemony by providing a historically grounded explanation that demonstrates why the injection of extra-regional resources into early modern South Asia produced hegemony while fostering systemic balancing behavior in Europe (post-1500). My findings raise questions related to regionalization (order-building) without regionalism (shared identities/threat perceptions), while showing that region (trans)formation effects order.

Introduction

The area known as South Asia today emerged as a distinct "region" for order-building in the early modern period (~1500–1750) in tandem with the Mughal Empire (~1526/1555–1739/1857). South Asia "before the Moghul Conquest seems to display less of a coherent states-system than any of the world's great macro-cultures — less too than that earlier India [South Asia] which produced the *Arthashastra* [~3rd century BCE–3rd century CE]" (Wight, 1977: 195).[1] The Mughals transformed South Asia into a region of Islamicate Asia, which was one of three early modern Eurasian international systems along with Europe and East Asia (Pardesi, 2017).[2]

I argue that it was the interaction of three factors — the "cognitive priors" (Acharya, 2012: 194) of the Mughal elite, strategic geography, and the politico-military interaction capacity in Islamicate Asia (stretching from Turkey to the Indian Ocean/South-east Asia) — that led to the emergence of South Asia as a region of this system. I use the English School's "structural account" (Buzan and Lawson, 2017; Schouenborg, 2011) to demonstrate this "cognitive-strategic" regionalization of South Asia through the practices associated with four "primary institutions" (Bull, 2012: 71; Wight, 1979: 111–112) — warfare, great power management, diplomacy, and political economy — that were co-constituted with Mughal hegemony in South Asia, and marked it off as a distinct region of Islamicate Asia.

My analysis demonstrates that South Asia was not formed through the process of "colonization/decolonization," as is widely assumed (Buzan, 2012: 24). The multi-polity South Asian region formed under Mughal hegemony pre-dates colonialism. Therefore, the argument that regions are "recent," and that they did not exist "until the making of a global-scale international system" led by Europe, must be amended (Buzan, 2012: 23–26). Furthermore, my approach to region formation as an "interactive" outcome of regional and extra-regional dynamics (of polities and resources within and outside South Asia) is distinct from the internalist (Acharya, 2013: 4) and externalist (colonization/decolonization) accounts in the literature on region formation.

As an "empirical IR theory," structural English School approaches "generate concepts, construct typologies, and provide historically grounded explanations" (Buzan and Lawson, 2017: 5). My empirical analysis has two major theoretical implications. First, I clarify the conceptual difference between imperial and hegemonic orders, and demonstrate that the Mughal-led order in South Asia was hegemonic as it rested on coercion (or the threat/use of force). Typologically, "coercive" hegemony must be understood as a primary institution alongside "legitimate" hegemony, which has been the focus of recent scholarship (Clark, 2011). Mughal coercive hegemony was durable and survived for close to one-and-a-half centuries (~1580–1720). I explain why some hegemonic orders are based on coercion while others mix coercion with legitimacy/acquiescence by elucidating the structural differences between Mughal and Ming/Qing

hegemonies. Second, I advance the debate on balance of power versus hegemony by providing a historically grounded explanation that demonstrates why the injection of extra-regional resources into early modern South Asia produced hegemony while fostering systemic balancing behavior in Europe (post-1500). The English School inclines toward such "grand narratives" rather than "regularity-deterministic accounts," which are nevertheless "testable" through "historical-interpretative modes of inquiry" (Buzan and Lawson, 2017: 3, 6, 17–18).

The rest of this article is divided into five main sections. The next section explains the salience of regions in international relations, especially as they pertain to order-building. The second section presents a broad overview of early modern Islamicate Asia and the Mughal Empire after briefly demonstrating that pre-Mughal South Asia was not the locus of regional order-building. The subsequent section discusses the cognitive-strategic creation of South Asia as a distinct space for regional order-building under the Mughals. The fourth section shows how the practices associated with warfare, great power management, diplomacy, and political economy in South Asia were distinct from those of the larger Islamicate system. I conclude with the implications of my findings for the study of hegemony and region (trans)formation.

Regions and regional orders

Regions have emerged as important sites for the study of international relations since the end of the Cold War, and are now considered an important level of analysis distinct from the international (Acharya, 2007; Borzel and Risse, 2016; Buzan and Wæver, 2003). This is especially true in the context of rising non-Western powers and the relative decline of the US. Regions were important for order-building even during the Cold War, although the bipolar global structure obscured this fact (Katzenstein, 2005). However, many International Relations scholars simply take the contemporary regions of world politics as ontological truths "out there," although scholars from cognate disciplines have vigorously debated this division of the world into regions (Lewis and Wigen, 1997). So, how do International Relations scholars analyze this concept?

In general, International Relations scholars tend to study the concept of regions alongside issues of regional order (Fawn, 2009). For example, Adler and Acharya are concerned with the emergence of shared understandings and identities in regional security communities, especially vis-a-vis extra-regional powers who may threaten this region whose members do not perceive security threats vis-a-vis each other. Adler's (1997: 250) "cognitive regions" are analogous to Karl Deutsch's "pluralist security communities," while Acharya (2012: 187–194) emphasizes the "cognitive priors of individuals" as he is interested in exploring the role of "ideas and identity" as "they shape the boundaries and membership of regions, and decide the question of their permanence and transience." While orders other than security communities have also been identified (Thompson, 1973), the analytical conflation of region formation with regional order-building has meant that scholars have made the latter the focus of their analysis while ignoring the origins of regions.[3] Not surprisingly, Lake (2009: 57) has argued that "what makes a region a 'region'" is one of the key unanswered questions in International Relations.

Most scholars define regions as clusters of geographically proximate states that are distinct from the larger international system in terms of modes of physical/material interaction and/or in a cultural-ideational sense (Buzan, 2012: 22; Paul, 2012: 4). However, it is recognized that "regions are formed and operate in different ways" (Fawn, 2005: 30). Given the multiple trajectories of region formation, I propose one important pathway to their origin. Following Katzenstein (2005: 39), I use an eclectic approach that combines cognitive and material factors. The cognitive priors of the elite are, indeed, the first step toward region formation, as argued by Acharya. Cognitive priors are historically informed and stem from how leaders divide the world in their minds. However, "regions on the mind do not equal regions of the mind" (Agnew, 1999). Consequently, material factors are important and the realities of hard power "cannot be exempt" from our understanding of regions (Hurrell, 2007: 170).

I argue that regions emerge out of the interaction between leaders' cognitive priors, the politico-military interaction capacity in the system, and strategic geography. The politico-military interaction capacity refers to the ability of states to militarily engage each other, and is a function of material power and political will (Buzan and Little, 2000: 91–96). Strategic geography captures the effects of large distances (and the consequent declining ability to project power) (Boulding, 1962: 262), oceans ("the stopping power of water") (Mearsheimer, 2014: Kindle location 2046), and other factors related to military topography (mountains/deserts). The presence of technologies such as navies can transcend oceanic/physical barriers, and even geographers debate whether oceans unite or divide (Wigen, 2005). Therefore, regionalization is the dynamic outcome of this threefold interaction. Not only does this approach eschew geographical determinism, but it recognizes that the boundaries of a region may or may not coincide with the leaders' cognitive priors because material factors remain consequential.

