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**The State of the Art of Regionalism**

**The Past, Present and Future of a Discipline**

**Rodrigo Tavares, Dept. of Peace and Development Research, Gothenburg University (PADRIGU), Sweden; [rodrigo.tavares@padrigu.gu.se](mailto:rodrigo.tavares@padrigu.gu.se)**

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# The State of the Art of Regionalism<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Although regionalism is a long-standing feature in international relations only since the 1960s and more emphatically since late 1980s scholars have shown a dedicated interest in the phenomenon. The literature is nonetheless disarticulated. This article takes one step back to take two steps forward. First it clarifies commonly used terms in the field as region, regionalism and regionalization and spells out its historical context. Second it focuses on the past by elaborating on the theoretical approaches put forward over the last fifty years and by highlighting the topics that concerned scholars. Thirdly, it channels attention to the future of regionalism introducing a tentative agenda for research where issues as regionalism and peace, micro-regionalism, in/out regional mechanisms, inter-regionalism, and the role played by the United States gain a particular relevance.

### **Rodrigo Tavares**

Dept. of Peace and Development Research,  
Gothenburg University (PADRIGU)  
Box 700  
405 30 Gothenburg  
Sweden

rodrigo.tavares@padrigu.gu.se

**Rodrigo Tavares** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Peace and Development Research, Gothenburg University (PADRIGU). In 2003/2004 he was a Visiting Research Scholar at University of California at Berkeley. He authored “Contribution of Macro-Regions to the Construction of Peace: A Framework for Analysis” published in the *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 7 (1) in 2004.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When Ernst Haas presaged approximately thirty years ago that regional integration theory was obsolete (1975) he was far from guessing how lively the intellectual debate on regionalism would be in the decades that followed. Within academia the debate has a long time ago transcended the classic (neo)functionalist approaches and is now strongly becoming a top research agenda for not only rationalist but also reflectivist scholars. In political circles the creation of cooperative ties between different social units as a way to foster economic and social welfare is also becoming a priority (Palmer, 1991). Virtually all countries in the world are engaged in some cooperative regional arrangement (Page, 1998). Since the theoretical interest in regional studies spans half a century and because it crosses numerous academic disciplines as political science, economy, military strategy, international relations and geography, the literature on regionalism is by and large disarticulated. This article endeavors to first take one step back to take two steps forward. In my opinion regionalism studies needs to submit itself to a process of vivid intellectual debate in order to consolidate its internal cohesion and to gain a personality by itself. This article has five parts. First, I will shed light on the heterogeneity of the terminology used in the field and try to bring together apparent divergent concepts. Second, I will give the historical account of the discipline pinpointing the structural differences of the process of regionalization. Third, attention is devoted to the main explanative, descriptive and explorative theories or approaches in the topic. Fourth, I outline the central issues that were discussed in the past underscoring how much have we learnt and how much the current debate is still embedded in previous assumptions. Finally, I engage in a discussion on the future of regionalism studies and put forward a tentative agenda.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS**

### *Region*

The difficulty in finding a satisfying definition of ‘region’ that meets the demanding expectations of the different epistemologies involved in regional studies is a symptom of the high degree of

comprehensiveness that the field has attained. As Nye reminds us “[M]any hours were wasted at the 1945 UN Conference in San Francisco trying to define it precisely” (1968:vi)<sup>2</sup>. Etymologically speaking, ‘region’ derives from the Latin word *regio*, which refers to an administrative area or broad geographical area distinguished by similar features. Yet as we dig deeper we can also find that the Latin word that gave birth to *regio* was *regere* meaning ‘to direct, to rule’. History tells us therefore that ‘region’ not only has a geographical but also a political connotation (Tavares, 2004; Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003:6). But how shall it be defined? A scrutiny of the literature indicates that four different dimensions are touched upon at varying degrees of intensity: (1) geography, (2) regularity and intensity of interactions, (3) shared regional perceptions, and (4) agency.

On the first component, despite the debate on the de-territorialization of geography (Agnew, 1996; Taylor 1996; Luke and Ó Tuathail, 1998) very few authors would disagree that a region ought to be typified by some level of geographical proximity. The degree of importance that is given to territory, however, shows a considerable discrepancy. For intellectuals as Palmer (1991:6), and H. J. de Blij and Peter O. Muller (2001), as geography is the pillar in the definition of region; the world is thereby an arrangement of neatly demarcated territorial macro-regions. In marked opposition constructivists and post-moderns underline that regions are not ‘natural’, ‘given’ or ‘essential’ (Katzenstein, 1996; Bøås *et al.*, 1999).

