

**“Regions in Comparative Perspective”**

Shaun Breslin, Richard Higgott & Ben Rosamond

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### **Abstract**

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#### *Address for correspondence*

Dr Shaun Breslin / Professor Richard Higgott / Dr Ben Rosamond  
Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 7AL

Email: [shaun.Breslin@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:shaun.Breslin@warwick.ac.uk) / [Richard.Higgott@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Richard.Higgott@warwick.ac.uk) / [b.j.rosamond@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:b.j.rosamond@warwick.ac.uk)

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## **Introduction**

The study of regions, regionalism and regionalization has once again come to prominence.<sup>1</sup> Not since the 1970s has the analysis of regional integration been so conspicuous (see Coleman and Underhill, 1998; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995; Gamble and Payne, 1996; Grugel and Hout, 1998; Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Mansfield and Milner, 1996). This has much to do with the emergence and in some cases resurgence of regional projects in the 1980s and 1990s. Scholarly attention in the United States was given a shot in the arm by the much-discussed creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In South America, MERCUSOR was created in 1991. ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations) became more assertive in Asia during the 1990s, and 1989 saw the birth of Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC). Meanwhile the Southern African Development Community (SADC) became a focal point for stabilization and regeneration following the end of apartheid. Most prominently, the European Union's (EU) single market programme intensified economic and political integration in western Europe from the mid-1980s, a process which continued with the remarkable achievement of monetary integration among a majority of member states by the end of the 1990s.

This book is in part designed as a stock-taking exercise of various conceptual and theoretical approaches to regionalism from the broad sub-field of international political economy. It takes as its immediate reference point the prospects for regionalism and its study in the wake of the financial crises that began in Asia in the second half of 1997. This directs attention not only to the extent to which regionalism remains a viable policy option for states in an increasingly globalized economy, but also to the issue of whether there are particular templates to which the growth of formal regional integration necessarily corresponds. The book also has the wider brief of thinking about how regionalism is theorized and whether meaningful comparative study is a plausible academic enterprise.

This chapter introduces this collection by placing the contemporary study of regionalism into context. It argues that the study of regionalism has occurred in two waves. The first of these began to gather pace as a sub-field of International Relations from the late 1950s and the second, as indicated above, emerged in the context of the IPE from the late 1980s. By first casting our gaze back to the first wave, we show how both the scholarly and 'real world' practices of regionalism shifted between the two periods. We then move on to explore the particular challenges to both theory and practice posed by the recent financial crises, before

exploring the prospects for the emergence of a genuinely comparative political economy of regionalism.

### **The study of regionalism: the first wave**

Early debates about regionalism emerged from three primary sources. The first was a political-normative question about the sustainability of the nation-state as a vehicle for effective and peaceful human governance. The second was the growth and gradual formalization of the social sciences, particularly in the United States. The third, of course, was the appearance of regional integration schemes. Of these the most discussed emerged in the 1950s in Western Europe with the European Coal and Steel Community, the abortive European Defence Community and the eventual European Economic Community. The spread of de-colonization in the post-war period had also seen the genesis of (now defunct) bodies such as the East African Common Market, but it was Europe that became the intellectual laboratory for the study of regionalism.

Integration theorists led by Ernst Haas (1958, 1964) and Leon Lindberg (1966) drew inspiration from two sources. From the work of Karl Deutsch (Deutsch *et al*, 1957), they inherited an interest in developing a social science of post-national community building that emphasized rigour over excessive normativity or idealism. From the earlier functionalism of David Mitrany (1966), they acquired an interest in the role of functional and technocratic imperatives in laying the basis for new forms of authority. However, there were significant departures from these two sources of inspiration. Mitrany's functionalism had argued that rational governance could only be achieved by total open-mindedness when it came to devising forms and levels of governance to meet changing human welfare needs. Mitrany was, therefore, certainly not a theorist of *regionalism*. Confining new functional institutions to a territorial region would infringe his basic idea that form should follow function. The neofunctionalists, led by Haas, in contrast saw functional 'spillovers' leading to economic and (ultimately) political integration occurring on a territorial basis. Also, whereas Deutch's concept of security communities anticipated increasing transactions leading to ultimate comity between states, Haas *et al* theorized the transcendence of the states system rather than its survival. Finally, neofunctionalist theory saw the processes of economic and political integration being driven by the actions of rational actors, be they supranational institutions or self-regarding producer groups.

Haas, Lindberg and others such as Philippe Schmitter (1971; Haas and Schmitter 1964), Stuart Scheingold (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970) and Joseph Nye (1968, 1971) used the European experience as a basis for the production of generalizations about the prospects for regional integration elsewhere. As it developed through the 1960s and early 1970s this form of integration theory became a model of impeccable rationalist social science. Work on regional integration inspired by the Haasian model and its variants became highly prominent in well-established US journals such as *International Organization* and added a degree of theoretical solemnity to new European outlets such as the *Journal of Common Market Studies*. The emphasis on functional pressures, growing interdependence and the significance of non-state actors stood in sharp contrast to the dominant orthodoxy of realism in American International Relations and in many ways laid some of the ground for the development of contemporary international political economy (IPE).

