

INTRODUCTION

Regional cooperation has become an increasingly important phenomenon in international relations during the last sixty years. While it is globalisation that continues to captivate politicians, the business community, academics and the general public alike, the contemporary period could just as easily be described as the 'era of regionalism'. Since the end of the 1980s, the world has witnessed a new interest in and a resurgence of regional integration. The revival of European integration with the Single European Act seems to have generated a momentum not confined to Europe alone. The North American Free Agreement (NAFTA) was created, followed by Mercosur (Comisión Sectorial para el Mercado Común del Sur) in Latin America in 1991 and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Africa. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) became much more assertive in the 1990s and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) was set up.

However, regionalism is hardly a post-Cold War phenomenon. Indeed, it is possible to discern two big waves of regionalism. The first wave peaked between the late 1940s and the 1960s, and was dominated by the European experience. Several factors converged to make Western Europe a particularly fertile field for new modes of international cooperation to take a hold. These included exhaustion from the war, US hegemony and its role in the reconstruction of Western Europe, Cold War politics, regional security interdependencies, and a general questioning of the role of sovereignty and the state within Europe. There were attempts at region-building outside Europe as well, though these were far less successful. ASEAN, founded in 1967, remains perhaps the most notable exception here. It was all these empirical developments together that created an entirely new focus in international relations theory – the study of regional cooperation and regionalism.

First-wave theorising on regionalism was a reflection of wider concerns within international relations theory such as the implications of the security dilemma arising out of an anarchical international system. Integration theory, evolving as a particular expression of regionalism theory at the time, was preoccupied with questions around sovereignty and the role of the state. The debate that dominated this period of theorising, therefore, is characterised by the divide between the supranational and the intergovernmental schools of thought, both of which are concerned with the role of the state and sovereignty in the process of regionalism. During the 1970s, however, the theoretical and practical interest in regionalism calmed down somewhat. Largely responsible for this was a stalling of European integration in this period and the realisation that the relative success of European integration had not been emulated elsewhere in the world. The economic recession of the 1970s and the Second Cold War did not encourage prospects for regional cooperation.

The second wave, the so-called 'new regionalism', took off toward the end of the 1980s and developed in a fundamentally changed context compared to its Cold War

predecessor. The new regionalism, as an empirical trend, is closely associated with accelerated globalisation and other systemic factors. In line with these empirical developments a whole new direction of theoretical enquiry is evolving, and with it, a new schism. This current divide pits new advances in the field of European studies against the so-called new regionalism as a theoretical school of thought, which is more at home in the field of international relations or, to be more precise, in international political economy. This volume argues that this divide is counterproductive and reductionist. Instead of talking past each other, both branches should combine their insights for the purpose of comparative analysis. A comparative framework, drawing from recent advances in European studies and international relations, has the potential to illuminate more about particular cases, while also unearthing general principles.

Here, it is interesting to note a certain blindness towards history. While regionalism seems to be on a new high, capturing the imagination of political decision makers and theoreticians alike, most interest is focused on contemporary regionalism, or the new regionalism. Very little attention has been devoted to the systematic exploration of the historical origins of regional processes. There is even less historical comparison between different regional projects. Notable exceptions include Beeson (2005) and Webber (2006). This is surprising given the potential benefits of such an analysis.

Theories attempt to make sense of the world, to understand and comprehend critical moments, which are often a culmination of a long series of events, some purely serendipitous, others formed and shaped by their milieu. They might include the current political configuration, history, and the beliefs and actions of the key personalities involved. Therefore, theorisation must pay close attention to detail, and to history. Only a careful historical analysis of different regionalisms would allow us to understand their particular idiosyncrasies. This is important for a better comprehension of current developments and problems faced by regional institutions such as the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN). Both ASEAN and the EU have their origins in first wave regionalism. Indeed, they are the most prominent examples of that period and, therefore, might well be described as the longest-running experiments in regional cooperation. A historical analysis will suggest that the current form and shape of EU and ASEAN is not only influenced by contemporary changes in the global political economy and the forces of globalisation, as suggested in some of the recent studies on regionalism, but go back a long way, to the idiosyncratic factors that led to their foundation, and the path-dependency these have set in motion.