In defining a region, other scholars focus primarily on the second component, i.e. the constitutive content and the degree of internal cohesion of a region. In this endeavor, the literature normally converges attention to the formation of regional social linkages (language, culture, ethnicity, awareness of a common historical heritage), political linkages (political institutions, ideology, regime types) or economic linkages (preferential trade arrangements). The authors who cast light upon internal regional linkages are mainly concerned with degrees of regional integration and regional internal cohesion. Although pragmatism may enable us to apply different levels of regional integration or ‘regionness’ (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000. See also Russett, 1967:191)

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘regional’ is not defined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. When the Charter was drafted an Egyptian attempt to define it was vetoed. The amendment put forward by Egypt was “There shall be considered as regional arrangements of a permanent nature grouping in a given geographical area several countries which, by reason of their proximity, community of interests or cultural, linguistic, historical or spiritual affinities make themselves jointly responsible for the peaceful settlement of any disputes which may arise between them (...)” (Cited in Russett, 1967:4)

to different regional constructions, no general coding or mathematical experiment has been carried out in order to measure regional integration<sup>3</sup>.

Thirdly, to social constructivists, “rather than seek an elusive objective...criterion for defining a region, one should treat regions as emergent, socially constituted phenomena” (Jessop, 2003). The focus should not be put as much upon geography nor on material interdependence but mainly on the cognitive idea of region brought upon by socialization processes conducted by region-builders (Neumann, 2003).

The last item is a most debated one. Classic approaches on regional studies emphasize the role of the state in the carving out of regional subsystems. Joseph Nye, for instance, defines an international region as ‘a limited number of *states* linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence’ (1968. Italics added). More recent contributions may also advocate state-centric approaches. Drawing on Karl Deutsch, Peter Katzenstein defines a region as “a *set of countries* markedly interdependent over a wide range of different dimensions. This is often, but not always, indicated by a flow of socio-economic transactions and communications and high political salience that differentiates a *group of countries* from others” (1996:130. Italics added). Defining region in this way is more of a limitation than an opportunity to post-moderns and social constructivists. They deal with the structure/agency and state/non-state divides by manifestly adopting a micro-oriented perspective that stresses the role of bottom-up agents.

Some other authors have attempted to stay away from this nuanced fragmentation either by bringing together all these components or by transcending them. In representation of the first group Bruce Russett (1967) defines a region by using social and cultural homogeneity, political attitudes or external behavior, political institutions, economic interdependence and geographical proximity as necessary components. Thompson (1973) condenses four attributes in a regional subsystem based on the work of twenty two scholars: the regularity and intensity in the interactions, geographic proximity, internal and external recognition of the region as a distinct area, and agency is comprised by two or more actors. Walking on the same route, I define region as a cognitive construction that spills over state borders, based on territoriality, with a certain degree of singularity, socially molded by a body of different actors, and motivated by different

<sup>3</sup> Attempting to fill this gap the United Nations University/Comparative Regional Integration Studies has recently set up a multidisciplinary team of researchers. See [www.cris.unu.edu](http://www.cris.unu.edu)

(and sometimes contradictory) principles (Tavares, 2004). Also of relevance is the endeavor to define region by describing it in terms of levels of analysis, as a level between the state and the international system. This is a strategy embedded on a realist and neorealist structural vision of the world (Cantori and Spiegel, 1970:22-25; Waltz, 1979). In a more innovative fashion, Lagenhove (2003) transcends this discussion on the conceptualization of region by introducing the concept of 'regionhood' and 'regionality'. The first, which is what distinguishes regions from non-regions, is characterized by (1) the region as a system of international acts in the international and national arena, (2) the region as a 'rational' system with statehood properties, (3) the region as a reciprocal achievement, and (4) the region as a generator and communicator of meaning and identity. Complementarily, 'regionality' is the suitable historical, geographical, economic, cultural and social conditions that encase a region.