It is important to empirically demonstrate that leaders create "mental images" (Acharya, 2008) to demarcate this region from the wider international system/society. The "deep rules" (Khong, 2014) associated with the system's primary institutions can be used as such regional markers as the practices accompanying them may be different within a given region from those outside. My methodology is both "diachronic" and "polysemous" (Costa-Buranelli, 2014b). Since "deep historical rooting" is "part of the comparative process" (Buzan and Zhang, 2014b: 230), I demonstrate diachronically that South Asia did not exist as a region in the pre-Mughal millennium as the practices associated with warfare, great power management, diplomacy, and political economy did not meaningfully differentiate South Asia from Eurasia. I also show the polysemic "deep rules" associated with these primary institutions along three axes — in South Asia, in Mughal–Safavid–Ottoman relations, and in Mughal relations with the rest of Islamicate Asia — to highlight the distinctiveness of South Asia from the wider Islamicate society after the rise of the Mughals (see Table 1).[4]

Following Holsti (2004: 21–22), the existence of these primary institutions that evolve historically to regulate inter-unit interactions is indicated by "patterned practices," in addition to "coherent sets of *ideas and/or beliefs*," and "*norms*," including "rules and etiquette." While ideas do not "cause" these practices or vice versa, they are "intertwined" and "reinforce" each other (Holsti, 2004: 37). Since international orders "exhibit a contingent evolutionary logic" (Ikenberry, 2016: 549), these practices must be determined empirically since "history and theory" are "co-constitutive" (Buzan and Lawson, 2017: 7, 16).[5]

Table 1. The polysemic “deep rules” and practices associated with the primary institutions in South and Islamicate Asia.

	Mughal–non-Mughal South Asia	Mughal–Safavid–Ottoman relations	Mughal–rest of Islamicate Asia
Warfare	Territorial incorporation	(i) Limited to the borderlands (ii) No great power military alliances (despite rhetoric)	Ensure access to trade and transit (not control)
Great power management	(i) Intervention in domestic politics (ii) Management of regional disputes (iii) Limiting Safavid/Ottoman influence	To maintain *de facto* “spheres of influence”	Non-intervention in domestic politics or regional disputes
Diplomacy	To establish Mughal hierarchy: symbolic, political, and military	To maintain theoretical equality and status competition	To establish symbolic Mughal hierarchy and trade-led diplomacy
Political economy	(i) Economic expansion and “closeness” through trade and finance (ii) Monetization of the economy (iii) “Unit” for trade beyond South Asia	(i) Export manufactures (cotton textiles); import bullion and horses (ii) “Functional services” of South Asian merchant-moneylenders	(i) Export manufactures (cotton textiles); import bullion and horses (ii) “Functional services” of South Asian merchant-moneylenders

The focus on South Asia is also apt because “there is a dearth of historical work” outside of Europe on “the ways in which regions have been constructed and imagined” (Hurrell, 2007: 158). Notably, the English School has recently been applied to the regional level of analysis. However, this literature focuses on contemporary regions of world politics like the Middle East or East Asia (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez, 2009; Buzan and Zhang, 2014a), or it considers regions such as Central Asia or West-Central Africa before the expansion/globalization of the European international society as full-fledged international societies in their own right (Costa-Buranelli, 2014a; Pella, 2015). By contrast, I argue that early modern South Asia was not a full-fledged international society, but merely one region of the Islamicate international society, thereby demonstrating that regions existed in historical international societies prior to the globalization of the European international society in the modern era.

South Asia

The pre-Mughal millennium

South Asia is best conceived as a “crossroads” (Subrahmanyam, 2013: 4) as it was not a region in the “mental images” of the pre-Mughal elite.[6] While the 13th-century

Indo-Persian historian Juzjani saw Delhi "as the epicenter of Islamic lands, a rival to Baghdad, Constantinople, Egypt, and Jerusalem, and even the center of the circle of Islam" (Flood, 2009: 229), the Hindu-Chola kings of the Tamil south (9th–13th century) saw themselves as the "*chakravartigal*"/universal rulers of the realm stretching from the Himalayas to the peninsula (Thapar, 2002: 366). This is despite the fact that this southern empire limited to the peninsula led naval expeditions to South-east Asia in the 11th century while ignoring the rising Indo-Islamic powers to its north (Kulke et al., 2009). For most of the pre-Mughal millennium, the northern parts of the subcontinent were geopolitically oriented toward the Middle East/Central Asia, while the Deccan (peninsula) was a part of the Indian Ocean-centered Afro-Eurasian world economy.

Since the emergence of Islamic political power in the Hindu–Buddhist regions of Seistan and Sindh (contemporary Iran–Afghanistan–Pakistan borderlands), there was a recorded "raid, battle or campaign … for almost every decade between 636 and 1296" as the Islamic frontier expanded into the subcontinent (Richards, 1974: 94). After the beginning of Islamic expansion in the north-west but before the Chola attacks on South-east Asia, Bengal became a tributary of Tibet (8th century), while Kashmir sought support from the Tang Empire to meet the combined Tibetan/Arab challenge (Wink, 2002: 44). However, the polities around the Indus continued to remain strategically oriented toward the north-west due to the arrival of the Mongols in Afghanistan (in 1221), which culminated with Timur's/Tamerlane's "sack" of the Delhi Sultanate in 1398. Notably, Delhi had become the destination of Persianized Central Asian Turks, Iranians, and other elite Muslims after the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258 (Jackson, 1999).

While Delhi and other northern sultanates nominally ruled their polities in the name of the Abbasid Caliphate before 1258, the small polities in the deep south of the peninsula and the Bengali Sultanate were oriented toward South-east Asia. In fact, the Ming naval expeditions (1405–1433) participated in regime change politics in the city-states along the Coromandel/Malabar coasts, while a Ming military contingent helped resolve a dispute between the Bengal and Jaunpur Sultanates (Sen, 2011). However, the new Islamic ruler of Bengal (a recent convert from Hinduism) also sought and received confirmation from the Cairene Caliphate in 1415 (before styling himself as the caliph) (Petrovich, 2012: 63).

Meanwhile, the peninsular Bahmani Sultanate voluntarily submitted to the non-contiguous Eurasian empire of Timur after 1398 due to their common rivalry with Delhi (Balabanlilar, 2012: 40). Many Deccani polities also recruited East African Abyssinian "slaves" from across the Indian Ocean as soldier-administrators, who rose to positions of politico-military power (Eaton, 2005: 105–128). Even the Hindu-led polities like the Vijayanagara Empire (1336–1646) consciously participated in the Islamicate system through symbols, the emulation of fiscal-administrative structures, and the recruiting of Muslim-Turkic soldiers (Asher and Talbot, 2006: 53–83).

Likewise, there were several sub-regional economies in South Asia that were loosely connected, although pre-Mughal South Asia was not an economic unit (Asher and Talbot, 2006: 25–114). For example, while the Delhi Sultanate attacked its neighboring polities to extract tribute, it used these resources to counter the north-western Mongol onslaught. Delhi did not have direct/continuous access to the maritime regions of Bengal and Gujarat (oriented toward the Indian Ocean), while the Vijayanagara Empire in the deep

south was cut off from the west coast by city-states despite its dependence upon seaborne commerce. Given their heterogeneous geopolitical, economic, and ideological interests and orientations, the subcontinental polities were parts of different/multiple and loosely/partially overlapping international systems during this period as the practices associated with warfare, great power management, diplomacy, and political economy did not meaningfully differentiate South Asia from Eurasia.