That said, by the mid-1970s this first wave of regional integration scholarship seemed to have run out of steam. The publication of Haas's devastating *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory* (Haas, 1975) seemed to indicate not only that neofunctionalism had run aground, but that the very idea of producing theoretical models of *regionalism* was deeply misconceived. There seemed to be two major problems with the project of integration theory. First, the expectation that the European experience would be replicated elsewhere seemed to have been scuppered. Ambitious analogous projects such as the Latin American Free Trade Area had failed and there seemed to be little momentum among elites to engage in regionalist enterprises. Second, Haas acknowledged that in the European case integration theories had largely under-estimated the role of national governments and the pervasiveness of nationalist sentiment. This had been underscored empirically by the behaviour of 'dramatic actors' such as President de Gaulle. Rather than being anomalous or recidivist, the engagement of Gaullism with European integration also shifted the overall policy style of the European Communities into an altogether more intergovernmentalist direction (Wallace, 1996). Indeed as Stanley Hoffmann (1966) noted, the game of European integration was complicated further by the domestic politics of the member states as well as their distinctive alignments in the international system (see also Hansen, 1969).

The dissolution of 'integration theory' was not simply a consequence of the discrepancies between theoretical predictions and empirical 'reality'. In addition, neofunctionalism was marginalized by the emerging distaste for grand predictive social scientific theories

(Moravcsik, 1998) and the development of interest in 'interdependence'. The latter became a partial rallying-point for the nascent sub-discipline of international political economy (Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner, 1998; see also Caporaso, 1978). This also led many erstwhile students of integration to take sides in the dominant neo-realist neo-liberal debates that characterized international relations in the 1970s and 1980s (Higgott, 1993).

The seemingly dramatic revival of European integration that accompanied the emergence of the single market programme in the mid-1980s produced a partial revival of neofunctionalist theorising. The evidence of an activist European Commission under Jacques Delors seemed to offer an empirical reinstatement of the neofunctionalist idea of supranational activism. Meanwhile the single market was suggestive of a number of spillovers into social policy, economic and monetary union and political integration more generally (Tranholm-Mikkelsen, 1991). Meanwhile, scholars of various persuasions became interested in applying new sophisticated forms of federalist theory to the European experience while normative political theorists and legal theorists began to apply their tools to the 'new' European Community. (see, for example, Brown, 1994; Sbragia, 1992; Shaw and More, 1995)

Yet, if anything, these developments underscored the distinctive nature of regional integration in Europe. Indeed the growth and increasing sophistication of conceptual work on European integration and supranational governance reinforced this point. The complex nature of the Community's decision-making processes drew attention away from International Relations paradigms towards a mixture of classic Laswellian political science and new forms of policy analysis (Hix, 1999). Others found state-centric accounts integration inherently unsatisfying either because they clung to outdated quasi-realist state fetishism (Rosamond, 2000) or because they could not possibly capture the 'everyday' regulatory complexity of the European policy process (Wincott, 1995). This is not to say that IR-derived work did not penetrate the European studies community - far from it. Indeed, Moravcsik's influential and much-discussed analysis of European integration (Moravcsik, 1998) grew out of neo-liberal institutionalist scholarship. While placing states and national executives at the centre of its analysis, Moravcsik's 'liberal intergovernmentalism' emphasized the significance of domestic variables upon nation preference formation and the two-level game character of international negotiation.

In that regard it resembled other emerging work on extra-European regional integration. The *relance* of European integration occurred more or less simultaneously with the appearance of regional free trade areas elsewhere. The appearance of regional integration schemes in North and South America, the Asia Pacific and Southern Africa (to name but the most prominent) was suggestive of a new regionalized world order, although the form that this took and the power configurations that were significant varied from account to account. For some, the world order would be triadic, with Europe, the US and East Asia as the nodal points. Others imagined the emergence of regions corresponding to civilizational orders (Huntington, 1998).

The temptation to see linkages between (and thus comparability among) the various forms of regionalism came from the supposition that they were driven by similar external forces. Two in particular stood out: the radically revised geopolitical security structure that followed the end of the Cold War and the growth of globalization. The former loosened up the possibilities of trans-border activity and inter-state exchange while the latter contributed to the questioning of relations founded on the premise of national territory and added fuel to IPE's concern with the fuzziness of the distinction between the 'domestic' and the 'international'.

### **Regionalism after the financial crisis**

The financial crises of the late 1990s may not have marked a watershed in the study of regionalism, but they did provoke a number of key issues for analysts of regional and global economic management that might have been less obvious in the heady 'emerging market' days of the early 1990s. This sense of curiosity was perhaps most acute among scholars of regional processes in Asia. In spite of the hype that accompanied their development prior to 1997, both APEC and ASEAN seemed incapable of delivering short term palliative responses to the regional financial crisis. This posed serious questions about their very efficacy as emergent modes of regional organization in Asia and the Asia-Pacific. This reading was further justified by the abortive Japanese initiative to establish an Asian Monetary Fund in the wake of the crises. The collapse of this plan in the face of US opposition highlighted the fragility of Asian regional projects. On the face of it, these seemed dependent on the hegemonic blessing of the US and any momentum from within was apparently constrained by the pivotal position of Japan between the US and the rest of Asia.

On the other hand, there is a powerful argument that the crises cleared the way for much clearer thinking about regionalism in Asia. Thus, in the longer term the crises may have



pushed states to think again about how best to build a regional order that is capable of preventing financial crises (or at least competent to deal effectively with those crises when they arise). For example, discussions over the creation of a network of currency swaps and other financial arrangements arising from Asian Development Bank meetings in May 2000 may represent a new approach to regional co-operation. In the longer term these could lead to what Dieter (2000) has called 'a new monetary regionalism'. This would be consistent with the view that monetary integration in Europe has been stimulated by a collective will to deal with the potentially ruinous consequences of internationally mobile capital (Verdun, 2000).

Even if such initiatives amount to nought, the negotiations at least refer to a growing regional self-definition of 'East Asia' as a valid economic space with a discernible political voice. Analytically, this suggests that such policy initiatives do not simply arise as rational (functional) spillovers from financial integration. Rather they depend upon emergent senses of collective identity that frame the ways in which elites respond to exogenous shocks. This highlights the centrality of two important variables in the study of regionalism that we earlier identified as largely absent from first wave theorising: the idea of regional identities and the catalytic challenges posed by external challenge.