### *Regionalism and Regionalization*

The dislodgment of regional studies is not only evident in the definition of region but on the associated ideas of 'regionalism' and 'regionalization'. For some authors, as Bjorn Hettne and Peter Katzenstein, the conceptual differentiation of these terms is very clear. The first means the set of *ideas* and *principles* that highlight the enmeshing of units in a regional context, whereas the second is most often defined as the *process* of regional interaction (Hettne, 1999-2001; Katzenstein, forthcoming 2004). Embarking upon the same perception, Andrew Hurrell takes regionalization to mean 'the growth of societal integration within a region and to the often undirected *processes* of social and economic interaction" (1995:39. Italics added). Slightly different is Raimo Väyrynen's stance (2003:43). Although he moves along the same lines looking upon regionalization as the dynamic process associated with region formation, regionalism is understood as being based on institutionalized intergovernmental coalitions that control access to a region. This reading is, however, by any means universally accepted. Fishlow and Haggard (1992) sharply distinguish between regionalization, which refers to the regional concentration of economic flows, and regionalism, which they define as a political process characterized by economic policy cooperation and coordination among countries. On the contrary, Bhagwati defines regionalism as a preferential trade agreement among a subset of nations (1999). Gamble and Payne, walking on a different route, define regionalism as a state-led project, whereas regionalization is primarily taken as a societal construction (1996).

As no particular classification is taken as prevalent and as all of them presuppose a degree of correctness, my suggestion is, by moving away from content/agency distinctions, assessing the etymologic nature of the words. The word 'regionalism' contains the Greek Sufism 'ism', which means 'the act, state, or theory of'. Regionalism shall, therefore, be approached as the *theory* that investigates the *process* of regionalization.

## **REGIONALISM IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Regionalism is almost as old as history. The listing of social units brought together by the force of the sword or by the endogenous and resolute wish of leaders and peoples is inexhaustible. Aware of the potential risk in breaking historical linearity into neat pieces, the weaving of regional ties has been, in my opinion, historically dominated by five cycles.

*Military regionalism.* The earliest accounts of regional constructions reflect military dominions or strategic territorial possessions brought together by violence. To control territories that were economically advantageous or by the simple desire to expand power and rule, continental empires were a benchmark of political constructions up until the Napoleonic Wars. These regional projects were regularly (1) imposed by force, (2) led by the decision of a restricted set of people, (3) centralized in one city, the core of political power, (4) non-legitimized by the will of the people invaded, and (5) restrictive in terms of in (we) - out (them/enemies) mechanisms. The Roman Empire, the Chinese Qin Empire, the Kalmar Union in Scandinavia or the possessions of Alexander the Great all constitute valuable empirical examples of military regionalist constructions. Western empires under colonial rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries shall not be approached as military regionalism because there is no geographical contiguity between the colony (generally located in the Third World) and the colonizer (located in Europe or Northern America). In the cases of Nazi Germany and Japan in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their imperialistic proposals based on excessive nationalism, although territorially coherent, did not come to sustainable fruition.

*Nineteenth century.* With the Industrial revolution and the technological breakthroughs associated to it, the commercialization of goods outside national borders and the knitting of trade ties among different political units were made possible. In the European continent several

customs unions thrived in this time frame. Sweden and Norway had a customs union from 1874 to 1900 and in the period 1819-1834 several preferential trade arrangements were established in central Europe as the Prussian Customs Union, the Central German Customs Union, the Bavarian-Wuerttembergian Customs Union and finally, more preponderantly, the Deutscher Zollverein, which consisted of Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, Hessen-Darmstadt, Hessen-Kassel and Saxony. In 1865, by establishing a Latin Monetary Union, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium agreed to standardize the value of their coinage. Outside Europe, prior to 1880, India, China and the Great Britain comprised a trading bloc in Asia (Mansfield and Milner, 1999; Kenwood and Lougheed, 1999; Pollard, 1974). Complementarily, regionalism also continued to be driven by military and security imperatives. As the Holy Alliance, the Triple Alliance, the Franco-Russian Alliance Military Cooperation, or the Entente Cordiale between England and France illustrate, security alliances were constituted and disintegrated in response to the immediate needs of the statecraft.