The Mughal Empire and the emergence of South Asia within Islamicate Asia

Islamicate Asia (~1500–1750). The formation of three great imperial polities in middle Eurasia in the 16th century — the Ottomans (~1300/1516–1517), the Safavids (1501), and the Mughals (1526/1555) — transformed this zone into an international system "like the diverse but related states of Western Europe," and this "cultural zone" also "included parts of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa" (Dale, 2010a: 3). The transformation of the Ottoman polity into a genuine empire under Selim I and the conquest of Mamluk Egypt (1516–1517) led to the emergence of Ottoman naval power in the Indian Ocean and the establishment of direct diplomatic links with the Acehnese Sultanate (established in 1496) (Casale, 2010). While these three self-proclaimed "universal empires" were the system's primary actors, the secondary actors included the Uzbeg Empire, the Deccani Sultanates, and South-east Asian polities, as well as the Portuguese Empire and the Dutch and English company-polities.[7]

The Mughal Empire — A brief history. Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, was a Turkic-speaking Sunni Muslim Central Asian from the Fergana Valley who was a descendant of Genghis Khan and Timur. Babur had conquered Delhi in 1526 with the help of Ottoman-Turkic gunners, while his son, Humayun, received support from the Safavids as the Mughals consolidated their rule in the subcontinent; meanwhile, their subcontinental opponents sought help/refuge from the Ottomans (Petrovich, 2012: 161–174). Babur's grandson, Akbar (who came to power in 1556) transformed the Mughal polity into a genuine empire by 1580 after conquering the realm stretching from Kabul to the Indus-Gangetic regions, as well as the maritime regions of Gujarat and Bengal. By Akbar's time, no "single kingdom or coalition of regional kingdoms could stand against the Mughal armies" (Richards, 2001: 56). Subsequently, Akbar and his three successors — Jahangir (1605–1627), Shah Jahan (1628–1658), and Aurangzeb (1658–1707) — focused their efforts on the five rich Shia-Deccani Sultanates — Khandesh, Ahmednagar, Berar, Bijapur, and Golconda.

During Akbar's reign, the Mughal Empire emerged as one of the wealthiest polities in the world (along with the Ming Empire) due to its large agrarian base and structural trade surpluses from the export of cotton textiles, the most widely traded global commodity of that period (Washbrook, 2007). By 1600, the Mughals controlled 100–145 million people, compared to 22 million and 10 million in the Ottoman and Safavid realms, respectively (Dale, 2010a: 107–108): "In the minds of the rest of the Islamic world Mughal India was a land of great wealth … and the Mughal courts were the richest and most generous of the time" (Blake, 1991: 33). Not surprisingly, Akbar issued the so-called

"infallibility decree" in 1579 (Buckler, 1924), proclaiming himself as the "Padishah of Islam" (Casale, 2010: 154), thereby simultaneously rejecting the Ottomans' caliphal claim and the Shia-Safavid claim to superiority. The implication was clear: the powerful/wealthy Mughals were no longer in debt of the Ottomans/Safavids for their earlier support, and they were theoretically equals (even as they competed over status).

However, as the Mughals expanded into the Deccan after extinguishing all the Shia Sultanates (1686–1687) and reached Gingee in the Tamil country by the end of the 17th century, they were beset with numerous crises: imperial overstretch, succession disputes, and domestic insurgencies (Bhargava, 2014). The death knell for the Mughals came in the form of the Persian ruler Nader Shah's invasion of Delhi in 1739. Nader Shah's victory resulted in looting on such a vast scale that Persia "was exempted from taxes for three years" (Axworthy, 2009: 9). While the Mughal polity had been reduced from a world empire to a rump polity by the 1760s, most new sovereigns in the subcontinent legitimized their rule only under symbolic Mughal authority, including the East India Company after the conquest of Bengal in the 1750s/1760s (until 1803). The Mughal polity finally ended after the failed 1857 Indian Uprising under titular Mughal leadership.

The Mughal creation of South Asia: Mental images

There were at least three distinct contemporary zones that the Mughals sought to dominate — South Asia, parts of South-east Asia, and their Timurid ancestral lands in Central Asia. First, the Mughal worldview was significantly shaped by the Arabic term *al-Hind*, which was used in "a politico-geographical sense" to refer to "the entire Indianized [Hindu–Buddhist] region from Sind[h] and Makran to the Indonesian archipelago and mainland Southeast Asia" (Wink, 2002: 5). The Mughals used this term in its Persian variant as *Hindustan*.[8] For Abul Fazl (Blochmann and Jarrett, 1873–1907b: 7), the court historian and vizier of Akbar, Hindustan was surrounded by lofty mountains in the north, while being "enclosed on the east, west, and south by the Ocean." He nevertheless included "Ceylon [Sri Lanka], Achin [Aceh], the Moluccas, Malacca, and a considerable number of islands" within its extent (Blochmann and Jarrett, 1873–1907b: 7). Akbar himself clubbed South and South-east Asia together by declaring his intention to control "all the ports of Hindustan, from Cinde [Sindh], to Chatigão [Chittagong], and Pegu [lower Burma]" in 1601 (Flores and De Saldanha, 2003: 45).

Second, the Mughals also wanted to reclaim their Central Asian ancestral homeland. While Babur was certainly attracted to the "gold and money" of Hindustan, he was never at home there, and had "an abiding nostalgia for Central Asia" (Subrahmanyam, 2014: 47). Akbar also hoped "to proceed to Turan … [and] Badakshān" to "get the possession of the land of his ancestors" should Hindustan "be civilized by means of obedient vassals" (Beveridge, 1837–1939: 616). Jahangir (Rogers and Beveridge, 1909–1914 [~1620]: 89) also desired "the conquest of Māwarā'a-n-nahr (Transoxiana), which was the hereditary kingdom" of his "ancestors" after freeing "Hindustan from the rubbish of factions and rebellions." However, the Mughals attempted the conquest of the Timurid lands only once, in 1646/1647, under Shah Jahan, but failed (Foltz, 1996).

Finally, there was a third idea of the region that the Mughals hoped to control, and it was limited only to what we would recognize as South Asia today. The historian Jafar

Beg Qazvini, working under Akbar, produced a grand historical narrative in which Islamicate Asia was divided into three "units," which were "not dynastic but politico-geographical" — Rūm, Iran, and Hindustan (Anooshahr, 2012: 235). Such a "territorial vision of history was new" as it "closed off South Asia to all but Mughal imperial claims" because of inter-imperial rivalry with the Ottomans/Safavids (Anooshahr, 2012: 235, 238). The ultimate goal of this conception of Hindustan was that of a Mughal polity that would dominate the entire subcontinent (Ali, 1996). Furthermore, the Mughals consciously translated Sanskrit politico-religious classics, including the *Mahabharata*, to position themselves as the legitimate successors of Hindustan's ancient rulers, including pre-Islamic rulers (Truschke, 2016). By the end of Akbar's reign, Hindustan had become "synonymous with the entire subcontinent" (Flores, 2015: 547), and the dynasty's "already composite identity as 'Turco-Iranians' … merged" with the non-Muslim traditions of South Asia (Lefèvre, 2012: 279). Why did one idea of a region limited to South Asia prevail when the cognitive priors of the Mughals also included parts of Central and South-east Asia?