The development of the idea of 'East Asia', as opposed to the idea of 'Southeast Asia' writ small or the 'Asia Pacific' writ large is a reasonably long-standing process in which insiders and outsiders are identified (Higgott and Stubbs, 1995). The attempt to assert a particular conception of 'Asia' is again evident in the recent debates about monetary regional co-operation where the in-group consists of the ASEAN states, plus China, South Korea and Japan. This 'Asia' also corresponds to the Asian side of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) process. It represents, in effect a widening of the membership of the East Asian Economic Caucus that emerged, in spite of stiff resistance from the US, within APEC in the 1990s.

To reiterate, that discussions on monetary regionalism in East Asia may come to nothing is less relevant than the fact that they are taking place. They are an important sign of one of the longer term consequences of the financial crises on Asian regionalism: the emergence of a will on the part of regional policy elites to take greater control of financial affairs at a regional level than previously. Initiatives to build a regional monetary order are specifically inspired by a desire on the part of regional policy communities not to be exposed again to compulsory adjustment measures imposed by the international financial institutions. In Asia

these institutions were perceived as imposing largely western/developed world perspectives on how states should organize (or more precisely *not* organize) their economies (Bello, 1999b).

At a more general level, the crises in Asia can allow us to think about the potential roles that nascent regional organizations play as mediating layers of governance between the nation-state and global financial institutions. In the Asian case this may involve the deflection of dominant western ideologies, preferences and economic models that are bound up with the philosophies and actions of the international financial institutions. In Europe, one purpose of such a mediating layer may involve the (perceived) protection of the 'European social model' against the assimilating tendencies of deregulated American capitalism (Hay and Rosamond, 2000). As Peter Katzenstein puts it in his contribution to this volume. 'Because they often mediate between national and global effects, as in the story of Goldilocks, they are neither too hot, nor too cold, but just right'.

Moreover, if we move beyond Asia to consider the subsequent financial crises in Russia and Latin America, then the relationship becomes clearer still. All told the post-1997 crises brought into question some rather cherished assumptions about the global economy. There was sharpened interrogation of the benefits of globalization and specifically the utility of the 'Washington Consensus' (Williamson, 1990) as a way for developing countries to deal with economic adjustment in general and financial deregulation in particular.

These specific observations lead us to identify three broad issues that contemporary students of regionalism need to address. First, how do international/global-level variables (investment flows, prevailing ideological orthodoxies, the development of other regional groupings and developments in the major international financial institutions and the WTO) affect the incentive structures of member states of regional organizations?

Second, there is the issue of the relationship between domestic politics and the policies of member states within given regional organizations. By domestic politics is meant both the complex of government-society relations and the cultural configuration of domestic political economies. In Helen Milner's (1992; 1998) account state elites find themselves in a two-level game. Demands for regional outcomes emerge from powerful domestic forces. The supply of such outcomes is the product of international bargains, the consequences of which feed back

into the processes of domestic politics. This line of questioning offers one way in which the importance of states can be acknowledged without resorting to the unitary conceptions of states that prevailed for so long in much US International Relations scholarship. It is a strategy that also treats intergovernmental exchange in terms that go beyond traditional conceptions of diplomacy.

Third, there would seem to be ample space for the development of both rationalist and constructivist approaches in relation to regional integration (Hurrell, 1995a). Constructivists have posed serious challenges to the way in which IR has thought about inter-state interaction. Moreover, they treat institutions (such as regular forums for regional dialogue) as ‘social’ venues rather than capsules in which rational action takes place. Therefore, various forms of constructivism ask us to contemplate the relationship between institutionalized interaction and the emergence of regional identities and interests. The constructivist literature remains on the thin side, though there has been something of a breakthrough into the study of European integration (Christiansen, Jørgensen and Wiener, 2001). Rationalists need not follow well-worn state-centric paths. Strategic action by state actors may still be important, but it is increasingly imperative to place this within an analysis of complexes of actors and institutional venues that conspire (and several levels of analysis) to influence the development of regionalism.

At the same time, tried, trusted and ‘believed to be efficient’ approaches to institutional design and strategic action are likely to be popular with governmental actors. We would expect them to be repeated, as rationalists might suggest, in the behaviour of states at the regional level. It is for this reason that the networking style of political relationships practised within the boundaries of many Asian states found their way throughout the 1990s into the political relationships that, as with ASEAN, developed at the regional level (Acharya, 1997a).

The interest that this volume expresses in the impact of financial crises takes us somewhat beyond thinking about the structures of global financial governance. It also poses questions about the role of domestic politics in the relationship between wider multilateral and regional processes of governance under conditions of globalization. The ‘bringing in’ of the domestic and the global into the analysis of regionalism, reflects a marked departure from much first wave work. In addition, earlier work often saw regionalism as a defensive mechanism to reduce dependence on the international economy. Many scholars of the new regionalism see

it as a way of securing greater competitive access to global markets as opposed to securing regional autarchy. Most recognize that in practice regionalism is rather more multifaceted and multidimensional than in the past. States now engage in any number of overlapping regional endeavours without sensing that there may be contradictions in such a process.

That said, there is no doubt that the defensive legacies of the earlier phase remain. The reconsideration of regional arrangements, especially of the kind discussed here by Bowles and Phillips, reflect a growing scepticism among political elites in developing states about the benefits of the unregulated nature of contemporary global capitalism. It is not just a case of finding regional solutions to economic crises, but a questioning of the advantages of pursuing unfettered neo-liberal strategies *per se*.