*Post First World War.* The prosperous and embryonic era of self-regulated market, international liberalization and free trade came to an end in the post-war period. This was the outcome of a conjugation of several domestic and global factors. First, the Great Depression of 1873 and the end of the Gold Standard basis for the pound in 1931, dictated the decline of the central economic stability orchestrated by Britain. Second the outbreak of the First World War broke off the interdependence trend and resuscitated old mistrusts and nationalist slogans. Finally, the American financial crash of 1929 undermined the apparent economic boom of the 1920s. The impact of these factors on regional integration was more visible in the type of regional arrangements *per se* than in a change in the previous pre-disposition to regionalize. Unlike the second, this third cycle of regionalism had a clear discriminatory, preferential and protectionist nature. Examples of this tendency were the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement<sup>4</sup> (1921) and the economic arrangements that interconnected Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Holland in the 1930s. Some other agreements were forged by both economic and

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<sup>4</sup> Point I of the Agreement reads as “Both parties agree not to impose or maintain any form of blockade against each other and to remove forthwith all obstacles hitherto placed in the way of the real trade between the United Kingdom and Russia in any commodities which may be legally exported from or imported into their respective territories to or from any other foreign country, and *not to exercise any discrimination against such trade, as compared with that carried on with any other foreign country* or to place any impediments in the way of banking, credit and financial operations for the purpose of such trade, but subject always to legislation generally applicable in the respective countries” (Italics added). Online at <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1918p/sovtrade.html>. Visited February 27th 2004.



military concerns. For example, the Rome Agreement of 1934, beyond a trade arrangement involving Italy, Austria and Hungary, comprised the establishment of a Danubian bloc under Fascist auspices to counterbalance the Little Entente and French influence in Central and Eastern Europe.

*Post Second World War – 1960s.* In this period the international system was characterized by the illusion of a collective security system embodied in the United Nations and by the dogmatic state-driven rationality of the Cold War. All over the world, regional political and military constructions as NATO, Warsaw Pact, SEATO, CENTO, the Rio Pact and ANZUS reflected the rationales of the Cold War. The way the first seeds of the European project fit into this underlying principle should, however, be cautiously treated. It can be argued that the Schuman Declaration (1950), the Treaty of Paris (1952) and the Treaties of Rome (1957) were, unlike the above mentioned military and political alliances, generated internally and not artificially constructed from the outside nor hegemonically imposed. The US were not, nevertheless, distracted to the new developments in Western Europe and responded adequately by backing the first European institutions as a strategy to curb the influence of communism. At the time the European Coal and Steel Commission (ECSC) was under heated negotiations, the US exerted a tremendous pressure behind the scenes helping to boost the process. A special committee was set up in the US Embassy in Paris to monitor progress, and acted as some sort of additional secretariat for Jean Monnet (George and Bache, 2001: 62).

Despite this boom, lengthily analyzed at the theoretical level (Haas, 1958; Yalem, 1965, Russett, 1967; Nye, 1968, Hansen, 1969; Cantori and Spiegel, 1970), the regionalist experience in this time frame fell short of expectations. In Europe, with the ‘Empty Chair Crisis’ of 1965 and the ‘Luxembourg Compromise’ of 1966 the integration process was dominated by a downturn in economic circumstances and subjected to intergovernmentalism. Regionalism outside Europe had not produced tangible results either. As Telò observes (2001:3) “too many inward-looking economic policies, too weak institutional settlements, the legacy of colonialism, and the weight of underdevelopment do explain the failure or the marginal impact” of this wave of regionalism. Also of fundamental importance is the fact that the US channeled its energy in promoting not regionalism but economic multilateralism and non-discrimination. Attempts to create regional trading areas in Africa, North America and Latin America did not get off the ground or collapsed at an early stage (Bhagwati *et al.*, 1999). All this motivated Ernest Haas (1975) to declare that

regional integration theory was “obsolete in Western Europe and obsolescent – though still useful - in the rest of the world”.

*New Regionalism.* The 1980s saw a resurrection of regionalism. The body of literature on this last cycle of regionalism is immense (Palmer, 1991; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995; Mansfield and Milner, 1999; Hettne, 1999-2001; Telò, 2001; Väyrynen, 2003), which reflects a renovated academic interest in the subject. This enthusiasm comes hand in hand with changes at the empirical level. As an illustration, the thirty-three regional trade agreements (RTA's) signed between 1990 and 1994 constitute the largest number for any five-period since the end of World War II (Mansfield and Milner, 1999:601). The differences between the ‘old’ (the first four cycles) and the ‘new’ regionalism<sup>5</sup> are discernible in terms of (1) agency, (2) vectors/motivation, (3) direction and (4) coverage. First, unlike previous regional constructions, which were state-led by nature, recent regional projects are driven by a wide range of different actors, from the individual to the community and from local to global agents. Second, as Björn Hettne points out “the new regionalism [...] is a multidimensional form of integration which includes economic, political, social, and cultural aspects and thus goes far beyond the goal of creating region-based free trade regimes or security alliances” (1999-2001: xix). Several regions are currently multidimensional by nature dwelling upon economic and security pillars as, for instance, ECOWAS or ASEAN. Third, regions are no longer imposed from above obeying immutable structural imperatives. They are constructed spontaneously by human action and social practices (Grugel and Hout, 1999:9) in the wake of a permanent redefinition of processes and interests. Society and people make each other during an ongoing, two-way process. Fourthly, regional integration has moved beyond a strict European experiment and has become a truly universal phenomenon.