The Mughal creation of South Asia: Primary institutions

Warfare

The Ottoman–Safavid and Mughal–Safavid frontiers were settled through warfare, and their politico-military interaction was limited to the borderlands. While there was no "impassable" physical barrier between the Ottomans and the Safavids (Dale, 2015: 6), the 1514 Ottoman–Safavid war at Chāldirān resulted in a strategic "stalemate" (Quinn, 2010: 210) as subsequent territorial exchanges were relatively minor and a function of politico-military power during any given encounter. Likewise, the Mughal–Safavid frontier was largely settled along the Hindu Kush/Sulaiman Mountains, with Kabul under decisive Mughal control after 1585, although their territorial rivalry, limited to the control of Qandahar, continued throughout this period and it "changed hands on a dozen occasions" between them (Islam, 1970: 14).

Not surprisingly, Abul Fazl considered Kabul and Qandahar as the "twin gates of Hindustán" (Blochmann and Jarrett, 1873–1907a: 398), although the Mughal armies raised on the Indus-Gangetic plains found it extremely difficult to project military power around the Hindu Kush/Sulaiman Mountains and beyond. This was largely due to the fact that these snow-clad mountains had few traversable passes and the application of military power in this region required long supply lines and horses from the Middle East/Central Asia (Gommans, 2002: 23–24). The projection of military power beyond this region raised the additional issue of logistics because the Mughal armies found it difficult to seek supplies from these semi-nomadic, agriculturally wanting regions, as Shah Jahan discovered during the solitary Mughal foray to capture the Timurid lands in 1646/1647.

In the east, the Mughals were unable to project military power beyond Magh-Arakan (in contemporary Myanmar, which was incorporated into the empire as an extension of Bengal) because Mughal power based on cavalry was not suitable in this ecological zone of wet forests (Gommans, 2002: 165). Although they were able to periodically subdue

Ahom-Assam and extract tribute, the Mughals found it difficult to annex this South-east Asian-style state in the forested eastern borderlands of the subcontinent that "moved entire local populations to another location" if the situation demanded (Richards, 2001: 106).

Therefore, even as the Mughals proclaimed themselves as "universal emperors" and "conspicuously missing from virtually all Mughal maps are territorial limitations" (Gommans, 2002: 20), the Mughal world-conquering ambitions were limited to the subcontinent only, with the Deccan as the most important frontier for expansion after 1580. Of the three major powers of Islamicate Asia, only the Ottomans developed an oceangoing navy and created a multi-continental territorial empire. However, the Mughals were able to successfully annex Gujarat by 1580 despite the large-scale presence of Turkic merchant-administrators and soldiers there, who had sought help from the Ottomans to ward off the Mughals. The Gujarati Sultanate "amounted to an informal but permanent Ottoman colony in the very heart of the Indian Ocean trading world," and Akbar was determined "to limit Ottoman influence" in the subcontinent's maritime borderlands (Casale, 2010: 48, 153).

However, the Mughals made no attempt to develop an oceangoing navy — despite their vast financial resources — even as Aceh submitted to the Ottoman navy (Casale, 2010: 124–125, 145–147, 180–181), and Abul Fazl had included the "Indianized" parts of South-east Asia, including Aceh, in his conception of Hindustan. The Mughals were the pre-eminent land power in the subcontinent and the strength of the Mughal economy and the subcontinent's structural trade surplus ensured that the security and prosperity of the realm was not affected by the lack of naval power.[9]

When the Maldives requested Mughal intervention in 1662 against the Dutch and English company-polities, the Mughals declined after noting that the emperor was "master only of land and not of the sea" (Prakash, 1985: 48). Since European maritime powers had no choice but to finance their trade with the Mughals by exporting bullion (largely extracted from the Americas), and because they lacked the power to establish themselves on the Asian landmass, the Mughals did not consider them as equals (Subrahmanyam, 2017). The Mughals were also able to successfully protect their maritime trade from disruption by European maritime powers on the high seas by responding militarily against them on land in Gujarat/Bengal, as the Dutch and the English discovered in the 1640s/1650s and 1680s/1690s, respectively (Arasaratnam, 1994: 263).

In other words, warfare was one of the primary institutions through which the Mughals created South Asia. Although their universal pretensions pointed toward continuous expansion, the interaction of their cognitive priors, politico-military interaction capacity, and strategic geography limited the "deep rule" of Mughal territorial expansion to the subcontinent. The Mughal Empire was a war machine that fought two main types of wars: first, the Mughals sought territorial expansion to increase their agricultural tax base, and to secure trade/communication routes for their defense; and, second, the Mughals intervened in the internal affairs of the peripheral polities to extract tribute, to subjugate them, and to eventually conquer them. Significantly, the aim of Mughal warfare in the subcontinent was not the destruction of their enemies, but their incorporation through "endless rounds of negotiations" (Gommans, 2002: 205).

Neither the Mughals nor any of the other subcontinental polities fought any wars outside of South Asia. When the Sunni Uzbegs asked the Sunni Mughals for an anti-Shia/

Safavid alliance in 1577, Akbar admonished the Uzbegs and angrily replied that "he did not regard a difference in law and religion as a ground for conquest" (Beveridge, 1837–1939: 292). This policy continued under his successors and a grand Sunni Ottoman–Mughal–Uzbeg alliance against the Safavids did not materialize despite periodic rhetoric. In fact, depending on the exigencies of power politics, the Mughals occasionally provided financial support or military advisors to the Ottomans or the Safavids during their wars with each other. However, the Mughals did not intervene militarily in the Ottoman–Safavid or Safavid–Uzbeg rivalries, even when requested by the contending parties (Farooqi, 2004: 62). The "deep rules" of Mughal warfare in South Asia were clearly different from those governing Mughal–Safavid–Ottoman warfare or warfare with other Islamicate Asian polities.

Great power management

Complementing warfare was the institution of great power management in subcontinental affairs. The Mughals followed three interrelated practices as the self-appointed managers of subcontinental geopolitics: to resolve domestic political conflicts in the region's secondary polities; to arbitrate disputes between rival polities; and to prevent the Ottomans/Safavids from establishing political-territorial control or geopolitical influence in the subcontinent. According to Chandra (2003: 449), Abul Fazl "makes out" the "oppression of the peasantry, violence against men's properties and lives, and destruction of the honour of families" as the "causes" of Mughal intervention in Ahmednagar. The Mughals also intervened in the succession conflicts in the Deccani Sultanates, even as the ultimate success of the candidates backed by them and/or their loyalty to the Mughals if successful were not always guaranteed (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 2004).

Likewise, the Mughals acted as the great power mediators in the political disputes between rival Deccani Sultanates. Bijapur and Golconda formalized the role of the Mughals in managing disputes between them through the 1636 Treaty of Submission. A decade later, as Bijapur and Golconda disagreed over territory and booty as they simultaneously expanded into the regions to their south, the Mughal emperor personally intervened to resolve the issue by dividing the spoils 2:1 in favor of Bijapur (Chandra, 2003: 456–457). Similarly, many Rajput chiefdoms also sought Mughal intervention in their disputes with rival chiefdoms and with domestic succession struggles. In the mid-17th century, the last ruler of the now-diminished Vijayanagara also turned to the Mughals in its dispute with Golconda (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 1998).