However, this does not imply that there is growing regional resistance to all elements of the globalization process. Indeed, there is the very serious question of the extent to which regional organizations act as a spur to global economic liberalization. An obvious example here is APEC's commitment to an 'open regionalism' approach founded on a promise of unilateral liberalization of member-state economies. In the case of APEC, the regional project was designed to facilitate wider global processes and could be read as a means of preventing the emergence of a specific 'East Asian' regionalism. Indeed the major spur to APEC in the early 1990s was the desire by its 'Caucasian' members to use it as a stick with which to beat the EU into finalising the Uruguay Round.

We should also consider the changing rationale for joining (or forming) regional organizations for many developing states. On one level, the formal criteria established for membership by organizations such as the EU forces policy changes on aspirant members. In the very process of liberalising to meet EU standards, these economies become more open to the global economy in general. In such cases regionalism can be seen as a pathway to globalization.

On another level, decisions made to forge closer regional economic relations may also have wider global implications. In this regard Bowles shows that there is a key distinction between current and old explanations for regional projects. Rather than building (or joining) regional arrangements to enhance independence from the global economy, many developing states now see regionalism as 'a measure to ensure continued participation in it' (Bowles, 1997).

This type of north-south regionalism – predicated on the extension of neo-liberal economic paradigms into the developing world – can be understood as a means by which developing states might consciously increase their dependence on investment and markets in developed cores (Grugel and Hout, 1998), while at the same time enhancing their regional voice in the wider global economic dialogue.

As these decisions are made to harness the economic benefits of international trade and investment, this suggests a symbiotic process where responses to globalization can lead to the promotion of regional projects, and the regions themselves can simultaneously promote globalization. Regionalism can be simultaneously a response to and a dynamic behind globalization. We are dealing, in short with mutually reinforcing and co-constitutive rather than contending processes. As Morten Bøås argues in his contribution, regimes are not barriers to globalization, but rather ‘in-betweens’: ‘the regional project is both part of and a facilitator of globalization, and a regional counter-governance layer in the world political economy’.

There is much more to the study of regions than economic integration alone. Nevertheless, the relationship between regions and neo-liberal paradigms and economic policies stands at the heart of many of the new assessments of regionalism and regionalization. Not surprisingly, it is also one of the key themes that emerges from this collection of chapters. As yet, there are no clear conclusions. As both Bowles and Phillips suggest here, financial crises have raised question marks over the acceptability of financial deregulation in particular and economic liberalization more generally as the best routes to development. Whether this is one, two, or three steps back after two steps forwards towards liberalization more generally remains less than clear. Both Latin American and East Asian responses suggest a move towards defensive regional organizations that provide some level of regulation.

This is occurring partly in response to recent heightened negative perceptions of the ‘Anglo-American’ model of development. But it is also a response to the perceived defects and injustices attendant upon IMF and World Bank imposed solutions to financial crisis. For some the policy response of the global institutions has been interpreted as a politically inspired attempt to force countries away from ‘developmental statist’ pathways. As *The Economist* put it, ‘The International Monetary Fund is so unpopular in East Asia that it now has an entire economic crisis named after it’ (*The Economist*, 13 May 2000: 109-110).

## **Comparative regionalism**

The prospects for the theory and practice of regionalism in the wake of financial crises provided a key rationale for collecting together the papers in this volume. A second stimulus was an interest in providing a forum for comparative analyses of regional processes. This is not a new problem for students of regional integration, but it is one we argue that still requires careful thought and development. Two particular issues spring to mind: the relationship between ‘area studies’ and studies of regionalism and the more specific question of the quasi-hegemonic status of ‘EU studies’ in the analysis of regional processes.

### ***Area studies and comparative regionalism***

Despite a marked growth in work on regionalism in recent years, the literature comparing regional projects remains stubbornly small. Most detailed analyses examine individual regional processes that attempt to place the case study at hand in a wider comparative context. Such work is often lop-sided and is influenced theoretically and empirically by the concerns of US academicians. Studies of comparative regionalism in the US are likely to focus on comparisons of NAFTA with the EU and increasingly with APEC. Indeed a considerable interest in explaining why Asian regionalism was ‘different’ emerged in the 1990s. There is very little comparative discussion of the problems and prospects for regionalism in Africa and the Middle East. Yet, surprisingly in a US context (given geographic proximity and proposals for a pan-American free trade area) there is very little work on regional processes in Latin America.

There are a few exceptions. Vellinga’s edited collection (Vellinga, 1999) takes Asia, Europe and Latin America as the focus of comparison. The key variable for the unit of comparison in this work is responses to globalization. The edited volume by Mansfield and Milner (1997) concentrates on explanations for both regional deepening and institutional variation. Meanwhile Gamble and Payne (1996) have sought to set the agenda for cross-case regional research within the ‘new political economy’ (Gamble 1995), a project carried a stage further by Hook and Kearns (1999) who focus on regionalism in ‘non-core’ states. Grugel and Hout (1998) focus on regionalisms across north-south boundaries. The work of Mattli treats regional integration as ‘the process of internalizing externalities that cross borders within a group of countries’ (1999: 199), a definition which enables comparison across time as well as space.<sup>2</sup>

Following Anthony Payne (1998), we suggest that both area studies and the study of regionalism would benefit from more studies of regional processes that focus on areas other than Europe and North America. This starting point gives us the potential benefit of bringing together the merits of two sub-disciplines that combine the theory building of students of regionalism with the richer empirical work in areas studies that is able to identify historical and political specificities. The chapters in this volume grow out of that aspiration.