This volume uses the comparative method in order to link theory and empirical aims. It breaks with the prejudice that EU integration and ASEAN are incomparable. A comparative analysis of EU and ASEAN regionalisms is likely to shed light on the dynamics driving regional processes. Indeed, the EU and ASEAN represent almost perfect case studies inasmuch as they appear to lie at opposite ends of the spectrum of institutionalised regionalism. Comparison, while bringing out the differences, will also prise out the commonalities. Thus, though the EU and ASEAN might have attained different levels of integration and institutionalism, there is no denying their 'regionness'. And regionalism begins to emerge as a complex and multidimensional

process informed by factors from the individual, the national and the international/global levels of analysis.

The regional level has gained increasing weight in the international arena throughout the 1990s. Much of this is related to the relationship between the state, regionalism and globalisation. A multilayered framework of governance is evolving where governance is increasingly dispersed between the nation-state, the regional level and global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Yet, the regional level remains surprisingly under-conceptualised. Efforts to identify the concept 'region' are sporadic and are dispersed across a wide range of literatures. This volume tries to address this lacuna by borrowing from these various literatures to explore the concept 'region' and the contradictions inherent in this concept.

While the meaning of 'region' is still emerging, there is relative sophistication in the literature when it comes to the two other most used terms in this context – regionalism and regionalisation. 'Regionalism' represents a general phenomenon, denoting formal and often state-led projects and processes and a body of norms, values, objectives, ideas and a type of international order or society (Schulz et al. 2001, p. 5). It is, at least in part, an intentional process of political, security or economic cooperation. Good examples of these formal processes are the intergovernmental dialogues and treaties determining the direction of the EU or ASEAN, to name but two. 'Regionalisation', on the other hand, is an empirical trend depicting a multidimensional process of intra-regional change that occurs simultaneously at several levels of social, political and economic interaction (Hettne 1999). It is more spontaneous than formal regionalism, it is less coherent, and is driven by private rather than government actors, arising from markets, investment flows and other transboundary activities. Regionalism can be understood as a top-down process imposed and managed by governments and other state-sponsored actors, whereas regionalisation is a more unplanned and undirected bottom-up process involving mainly private political, economic and civil society actors. It is conceivable that public actors too participate in regionalisation, for instance, by actively encouraging the transboundary co-operation of private actors in particular economic sectors.

Regionalism and regionalisation are not mutually exclusive concepts. Indeed, they tend to complement each other. The more formal process of regionalism, for example, establishes the infrastructure, provides the funds and incentive for regionalisation to take place, while informal regionalisation can be a push-factor for regionalism and more formal state-oriented or issue-specific regional governance. Thus, regionalisation in a way represents a drive for more formal regulatory mechanisms and regional governance. The question of whether informal integration and regionalisation precede formal integration and regionalism is one of the key questions in contemporary regionalism literature. Apart from establishing conceptual clarity, the distinction between regionalism and regionalisation opens up the possibility for meaningful comparisons between institutionalised formal instances of regionalism that have established institutions, such as the EU, and informal instances of regionalisation where such institutions are largely absent.

We often also talk about regional integration, a phrase often confused with regionalism. Integration can be understood as a condition or a process, and in

its most common sense can be described as the formation of institutions and the creation of a new polity by bringing together a number of different constituent parts (Christiansen 2005, p. 580). Thus, it goes a step further than regionalism. While integration is an instance of regionalism, not every instance of regionalism is a case of integration. This implies that European integration is a particular instance of a broader phenomenon: regionalism.

Outline of the Book

Chapter 1 provides an overview of theories emerging under first-wave regionalism, a period dominated by European integration. Theoretical developments are analysed against the backdrop of the particular political, economic and social circumstances surrounding their evolution. A common thread running through first wave debates is the role of the state and the centrality of sovereignty. What role should states have in the integration process? Is the direction of regionalism determined by the state, or by supranational actors and agencies? Should sovereignty be restricted or pooled? Thus, the many approaches developed to explain the phenomenon of European regionalism in this phase veered between the supranational, implicitly and explicitly reining in sovereignty and the state, and state-centric or intergovernmental, emphasising the centrality of sovereignty and the state.