Through such practices, they were demonstrating that South Asia belonged to the Mughal sphere of influence, and they consciously sought to limit Ottoman/Safavid influence in regional affairs. Analogous to Mughal sensitivities regarding Gujarat–Ottoman relations discussed earlier, the Mughal thrust toward the Deccan was also dictated by Deccan–Safavid connections. Along with the quest for tribute and territory, the Mughals intervened in Deccani affairs to limit Safavid influence there given the Shia persuasion of these polities and the migration of Iranians and their consequent politico-military role there. The Mughals also worried about a two-front war in the Deccan and Qandahar due to these links. When the Safavids offered "to give up an equivalent or larger territory" from their own realm in the early 17th century to save Bijapur from the Mughals, they

were ignored (Nayeem, 1974: 63). The Mughals would have compromised their hegemony in South Asia by giving the Safavids a role in Bijapur while creating military/logistics issues related to controlling territory beyond the Sulaiman Mountains.

In other words, there were military-geographic limits to Mughal practices of great power management. Despite their intervention in Deccani politics, the Mughals did not intervene in the succession struggles and political strife in the Uzbeg Empire after 1598, even as it had weakened considerably, although the Mughals coveted their ancestral lands in possession of the Uzbegs (Khan, 2003: 332–334). Mughal non-intervention in Uzbeg-Central Asia is noteworthy because it is closer to Delhi compared to the Deccan. Along with warfare, great power management also helped demarcate South Asia as a region within Islamicate Asia.

Diplomacy

While the diplomatic history of Islamicate/South Asia remains under-researched, a close analysis of Mughal court protocols/rituals, practices (the exchange of embassies), and perceptions (articulated in memoirs and displayed in art) demonstrates that the Mughals conceived of diplomatic relations along three separate axes: relations with the Ottomans/Safavids; relations with the subcontinental polities; and relations with other polities in Islamicate Asia (including the European powers). Diplomatic practices were "the site" where the other primary institutions were "reproduced" (Sending et al., 2015: 17) and contributed to order-building in South Asia. While the Mughals treated the Ottomans/Safavids as theoretical equals (while competing for status), they considered all other Islamicate Asian polities as subordinates, albeit with important distinctions between subcontinental and non-subcontinental subordinates.

Given their universalist claims, diplomatic representation "implied an integration into Mughal hierarchy," unlike practices in Europe, where "the ambassador remained distinct from the foreign court" (Flüchter, 2016: 118). All foreign diplomats, as well as Mughal ministers and other notables, were required to stand deferentially in an elaborate hierarchical order around the emperor according to their status (Fisher, 2016: Kindle location 1984). Only the Ottoman and the Safavid ambassadors stood apart and saluted the Mughal emperor in their own styles while all others were expected to perform the Mughal genuflection (*sijdah* and *taslim*) (Farooqi, 2004: 84). Similarly, the Mughal emperor personally received the Ottoman and Safavid envoys and the correspondence from their monarchs, even as other envoys and their letters were received via Mughal intermediaries (Farooqi, 2004: 84). While the Ottomans and Safavids reciprocated Mughal courtesies, the Deccani Sultans accepted the exalted status of the Mughals by accepting their correspondence directly from Mughal envoys. One of the chief functions of diplomacy in Islamicate Asia was to establish the relative power and status of the courts sending and receiving embassies, which were only sent when needed and stayed abroad for a finite period. The "deep rules" of diplomacy in South/Islamicate Asia were clearly distinct from those of Europe, which saw the emergence of the resident ambassador in Renaissance Italy.

In terms of status competition, Akbar challenged the Ottoman rulers' self-perception as the caliphs of Islam by declaring himself as the caliph, as well as through his massive

charity works in Mecca and Medina, which led to Ottoman complaints about the effects of Mughal charity on the local economy and on Ottoman sovereignty (Farooqi, 1996). The Ottomans also complained when the Mughal Prince Khurram gave himself the title of Shah Jahan (Shah of the World) after becoming the emperor in 1628 as he was the Shah of Hindustan only. The Mughals were particularly problematic for the Ottomans because not only were they fellow Sunnis, but their "power and wealth" also "began to impede upon Ottoman sensitivities" (Petrovich, 2012: 345). Lured by its riches, many Ottoman subjects migrated to South Asia, and some Ottoman provincial-level administrators defected and sought employment in Mughal administration.

Similarly, the Mughals were in constant cultural competition with the Safavids due to their historical support for Babur and Humayun, and because the Mughals had adopted Persian as the language of politics and administration. To demonstrate their own superiority, the Mughals "appropriated the mythical Iranian past" in their elaborate artworks to project themselves, rather than the Safavids, "as true heirs to ancient Persian kingship" (Koch, 2012: 209). The Mughals also celebrated the cosmopolitan and tolerant nature of their empire compared to the Shia sectarianism of the Safavids. This allowed the Mughals to extol themselves as the true universal monarchs because Sunni Iranians fled Safavid persecution by migrating to South Asia, along with Iranians of all persuasions who were attracted to Mughal wealth (Subrahmanyam, 1992).

While all foreign diplomats were expected to present gifts (*nazr*) to the Mughal emperor commensurate with their status, the subordinate subcontinental polities were also expected to pay tribute (*peshkash*) (Siebenhüner, 2013). Many Rajput chiefs and Deccani monarchs had to send a male heir to the Mughal court as an expression of their subordination, often with the unstated goal of eventually joining the Mughal administration (Fisher, 2016: Kindle location 1550). Some subordinate polities, like Bijapur, were expected to contribute troops in joint expeditions with the Mughals (Chandra, 2006: 200). Many polities, like Bijapur and Golconda (after the 1636 treaty), were also required to allow the stationing of a Mughal high-official (*wakil*) at their courts as a symbol of their subordination (Chandra, 2003: 482). The Mughals styled themselves as the *shahanshah* (Shah of Shahs) or as *padishah* (the Chief Shah), while the rulers of the vassal states were called *shahs* (kings) if they submitted formally or as *khans*/*marzabans* (local chiefs) if formal submission was resisted (Chandra, 2006: 190). Formal submission for the Deccani Sultanates included the payment of an annual tribute, striking coins in the name of the Mughals, and reading the Mughal emperor's name as the ruler/caliph in the Friday prayers.

These diplomatic procedures were the symbolic expression of a Mughal-centered hierarchical order in South Asia (which allowed the Mughals to reject Ottoman/Safavid claims to superiority). However, there were differences in Mughal relations with subcontinental subordinates compared to subordinates outside of the subcontinent. For example, success or failure of the European powers depended on the nature of their gifts and on whether they prostrated (*sijdah*) before the emperor or his representatives (Chida-Rizvi, 2014). The Dutch and English envoys performed these rituals several times, even if reluctantly (Jaffer, 2004: 79). The Portuguese were considered "as only one of the many frontier peoples" of the Mughal realm, alongside the Deccanis, since they had established an enclave in Goa (Flores, 2015: 553). The Mughals could assert superiority

over the Europeans in Islamicate Asia as they were viewed largely as armed brigands on the high seas (not consequential land powers), and because Europe's "principal export" to Asia before the Industrial Revolution was "violence" (Parker, 2003: 115).