Political scientists have long recognized the virtues of careful comparative analysis. It is the best device we have for both testing theoretical propositions and applying new readings to particular case studies. The case studies gathered here have been conducted by scholars who, in disciplinary terms, are most usually characterized as international political economists, but who also possess detailed area studies knowledge.

Other papers in this collection also offer a route into comparative analysis. Morten Bøås identifies a series of common variables and assesses their effects on different areas. Amitav Acharya (see also Acharya 1997b) develops a distinction between sovereignty-bound and intrusive forms of regionalism. This helps him to assess the nature of the relationship between regionalism and post-Westphalian world order. Often juxtaposition masquerades as comparison. It is not enough to place to objects alongside one another and identify that they are different. The EU is different from regional organizations in Asia. Yes, of course – but so what? If a valid comparison is to be made, then – in these cases – the disjuncture of temporal stages of development need to be taken into account. Perhaps this means that the appropriate comparison is between European and Asian regionalism at similar stages of development.

Simple comparison in the here and now would quite quickly yield the claim that unlike the EU, Asian regionalism is compromised by deep ideational conflicts, by residual cold war divisions, by memories of war and occupation, by vastly different levels of development among component member states, by radically different indigenous models of political economy, by the ambitions of competing regional powers, and by the strategic ambitions of the United States. Moreover, there are clearly rival regional projects and multiple voices of regions in contemporary Asia, whereas the EU is now unequivocally the dominant regional organization in Europe. But of course, this characterization of Asia could easily have been applied to Europe at the end of the Second World War.

This is not to say that Europe's present is Asia's future (Higgott, 1998). For the comparativist, there are significant consequences, such as identifying those variables that are likely to yield different outcomes. The key question to ask is whether comparison is a valid enterprise. On the other hand, the principles of good comparison when applied should be able to tell us whether we are engaged in an act of folly. The idea that Europe *circa* 1950 and Asia *circa* 2000 may be at similar stages of development may be an outlandish generalization and could be shown to be such by theorists who might challenge the very idea of uniform patterns of development and by area specialists who might identify insurmountable contextual specificities in each region. So William Wallace (1994) all but argues that European regional integration should not be compared to other regional projects. The specific geopolitical, local, historical and ideational context of the late 1940s and early 1950s yielded a very particular and peculiar model of regional institution-building in western Europe that simply cannot provide a template for the analysis of other regional projects. Nor is it a valid for policy-makers elsewhere to judge their regional enterprises with reference to the contemporary and historical EU.

Two qualifications may be in order. First, an IPE frame of reference offers comparative study at a slightly higher level of abstraction. Therefore, meaningful questions can be asked about *inter alia* regional projects as a response to the replacement of national markets by international or global markets; regionalism as a response to the internationalization of the division of labour and production; and regionalism as a response to the strengthening of multinational and private policy-making structures. Asking how authoritative actors respond, albeit at different times, to common challenges forces us to isolate the major variables and explain how they interact.

Second, the very fact that policy-makers (rightly or wrongly) conceptualize regionalism with reference to the European model is in itself an important reason for scholars to explore the possibilities of comparison – if only to show that we are not dealing with functionally equivalent entities. It is clear that policy learning and the politics of emulation (or in many cases the politics of avoidance) are major features of current deliberations about regionalism. Most obviously, the time lag between European developments and the construction of regional orders elsewhere has meant that region-building elites have had the opportunity to learn from the EU's experience, to emulate specific attributes of the European experience and, more often, to avoid replication (Hurrell, 1995a). The less institutionalized approach that



is emerging in Asia seems to represent a deliberate choice to avoid the perceived ‘cartesian’ legal formalism of the EU.

### *EU studies and comparative regional studies*

The spectre of the EU and the European experience of regionalism loomed large in the preceding paragraphs. Ironically, it is probably fair to say that the EU as an exercise in regional integration is one of the major obstacles to the development of analytical and theoretical studies of regional integration. For example, the characterization of Asian and Latin American regionalisms as ‘loose’ or ‘informal’ reflects a teleological prejudice informed by the assumption that ‘progress’ in regional organization is defined in terms of EU-style institutionalization.

This need not necessarily be a methodological problem. To undertake comparison, we need to have something with which to compare. However, the dominance of the EU in regional studies raises three difficulties. First, as Helen Wallace notes in this collection, ‘[t]oo much of the discussion of Europe and Europeanization has been conducted as if somehow Europe were closed off from the wider international arena’. Perhaps understandably, given the immense complexity of the EU as a system of economic governance, specialists in ‘EU studies’ have been reluctant to raise their gaze to think about the broader global and regional processes of which European integration is a part and to which it contributes. Indeed, as Wallace notes, the EU-fixation of European integration studies often neglects the wider processes of political and economic reconstruction that have characterized the continent since 1989 (see also Wallace, 2000a and 2000b).

The second problem emerges from the claim (or more often the latent assumption) that EU represents *the* paradigmatic case of regionalism. It provides too strong a point of comparison against which all other regional projects are judged. The comparative question is rarely turned on its head. If the EU and APEC are compared, then emphasis is almost always on why APEC is different rather than vice versa. This dominance of the EU on our scholarly mental maps also imposes an understanding of regionalism as being bound up with formal institutionalization. To equate mature regionalism with the creation of supranational bodies equivalent to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice automatically prejudices any conclusions we might want to make about the emergence

of a world order based on regional organizations. It thus side-steps some of the perhaps more profound political economy questions that should sit at the heart of contemporary analyses.