The end of the 1980s witnessed a resurgence of regionalism worldwide. This second wave is the subject of Chapter 2. Theorising in this phase takes place against a fundamentally altered geopolitical landscape. The Cold War has ended. Globalisation is challenging traditional delineations of national and international space. The dividing lines are fuzzy as issues of domestic and of international politics are becoming inextricably interwoven. Under these circumstances new spaces for political, economic and social interaction are emerging, spaces larger than the national level but smaller than the international level as a whole. As such, it is no surprise that regionalism again begins to receive a good deal of scholarly attention. Critiques of first wave theorising, and the supranational-intergovernmental divide appear. However, this new phase develops its very own divide, pitching theoretical advances in European integration scholarship against new regionalism scholarship. Chapter 2 devotes some time to outlining some of the progress made by both sides, focusing, for instance, on multilevel governance and network approaches, and the contribution of the new regionalism and post-positivist approaches such as social constructivism to regionalism studies. This developing divide, however, is becoming unsustainable. The chapter argues that instead of continuing to talk past each other, both traditions should converge and develop a theoretical framework facilitating the comparative analysis of regionalism. The second part of the chapter sketches such a framework and, thus, provides the theoretical basis for the comparative analysis in the rest of this volume. For purposes of analysis, regionalism is seen as a multidimensional process, developing in overlapping areas including the security, the economic, the political and the social arenas. Its causes and dynamics originate from the individual, the domestic and the international levels of analysis. Regionalism creates an intermediate level between the domestic and the international. Thus it

becomes possible to conceive of contemporary regionalism in Western Europe and in Southeast Asia as both, a continuation of first-wave regionalism, as well as part of a global restructuring process where administrative responsibilities are increasingly shared between the national, regional and global levels.

Having stated that regionalism has developed in these two big waves, Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to the systematic comparison of first-wave and second-wave regionalism in the instances of the European Union and ASEAN. Only by locating the experiences of both regionalisms within their specific historical contexts can we begin to grasp the factors driving regionalism. Chapter 3 links the regional experiences of Western Europe and Southeast Asia to particular historical and geopolitical circumstances. It highlights the importance of the US as a facilitator of regionalism during this period as part of its Cold War strategy of containment. Also critical to understanding the context are the security interdependencies in Western Europe and in Southeast Asia. Indeed, it can reasonably be argued that first-wave regionalism in both instances was, at least initially, driven by internal and external security imperatives. A particular focus of this chapter is the role accorded to state and sovereignty within the two regionalisms. While European integration is partially driven by the desire to restrain or at least pool sovereignty, ASEAN regionalism is driven by the desire to consolidate state-building and sovereignty in Southeast Asia. Hence, while it may be argued that European integration was taking steps towards transcending the Westphalian system, ASEAN used regionalism as a tool to facilitate the establishment of Westphalia in Southeast Asia. This, perhaps more than anything else, might best explain the different attitudes with respect to concepts such as sovereignty and non-intervention in both cases. The historical analysis also underlines that the causes for both regionalisms are located at all three levels of analysis: the individual, the domestic and the international/global.

The comparison continues in Chapter 4 with a focus on contemporary regionalism. Globalisation and geopolitical restructuring following the end of the Cold War have dominated the 1990s and posed a unique set of challenges for the EU and ASEAN alike. Interestingly, both have responded by enlarging their respective membership. However, this widening without deepening has resulted in a host of problems. Regionalism in both instances is currently undergoing something of an identity crisis, a topic that is taken up in more detail in Chapter 5. With the Cold War overlay gone, both regions have been 'set free'. The new regionalism of the EU and ASEAN is fundamentally linked to factors such as economic globalisation, the emergence of new security concerns, and the general increase in political, economic and social transboundary activities. Also highlighted here is the changing role of the US – from a facilitator of regionalism to increasingly becoming 'the other' against which regions are posited.

This points to the increasing salience of ideational factors in contemporary regionalism. This is at the centre of Chapter 5, which is devoted to a detailed analysis of the problems surrounding the identification and delineation of regions. Both, the EU and ASEAN have emerged as discrete regions in their own right, based on their own regional identities. These identities are discussed in some detail. The emergence of EU and ASEAN as actors in international relations, and their recognition as such by other international actors, has provided for some coherence at the international

level. The internal dimension of European identity is provided by the application of a particular normative structure across all EU members. The same holds for ASEAN with its sovereignty-based 'ASEAN way' and state-led version of capitalism.

The volume aims to complement the burgeoning literature on regionalism. It does so and differentiates itself in a number of ways. First, the underlying theoretical approach of the book combines new advances in international relations theory and European studies. As such it brings European integration back into the limelight and bridges the artificial divide pitting European studies against international relations.

Second, the book adopts a comparative method to combine theoretical and empirical aims and applies this to the study of regionalism and regions. Systematic historical comparisons involving the EU are still few and far between.¹ However, much can be gained from such a comparison. The volume, therefore, uses a historical perspective to place the development of regionalism theory within its particular context and to bring together 'old' and 'new' regionalism.

¹ For exceptions see Beeson (2005), Webber (2006), Buzan and Wæver (2003) and Katzenstein (1996).