Many Indian Ocean polities maintained relations with Mughal coastal provinces as opposed to the imperial court, thereby highlighting the commercial nature of their relationships. Aceh was a notable exception in this regard, and by the late 16th century, Aceh had begun to emulate Mughal political institutions (due to the fame of Mughal riches and decline of Ottoman naval power) (Lombard, 1999). Nevertheless, the Europeans and South-east Asians accepted Mughal robes of honor (*khilat*) that had symbolically been used by the emperor as acts of submission and incorporation into the Mughal hierarchy analogous to the practices of the subcontinent. They understood that the Mughals would endow them with presents and commercial privileges "worth more than those they had presented" if all the rituals were adequately performed (Jaffer, 2004: 83). The overriding commercial nature of the Mughal relationship with the Europeans and South-east Asians differentiated them from subcontinental polities, even as all of them symbolically accepted Mughal superiority.

Political economy

By 1580, Mughal economic policies "interconnected various parts of South Asia in increasingly close networks" (Asher and Talbot, 2006: 152). The conquest of the rich Indus-Gangetic agricultural plains and the maritime regions of Gujarat and Bengal, as well as the control of the overland trade via Kabul, allowed the Mughal Empire to emerge as the richest state in Islamicate Asia. Akbar also monetized the Mughal economy by establishing "a new tri-metallic currency with the silver rupee as the basic coin" (Wink, 1988: 55). Henceforth, all commercial transactions, including taxation and the payment of soldiers' salaries (especially the cavalry), became dependent on cash. However, the monetization of the economy was intimately interconnected with international trade as the subcontinent lacked sizable deposits of silver (or gold). Under the Mughals, South Asia emerged as the leading exporter in the world and perhaps 60% of global manufacturing exports were produced in the subcontinent, primarily cotton textiles (Darwin, 2008: 193). This made the subcontinent the "ultimate sink" for precious metals mined in the Americas (Richards, 1997: 206).

Not surprisingly, the Mughals increased the land under cultivation by clearing forests and encouraged the production of commercial crops. They also implemented policies to ensure the protection of trade routes and the building of maritime port infrastructure. The links between trade and bullion, tax collection in cash, and the expenditure of capital for Mughal war efforts created a sophisticated banking system (Asher and Talbot, 2006: 273). The main Mughal financial market in Surat (Gujarat) also fostered the growth of financial houses in non-Mughal South Asia along the Coromandel and Malabar coasts (Arasaratnam, 1994: 184, 273). Mughal and non-Mughal South Asia also became interlinked through overland and maritime trade in food products and textiles (Asher and Talbot, 2006: 172–173). The "commercial ties" that now connected South Asia "had no precedents" (Raychaudhuri, 1982: 184), and this Mughal-led multi-polity region emerged as a "unit" in international trade (Richards, 1997: 204).

This political-economic regionalization of South Asia was key to the survival of the Mughal state. In addition to the bullion trade and the commercialization of the Mughal economy, control over the maritime and overland supply routes for warhorses (Gujarat/Bengal/Kabul) — the backbone of the Mughal military machine — were firmly under Mughal authority (since the climate of South Asia was not suitable for raising horses) (Gommans, 2002: 111–121). At the same time, Mughal wealth continued to attract Ottoman "experts in military technology and firearm specialists," Safavid "artists, bureaucrats, and literati," and Central Asian "military immigrants" to man the administrative and military institutions of the empire since it lacked an ethnic core (Dale, 2010b: 267).

In return, the Mughal economy provided "functional services" (Ikenberry, 2011: 31) for the rest of Islamicate Asia in the form of (Muslim and non-Muslim) South Asian merchant-moneylenders. Buoyed by the strength of the Mughal economy, South Asian merchant-moneylenders were the "largest" and the "most influential" commercial agents in Islamicate Asia (Levi, 2010: 576). They resided outside of South Asia for long periods of time selling South Asian cotton textiles, investing the profits to connect rural–urban markets in some of their host societies and monetizing their economies, collecting taxes on behalf of some hosts, and even funding some of their military campaigns (Subrahmanyam and Bayly, 1988). The rest of Islamicate Asia had a stake in the economic order created by the Mughals.

In other words, the regional order in South Asia and the economic order in Islamicate Asia mutually sustained each other through links between trade, finance, and military power. Although Mughal warfare was centered on the cavalry, horses were imported from Islamicate Asia and Mughal soldiers were paid in cash, even as the monetary resources/bullion for these transactions were generated through a trade surplus. As such, the monetization of the Mughal economy sustained warfare in South Asia. In turn, Mughal wealth and military power supported the practices associated with the primary institutions of great power management and diplomacy that were co-constituted with Mughal hegemony in South Asia through symbols and substance, as discussed earlier. In sum, political economy was the link between the regional order in South Asia and the Islamicate society, and the practices associated with these institutions developed together and reinforced each other, thus sustaining the Islamicate system (~1580–1720).

Implications for International Relations theory

The study of hegemony

The emergence of South Asia as a region under Mughal hegemony has two important theoretical implications. First, coercive hegemony should be considered as one of the primary institutions of an international/regional society. While some scholars do regard hegemony as a primary institution, their treatment of hegemony as "constraining of the powerful," as opposed to "facilitating their domination of the weak," is, in fact, about hegemony as a "legitimate" institution (Clark, 2011: 40). After all, these analyses focus on altering the behavior of the powerful "by the effects of legitimated rules" (Hurd, 2007: 79).

However, Mughal hegemony in early modern South Asia was coercive when Mughal military power was at its peak (~1580–1720) as it was based on the threat/use of force. Despite being conflict-prone, this was a long and prosperous era. Mughal hegemonic order in South Asia was not tantamount to an "empire" since polities independent of Mughal rule continued to exist throughout this period. For Doyle (1986: 19), empires "include more than just formally annexed territories, but they encompass less than the sum of all forms of international inequality." The Mughal polity was, indeed, organized as an empire and included areas of direct administration and those ruled through subordinate intermediaries (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 1998). However, Doyle's definition does not clearly demarcate "the boundary between nonempire and empire" (Motyl, 2001: 15).

This boundary can be determined by analyzing two interrelated links: the kind of superordinate control of the subordinate; and the directionality of the vector governing their relations. The kind of superordinate control can be gauged from Maier's (2006: 66) distinction between "being" and "having" an empire. While the Mughal polity was organized as an empire, it did not "have" an empire in the Deccan, not even after the 1636 Treaty of Submission that allowed the Mughals to post a *wakil*-official in Bijapur/Golconda. For example, post-1636, Golconda maintained its own currency, fought wars with Bijapur and the Mughals, expanded territorially into the deep south, and maintained diplomatic and economic relations with the Safavids and Aceh. Golconda was an international actor with considerable domestic/economic autonomy.[10]

Second, Watson's "pendulum analogy" can be used to understand the central axis of the struggle governing superordinate–subordinate relations (Watson, 1992: 13–16). The "gravitational pull" (Watson, 1992: 122–127) on this pendulum was in the form of the Mughals trying to limit Bijapur and Golconda's foreign policy through coercion (hegemony) as opposed to Bijapur/Golconda trying to negotiate autonomy within a Mughal political superstructure (empire).[11] The Mughals used coercion to prevent the subcontinent's secondary polities from submitting to, or establishing alliances with, the Safavids/Ottomans, even as trade, diplomacy, and immigration connected the Deccan with Islamicate Asia (and the Mughals did not and perhaps could not sever such links). Effectively, the Mughals established a *de facto* "sphere of influence" (Bull, 2012: 194–222) in South Asia through coercion. Although Mughal coercion was sometimes habitual ("dominance" for Bull) and sometimes reluctant ("hegemony" for Bull), this transition remains unclear in historiography. I characterize the Mughal-led regional order as hegemonic since it rested on the coercion of independent secondary states that did not freely submit (as opposed to imperial, in which subordinate communities seek autonomy). Bijapur and Golconda lay beyond the "boundary" of the Mughal Empire until their conquest/incorporation in 1686/1687.[12]