The final problem emerges from the increasing professionalization of EU studies as a distinct sub-disciplinary domain in the political sciences. It has its own conference circuit, a number of established journals (at least six in English alone<sup>3</sup>), national and international professional associations and its own internal discourses. Energies and activities are concentrated within that community. It is a little dangerous to claim that professional advancement for scholars is solely dependent upon success within the EU studies community (especially in the US where, for instrumental reasons, leading analysts of the EU tend increasingly to seek to establish a wider political science identity for themselves – Pollack, 2001).<sup>4</sup> Yet there can be little doubt that academic careers can be spent in their entirety by researching and teaching the EU. Of course, the Union's longevity, its institutional complexity and its policy reach mean that it is considerably more than an international organization. Indeed it is now routine to characterize the EU as a political system rather than as a project of regional integration. For writers like Simon Hix, this means that the EU should be studied as a political system using the established tools of political science (Hix, 1998). The side effect, runs the argument, is the profound devaluation of the theoretical toolkit of 'International Relations' (Hix, 1994). This is an extreme position in the debate (for a critique see Rosamond, 2000: ch.7), but it does raise the issue of whether the EU is actually an instance of integration, and thus of regionalism, at all. The gauntlet thrown down by Hix is the assertion that since most self interested actors within the EU polity do not operate with questions of integration and region building at the forefront of their calculus, then neither should we as analysts of their behaviour.

Hix's position is not an appeal for narrow area studies, but an argument against not only comparative regionalism but also the utility of 'international studies' as a parent discipline for the study of the EU. Against this, we would argue that the confinement of the analysis of regionalism to a distinct disciplinary domain creates an unhelpful barrier between 'International Relations' and 'political science' that threatens to cordon off EU studies from innovative theoretical developments in areas such as IPE. As Simon Lee shows in this volume, the conceptual tools of international political economy can tell us a lot about the ways in which the EU's policy-making processes are beginning to pan out at the commencement of the twenty-first century.

### **Varieties of regional integration**

Notwithstanding the preceding discussion, there is in some areas a widespread assumption that in order to be 'proper' regionalism, a degree of EU style institutionalism should be in place. This emphasis on institutional regionalism proceeding through a mixture of intergovernmental dialogue and treaty revision is at the heart of the now classic model of economic integration developed forty years ago by Bela Balassa (1962). Balassa used the term 'economic integration' to refer to the creation of formal co-operation between states and the progressive movement towards a free trade area, a customs union, a common market, monetary union and finally total economic integration. This view of regionalism is at the heart of much of the existent comparative literature and its teleological, progressive reasoning also informed the neofunctionalist version of integration theory (Webb, 1983). Despite widespread scepticism about the virtues of unidirectional models of modernization in the social sciences, the staged model of Balassa still frames quite a lot of discussion, even amongst those who eschew trade as the key spillover dynamic (Dieter, 2000).

At one level, this reading of regionalism is statist, seeing as it does advances in regionalism as driven by the formal sanction of intergovernmental bargains. But at another level, it raises central questions about the relationship between politics and economics, between states and markets and between formal and informal authority. In the models of Balassa and Haas, the integration of economies at a certain level (say a free trade area) would create functional pressures for the deepening of economic integration (in this case a customs union, which in turn would generate an overriding rationale in favour of the development of a common market), But as economic integration deepened, so authority and regulatory capacity would also have to drift to the regional level.

But also at the heart of this way of thinking is an issue that has become central to second wave deliberations about regionalism. This is the relationship between what William Wallace (1990) has called formal and informal integration. The former refers to integration led by the formal authority of governmental actors through agreement or treaty. The latter is integration led by the *de facto* emergence of transnational space among private market actors (see also Higgott, 1998). The key issue is the 'chicken and egg' question of whether formal precedes informal integration or vice versa. This helps us to break out of the teleological shackles of the first wave and may help us to move our focus to different types of regional response to more specialized issue-specific questions.

This connects to an issue of terminology: the distinction between regionalism and regionalization. It becoming increasingly accepted that *regionalism* refers to those state-led projects of co-operation that emerge as a result of intergovernmental dialogues and treaties. Regionalization refers to those processes of integration which ‘come from markets, from private trade and investment flows, and from the policies and decisions of companies (Hurrell, 1995a: 334) rather than as a result of the predetermined plans of national or local governments. This distinction opens more possibilities for studying those processes of regional integration in those parts of the world where more formalized, EU style regional organizations are absent.

However, in our attempts to advance comparative research, we would insert three important caveats. The first is that the notion of the boundary or perimeter of a region can, by default or by design, be fuzzy. It can often be the case that there is no treaty that stipulates membership of a regional order. As such there is less need to exercise pedantic definitional thinking about the parameters of a ‘region’ than is often the case in ‘regional’ literature – it is processes rather than just the outcomes that are important here. A similar definitional relaxation can be made in the relationship between regionalization and globalization. These are not mutually exclusive processes. Failure to recognize the dialectic between globalization and regionalization can mean that we might impose a regional level of analysis on something that is actually global. Or perhaps more correctly, we should make sure that we consider the salience of extra-regional relations whenever we are considering regionalization. As suggested above, this was one of the principal deficiencies of first wave integration theory.

A good negative example is found in the work of Kent Calder (1996). Calder’s assessment of the rise of inter-Asian trade concludes that the biggest victim of this regionalization is what he calls ‘globalism’. The increase in intra-regional trade means a decrease in reliance on the extra-region, and in particular, the US. But in large part, the growth in intra-regional trade is the consequence of the fragmentation of production across national boundaries. With components produced in factories across the region, the trade component in the production of a single commodity increases dramatically. The final good produced as a result of this intra-regional trade still has to be sold somewhere; and still, as much as ever, the US remains the major market for these goods. Is this regionalization or globalization? The dichotomy clearly does not help. The answer is both: the processes of developing regional production networks

are themselves driven by global processes and are contingent on global markets. Close regional economic integration both results from and further drives globalization.