Yet, paradoxically, Mughal hegemony became "legitimate" — especially for sovereign imprimatur in the absence of coercion — only in the era of imperial decline (post-1720) as the Mughal successor states nominally ruled their new polities and struck coins in the name of the Mughal emperor, who merely controlled Delhi and its environs. While future research must address the issue of strategies of consent to explore the relationship between material power and the legitimacy of hegemonies, a brief comparison with Ming/Qing hegemony in East Asia is illuminating (Kang, 2010) as all hegemonies "are

not alike" (Ruggie, 1998: 121). The subordination of secondary polities in East Asia — Korea, Vietnam, and Japan — was based on a combination of the social logic of "relational affection and obligation" in addition to the instrumental logic of costs/benefits (Zhang, 2015: 7). However, this social logic was absent in Mughal South Asia (~1580–1720), where hegemony was based "entirely"[13] on coercion, for three main structural reasons.[14]

First, while East Asia was unipolar and Sinocentric/"radiational," where the secondary polities maintained diplomatic relations only with China as opposed to each other (Zhang, 2001: 53), Islamicate Asia was a multipolar and multiordinate system (Pardesi, 2017: 270–275). Not only did the Mughals, Ottomans, and Safavids treat each other as coequals, but the secondary polities of South Asia maintained diplomatic links with each other and with the great powers. Consequently, South Asia's secondary polities had more politico-military options than their East Asian counterparts. Therefore, even as the Mughals resorted to coercion to sever Ottoman–Gujarat and Safavid–Deccan links, the Ming/Qing Empires (until 1840) did not have to worry about links between a subordinate and another major power. Notably, the Ming/Qing Empires exercised system-wide hegemony, although Mughal hegemony was limited only to one region (South Asia) of Islamicate Asia.

Second, China was the primary civilization that had fostered the emergence of the secondary East Asian states, which borrowed its domestic political institutions/norms for state-making. By contrast, the Islamicate civilization was split between three major powers with their own universal pretensions, and the domestic institutions of the Mughal Empire were informed by multiple traditions (Persian, Turko-Mongol, and Indic). Notably, the secondary polities of the Deccan were formed before the Mughals (Eaton, 2005), and therefore lacked any obligation/affection. On the other hand, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam acknowledged their cultural debt to China until the 19th century (Holcombe, 2001: 5, 41, 178).

Finally, whereas the Ming/Qing dynasties inherited a unified Chinese Empire from their Mongol/Yuan predecessors, the Mughals found "a resolutely polycentric" system in South Asia, and had to create a hegemonic polity from scratch as it was absent over the previous millennium (Lieberman, 2009: 755).[15] This dramatic transformation in South Asia ensured that Mughal "rituals" of sovereignty "created a new social order and memory to sustain it" post-1720, and the Mughal successor states ruled in the name of the Mughals (who now lacked politico-military power) instead of framing their statehood on pre-Mughal (or other) traditions (Moin, 2017: 327). By contrast, China's "superiority was based on strength and was meaningless during periods of weakness and disorder" (Wang, 1983: 57). Future research must address why hegemonic authority sometimes survives the decline of the hegemon by studying these experiences.

Hegemony and balance of power

Next, coercive hegemony must be treated as a primary institution on a par with the balance of power, the "master-institution" of the European international society over the past 500 years (Wight, 1973: 93). While most scholars agree that this "balancing mechanism" worked differently in different centuries (Liska, 1977: 8), three factors have been

cited in the maintenance of the European balance: multiple fronts, the presence of land and sea powers, and the injection of extra-regional resources (Dehio, 1962; Kennedy, 1987; Thompson, 1996). However, all three of these factors were also present in South Asia in the period under consideration.

The Mughals faced challenges along multiple fronts — pressure from the Safavids and the Uzbegs in the Hindu Kush, the Ottomans in Gujarat, some Rajput chiefdoms, and the Bengali, Bihari, and Deccani Sultanates (with links to the Safavids). In part, the Mughals were able to overcome the challenge posed by multiple fronts due to their superior "administrative capacity" (Wohlforth et al., 2007: 15–16): the taxation-*jagir* and military manpower-*mansab* systems (Gommans, 2002; Richards, 2012). Second, as in Europe, the Mughals also faced potential naval balancers. Ottoman naval power along the Gujarati coast was capable of challenging the Mughals on land and disrupting Mughal regional hegemony. Given that the Ottoman navy was strong enough to create a non-contiguous empire (at least initially) in Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa, while dominating distant Aceh, contingency must be built into our explanation of Ottoman failure in Gujarat as many Gujarati-Turks were, in fact, "renegades from Ottoman rule" with uncertain loyalty toward them (Petrovich, 2012: 96). This is important because no theory of hegemony (or balances) can be deterministic.

This leaves the crucial factor of extra-regional resources. There are two distinct mechanisms as per to this logic. First, according to Thompson (1996: 174), "a very specific interpretation of the balance of power" worked in Europe after the 1490s: the injection of extra-regional resources in the form of alliances with European balancers against emerging regional hegemons, primarily the Ottomans and Russians in the East and later American power in the West. Second, "system expansion" resulting from the introduction of new [marchland] powers" into the system/region as the emerging hegemon expanded is believed to have thwarted attempts at hegemony in several cases in world history (as these marchland powers emulated and then checked the expanding hegemon) (Wohlforth et al., 2007: 11). Interestingly, South Asia also witnessed the introduction of extra-regional resources during this period from the marchlands. However, this introduction happened neither as alliances between regional and extra-regional powers to check the expanding regional hegemon, nor because the marchland power emulated and checked a rising/expanding regional hegemon. South Asia witnessed the injection of extra-regional marchland resources through immigration/conquests and the formation of "new" states (with new fiscal-military institutions).

The introduction of the Mughals and other Turko-Mongol/Persian administrators into the subcontinent, their fiscal-*jagir* and military-*mansab* systems, and world-conquering ideologies radically altered subcontinental geopolitics. While a subcontinental hegemon appeared in 1580 (and survived until 1720), such a geopolitical configuration was missing in the pre-Mughal millennium, which witnessed barely six dispersed decades of such hegemony (Schwartzberg, 2006: 260). The "cumulativity of power" (Wohlforth et al., 2007: 16) under the Mughals — simultaneous control over the most productive agricultural lands and maritime/continental trade routes — was necessary for the emergence of Mughal hegemony.