The second caveat concerns how we map both economic and political space. Care should be taken to avoid strict national or sovereign parameters when identifying regionalization, In addition to looking for a correlation between the national state and regional membership, we should also examine the wider groups and classes of actors that are involved in processes of integration. The fusion of transnational class alliances that integrate elites, but not usually the wider populations of a given country is the key here. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the context of the development of APEC where there is a clear disjuncture between the enthusiasm for the process amongst regional corporate and bureaucratic elite and the disinterest, if not hostility of the wider communities in many of the member states. This kind of argument is given a neo-Gramscian spin in this volume in the chapters by Andreas Bieler on Europe and Ian Taylor on Southern Africa.

Similarly we need to think about the increasing importance of the emergence of sub-national and cross-national economic (if not yet political or social) space. Where economic regionalization is occurring, it is often at the sub-national, transnational level. Across the Franco-Spanish border, along the Maputo corridor. Across the US-Mexican border, across the Yellow Sea and so on. Sovereign boundary demarcation, as we have known throughout history, is not automatically a guide to the parameters of economic interaction. Helen Wallace makes a similar point in her contribution to this book which locates its discussion of European regionalism in a broader historical perspective.

For obvious reasons, assessments of 'region' invariably focus on integration at the expense of the possible counterfactual process – fragmentation (if not disintegration). As sub-national areas or sectors become externally oriented or integrated – as part of emerging transnational economic space – we should ask more often how they subsequently relate the configuration of national political space. Bernard and Ravenhill (1995) explore the relationship between Singapore and Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in Malaysia. They comment that foreign subsidiaries in the EPZs were more integrated with Singapore's free trade industrial sector than with 'local' industry. The case of the EPZs is particularly pertinent. In many parts of the world, developing states have created technology zones, special economic zones, export processing zones and so on to tie these sub-national areas into wider regional or global

economies. In many cases they are purposely designed to foster cross-border integration – and in the process contribute to the disaggregation of domestic *national* economies.

This brings us to the third qualification which relates to the false dichotomy question. Charles Oman argues that the ‘principal macroeconomic force shaping those dynamics and driving “globalization”...is the ongoing development, formidable competitive strength, and spread...of post-Taylorist “flexible” approaches to the organization of production within and between firms’ (Oman, 1999: 36). One unfortunate problem of regional analysis over the last few years is that some observers have taken such judgements on technical and economic change and extrapolated from them into the socio-political sphere in a manner for which the evidence is, at best, flimsy. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in what is often called the ‘hyperglobalist’ literature (Held et al, 1999) which sees the demise of the significance of state actors and state borders in the creation of what Kenichi Ohmae (1995) has labelled ‘region states’. This marginalizes the role of the state in processes of regional restructuring because it imagines the state as nothing other than the victim of cross-border processes.

The teleology of the ‘hyperglobalization’ thesis, therefore, runs the risk of misconstruing how economic space is politically and socially (re)constructed. At the very least, economic regionalization is facilitated by the development of infrastructural links (an area, we maintain, in which there is much research to be done). On a more basic level, economic regionalization requires governments to sanction the relaxation of barriers to trade and investment, or more proactively, to facilitate the provision of incentives to investment and trade sponsorship. Thus, it is not to privilege state-led or *de jure* regionalization as the dominant variable. Rather it is to identify the manner in which it relates to the processes of *de facto* market led regionalization – the relationship between regionalism as a state-led project and regionalization as a process.

### **Towards a new political economy and new regionalism?**

The preceding caveats suggest not only the dangers of making simplistic assumptions; they actually indicate potentially more fruitful areas for future research on regional processes. As we suggested at the beginning of this introduction, there is an increased scholarly interest in regionalization that is not in all instances keeping pace with the changing understandings of its practice on the ground. This is especially true in the analysis of East Asia where

regionalization is perhaps a more obvious focus of research than regionalism. More generally, regionalization remains an under-studied phenomenon. That said, and by way of conclusion to this chapter and introduction to the rest of this volume, it is possible to pull together some emerging themes from scholars in this dynamic and evolving field of enquiry.

Most obviously, new regionalisms are defined in rejection of the old; 'old' in terms of both theory and practice. We spent some time thinking about old – or, as we put it, 'first wave' – theories of regionalism precisely so that differences might be identified. At the level of practice, the key feature of the 'new' is the sheer number of formal regional arrangements. There are few countries that are not members of at least one regional organization and most are members of more than one. This upsurge in regional activity can be explained in several ways.

First, the end of bipolarity has removed the significance of cold war perceptions and divisions. Second (and related), the United States no longer adopts an antithetical position towards regional co-operation. Put more properly, the US is no longer hostile to certain forms of regional organization that either include the US as a member or promote an agenda reflecting neoliberal views conducive to American thinking. In this regard, the increased adoption of varieties of domestic neoliberal policies should be seen as a third explanatory variable for explaining new regional initiatives. Notably, the promotion of export growth strategies has promoted the reality of increased economic regionalization. For both Shaw and Bowles in this volume, this is the way in which the new regionalism comes to be embodied effectively in the south (and it is in the south that we should look for our analyses of regionalism more than in the past). A fourth explanation is to be found in the declining Westphalian system and the decreasing significance of territorial borders in an era of a more globalized economy (Scholte, 2000). The need to either respond to globalization or, for Bowles, the need to *participate* in the global economy is a driving factor for governments, weak and strong.

A further spur to new thinking has been frustration with the dominance of intergovernmentalist explanations that emanate from much theorising, and in particular the stubborn dominance of hegemonic stability theory in much US based literature. This exasperation is evident in Gamble and Payne's (1996) call for a new political economy

approach to studying regionalism. An understanding that state actors are but one set of key agents among potentially many is at the heart of newer approaches.