However, the impact of "immigration" and the consequent formation of new states (with new political/fiscal/military institutions) that confer geopolitical

advantages in the new region was also crucial, although immigration is consciously absent from Kaufman, Little, and Wohlforth's (2007: 246) world-historical survey of balances and hegemonies.[16] This is an important lacuna as such a process of hegemonic formation might not be that unique. While European (and African) immigration to the New World was an ongoing process after 1500, regional/hemispheric hegemony emerged only in the century following 1776 as the US emerged as a "new" political organization with novel institutions in the Americas. The "administrative capacity" of these new institutions allowed this expanding American state to "cumulate power" on its path toward regional hegemony. In both the Mughal and American cases, the ancestral homeland of the immigrants was not a part of the hegemonic realm.[17] Therefore, we need to pay more attention to the processes of system expansion and extra-regional resource injection. These processes are capable of producing balances as well as hegemonies. If system expansion and the injection of extra-regional resources happen through alliances or the inclusion of marcher states, then the system moves toward balances (Europe). However, if system expansion and extra-regional resource injection occurs through immigration and state formation through novel institutions, then hegemonies are possible (Mughal South Asia/the Western Hemisphere).

Finally, early modern Islamicate Asia was an anarchic system. Although the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals had universal pretensions, there was no system-wide empire in Islamicate Asia and the three major powers dealt as coequals. However, Islamicate Asia remained a multi-unit, anarchic system despite the absence of "systemic" balancing coalitions (Wohlforth et al., 2007: 3). Islamicate Asia was an anarchic system of "multiple hegemonies" (Wohlforth et al., 2007: 7) and a "society of empires" (Little, 2016). The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals exercised hegemony over their *de facto* "spheres of influence" within this system, although the reach of their hegemonies remained variable.[18] The system nevertheless did witness intense geopolitical/military struggles when their spheres collided. The absence of systemic balances and the presence of hegemonies — in South Asia and Islamicate Asia — mean that hegemony should be treated as a master-institution of an international/regional society alongside balance of power.

The Mughal-led regionalization of South Asia, as discussed earlier, happened in the absence of regionalism or the emergence of shared threat perceptions and common identities within South Asia, especially vis-a-vis extra-regional powers. For example, the Shia-Bijapuris repeatedly sought Safavid assurances against the Sunni-Mughals, including a two-front alliance. How the Mughals maintained hegemony for nearly one-and-a-half centuries continues to remain a theoretical puzzle given the widespread belief that "when regions are built purely on the basis of material power to reflect or serve the geopolitical needs of the great powers, without an ideational core or consensus, they do not last" (Acharya, 2012: 190). Future research must address if it is possible to create a legal-normative framework that enables hegemonic coercion, and why the subordinate states accept such coercion. The fierce resistance that the Deccani Sultanates put up against the Mughals demonstrates both that they were not "bandwagoning for profit" (Schweller, 1994), and that they did not submit because of the social logic of affect. Even as it was based on coercion, Mughal hegemony was long-lasting.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated that South Asia was not a region in the pre-Mughal millennium, even as the polities there belonged to the same "macro-culture," as remarked by Wight (1977: 195). While Wight's (1977: 33) better-known statement that a system/society "will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members" has already been challenged by Bull (2012: 13–6), as systems/societies do emerge among polities from different macro-cultures, my analysis shows that a common macro-culture did not produce a system/society in South Asia in the pre-Mughal millennium as these materially and ideologically heterogeneous polities were parts of different/multiple and loosely/partially overlapping systems. Why some macro-cultures generate systems/societies (like ancient Greece, ancient China, and South Asia of the *Arthashastra* and the Mughals) while others do not (such as South Asia of the pre-Mughal millennium), and why some of these systems/societies are formed under the shadow of a hegemon (Mughal South Asia) while others are organized toward the multiple-independences end of Watson's notional "pendulum" (ancient Greece), can only be answered through comparative-historical analysis of international systems/societies.

Furthermore, South Asia's emergence as a region under Mughal hegemony prior to the expansion/globalization of Europe shows that regions existed in international systems/societies before the creation of a global-scale international system. For Buzan (2012: 27), there are only two regions that existed before the era of Western/Japanese empires (~1750–1950): Europe and North-east Asia. South Asia's emergence as a region prior to the globalization of Europe means that this view must be amended, especially because early modern South Asia was a region of Islamicate Asia while Europe and North-east Asia were full-fledged international societies. Given the regionalization of contemporary world politics as American preponderance wanes, early modern Islamicate Asia may serve as a useful analytical comparator as we try to understand region–system interactions that create and sustain order.

We need to pay more attention to the patterns of region (trans)formation through time as they also affect order-building in addition to the rise/fall of the great powers and state (trans)formation. In fact, it is possible that after nearly half a millennium, South Asia will again cease to be the site of regional order-building in the coming decade(s) due to the rise of China, America's pivot to Asia, the normalization of Japan, and India's Act East policy. The merging of South Asia with North-east and South-east Asia — into a mega-region that is entering the mental images of the regional elite as the Indo-Pacific — will be a truly transformative change as Mughal South Asia was a part of Islamicate Asia. Understanding region (trans)formation also cautions against simplistic readings of the past to understand the present as the "region" in which contemporary China is rising is very different from the "region" where past Chinese empires exercised hegemony.

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Notes

1. Pre-Mughal South Asia may be conceived of as a "region" for sociological/anthropological purposes, although this would lead to research questions other than those of interest to International Relations scholars.
2. "Islamicate" refers to the sociocultural system found among Muslims and non-Muslims as opposed to the religion of Islam (Hodgson, 1974: 57–59).
3. Buzan (2012) is a notable exception.
4. An analysis along these three axes is sufficient as Islamicate Asia was organized around the Mughals, Safavids, and Ottomans, as explained subsequently. Buzan and Zhang (2014: 208) use a similar strategy in comparing East Asia with the "Western-global" as opposed to the "global" society.
5. For an alternative intersubjective ontology of the primary institutions, see Spandler (2015).
6. Post-*Arthashastra*, it remains unclear when/why South Asia ceased to be a region. For example, the Kushan Empire (~1st–3rd century CE) stretched from Central Asia to the Ganges.
7. Philips and Sharman (2015) focus on the Indian Ocean dimension of this system.
8. "Hindustan" had multiple meanings under the Mughals.
9. European hegemony in the Indian Ocean "crystallized" post-1750 (Conermann, 2015: 551).
10. American military presence in South Korea does not mean that America "has" an empire in Korea (Maier, 2006; Nexon and Wright, 2007).
11. Historians also treat the Deccani Sultanates as "independent" actors (Nayeem, 1974).
12. Even then, subcontinental polities like Portuguese-Goa, Ahom-Assam, and the city-states of the deep south lay beyond the Mughal "Empire."
13. Such hegemonic orders are, indeed, possible (Ikenberry, 2001: 23).
14. The social logic of Mughal coercion in South Asia was directed at the Ottomans/Safavids (who had to accept the Mughals as equals), although the secondary states of South Asia did not consider Mughal hegemony as legitimate.
15. The Mughals were perhaps influenced by the limited precedent of the Delhi Sultanate.
16. Islamicate Asia and the Mughals are also absent.
17. The standard explanations of American hegemony focus on weak/absent balancers (local and/or extra-regional) (Elman, 2004; Mearsheimer, 2014: Kindle location 4027–4211). On America's republican institutions, see Deudney (1995).
18. On Ottoman and Safavid hegemonies, see Kupchan (2014) and Matthee (2010).

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Author biography

Manjeet S. Pardesi is Senior Lecturer in the Political Science and International Relations Programme and Asia Research Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.