Timothy M. Shaw's study of Africa in this book is premised on the idea that moving away from this old statist approach is the defining characteristic of the 'new regionalisms'. First wave theorising tended to polarize debate between state-centric perspectives and those that more-or-less wrote states out of the equation. Newer perspectives recognize the complex cocktail of state actors, interstate and global institutions and non-state actors (especially multinational corporations, emerging civil society organizations and NGOs) that have an effect upon regional outcomes. Of course, the balance in importance of these actors varies on a case to case basis. Indeed, Hettne and Soderbaum here warn against the danger of trying to find a 'one size fits all' explanation. The world is a complex and we should only try to find complex answers.

To this long list of potentially important actors we should add sub-national and local authorities. Often these actors are found playing increasingly active roles in developing both formal regionalism and informal economic regionalization. In many cases, these local state actors operate on their own initiative and at times their preferences conflict markedly with those of national governments (Breslin 2000).

Another key feature of the new regionalism in both form and approach is the significance of coexistent multiple forms of region. This is not a desperately novel observation. Indeed, similar thinking lay at the heart of Mitrany's rejection of politically inspired regions and the need instead for 'form' to 'follow function' in debates over the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s. Mitrany's advocacy of flexibility in the construction of post-national forms of governance foresaw a quite variegated pattern of authority and socio-economic management. Indeed Mitrany (1965) was particularly scathing in his criticism of territorially bound regional organizations such as the European Community. Nevertheless, as Bowles argues here, it is multiple forms of *regionalism* that is striking about the contemporary period and which bears some resemblance to the variegated pattern of governance forms that writers like Mitrany envisaged (and in his case advocated).

A number of crucial issues emerge for students of regionalism in the current period. On one level, we see the involvement of key states in a number of different regional projects, notably



the US as a key node in both NAFTA and APEC. In other cases, we see different organizations based on functional responsibility in the same broadly defined geographic area. One example is the distinct but overlapping memberships of NATO, the Council of Europe and the European Union as suppliers of security in Europe. Even if we take a single issue – say economic integration built around trade and investment links – then numerous levels of both formal regionalism and informal regionalization can be identified. A good example is the Mexico-Tijuana micro-region that not only exists alongside the larger NAFTA, but whose development has in many ways been facilitated by the very creation of NAFTA. Similarly cross-border micro-regionalism in Europe (e.g. between France and Spain) has been read as a consequence of higher levels of formal regionalism in the broader EU. The authority and efficacy of national governments in dealing with trans-boundary issues has been transformed, some would say undermined, by a dual movement. This has been both ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’. It results in the transfer of some fields of national sovereignty to the EU and the concomitant dismantling of national borders as barriers to inter-EU trade. Indeed institutional changes at the EU level, as well as new communication technologies and the development of transportation, have encouraged the formation of regional networks based on common interests in terms of economic development (Morata, 1997).

The Closer Economic Relationship between New Zealand and Australia is another example of dual processes of regional integration. So indeed is the existence of ASEAN, with its renewed emphasis on free trade in the development of an Asian Free Trade Area, and APEC which has its own ‘open regionalism’ agenda. Indeed the Asian example provides a number of interesting insights. Macro-level economic regionalization in East Asia is proceeding through different overlapping microregional processes, yet this microregional integration is itself driven by, even reliant on, globalization. Thus, we need to consider not only the relationship between the regional and the global, but also the relationship between different regions; different in terms of levels (perhaps defined best in terms of size) and also in forms (in terms of functions).

## **Conclusions**

We have attempted to illustrate the manner in which the theory and practice of regionalism and regionalization is in a state of dynamic evolution. There are continuities in the study of these processes in the contemporary era with research on integration from 30-40 years ago that we identified as the first wave of theorising. But we have also suggested that there are

significant theoretical advances, especially to the extent that the contemporary literature is much less state-centric, has a much greater recognition of the importance of politics and recognizes the degree to which the 'idea of region' is socially constructed.

These innovations are a reflection of advances in theorising. They also represent a response to the manner in which regionalism as both a quantitative and qualitative important factor in global politics has developed over the time since the first wave theorists were writing. The increasing salience of regions has enhanced our understanding of these processes but, at the same time, made it difficult to augment much of our general explanatory ability – generalization being the hallmark of theorising. In part this has been explained by the dominance of the EU as the principal observable enterprise in regionalism in the post war period and the manner in which it has skewed the development of regional integration theory. But, as we have suggested, the evolution of other, invariably less formalized processes of regionalism and regionalization in other parts of the world is theoretically under-specified because of the way in which these developments have been juxtaposed against the European experience.

## Notes

1. These are deeply ambiguous terms. More often than not these are obvious contiguous geographical units, though it is not axiomatic that this should always be the case. The contiguity question makes the identification of regions manageable, but it does not negate the fact that they are conscious socio-political constructions and hence, open to political contest. We do think it is important, however, to distinguish between the *de facto*, market driven nature of the evolution of 'regionalization' and the *de jure*, state-driven nature of 'regionalism'.
2. Other good recent examples of work on regionalism include special issues of *Third World Quarterly* 20(5), 1999 and *Politeia* 17(3), 1998
3. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Journal of European Integration*, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *European Union Politics* and *Current Politics and Economics in Europe*.
4. We do not have space to argue this point through, suffice it to say that the trajectory of EU studies in the US is closely related to (a) the rise of rational choice as the dominant paradigm in political science and (b) the declining legitimacy of 'area studies' as a route to career advancement (see Rosamond, 2001).

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