The driving forces of the new regionalism were, nevertheless, outside the regional frame and came from the global level. For Fawcett (1996:17) and Palmer (1991:2), the ‘most dramatic’ and the ‘most publicized’ reasons for the return of regionalism were the new attitudes towards international cooperation and the decentralization of the international system brought about by the collapse of Communism and the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>5</sup> The term ‘new regionalism’ was first introduced by Norman Palmer (1991).

## THE PAST AND PRESENT OF REGIONALISM

The discipline of regionalism has spent most of its time structuring itself and making an inner effort to achieve legitimacy and attain a proper shape. The first preoccupation of academia was to put forward explanative and descriptive theories of regionalization and regional integration. Second, a parallel endeavor aimed at placing regionalism in the vertical spectrum of international relations by underlining the domestic forces that foster regionalization and calculating whether regionalism is a positive or negative trend vis-à-vis the global economy and global security.

## THEORIZING ON REGIONALISM

In order to explain, describe or explore the subject of regionalism numerous approaches and theories were generated within International Relations/International Political Economy over the last sixty years from. The body of literature is so extensive that some authors have recently endeavored to compile and compartmentalize the theoretical landscape. A first systematic attempt, done by Andrew Hurrell (1996), divides up all the approaches into systemic theories (neorealism, structural interdependence, globalization), regional theories (neo-functionalism, neo-liberal institutionalism and constructivism) and, finally, domestic theories (regionalism and state coherence, regime type and democratization). Schulz *et al.* (1999), in a more circumspect fashion, narrow down these approaches to four (neorealism, functionalism and institutionalism, regional economic integration and the new regionalist approach). Mattli (1999) moves along the same lines but categorizes them fairly differently. To him there are political science approaches (functionalism, neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism) and economic approaches (customs union theory, optimal currency area and fiscal federalism). Another compilation, done by Finn Laursen (2003), overlooks several essential theories and focus exclusively on neofunctionalism, game theory perspectives, (liberal) intergovernmentalism, Mattli's comparative regional integration analysis (1999), and social constructivist critiques. The finest piece of literature in compiling the main (new regionalism) theories was, however, edited recently by Fred Söderbaum and Tim Shaw (2003). In this edited volume, ten renowned scholars on the new regionalism are condensed into rationalist and reflectivist views. Drawing on all these synthesizing attempts, where one registers eighteen theoretical approaches to regionalism, the mainstream (or old) theories of regionalism are functionalism, neofunctionalism, liberal institutionalism, intergovernmentalism, regional economic integration and neorealism.

Functionalism focused on the creation of a set of functional agencies that may socialize politicians, civil servants and the peoples into adopting less nationalistic attitudes (Mitrany, 1966). Neofunctionalism highlights, in a less normative way, how national interests may be achieved through functional spillover, political spillover and upgrading of common interests (Haas, 1958b, Lindberg, 1963). Liberal institutionalism underscore why states turn to institutions (Keohane, 1984; Ruggie, 1993). It argues that they do so as an attempt to solve cooperation problems (institutions provide information about other's preferences, intentions and behaviors; establish liabilities, reduce uncertainty and lower transaction costs). Intergovernmentalism argues that regional integration can be better comprehended if agency is attributed to top official politicians and if the process is studied as a set of political bargains that aim to maximize national power (Moravcsik, 1991, Taylor, 1983). Regional economic integration theory refers to the linear increase of economic interdependence through a stage process that starts with a preferential trade area and moves on to a free trade area, customs union, common market, economic union and political union (Balassa, 1962). Finally, neorealism argues that regional groupings are predominantly formed by states in response to an external security threat (Waltz, 1979). After the constructivist boom in IR theory (Wendt, 1999), and the resurgence of regional empirical activity in late 1980s, a second wave of theories emerged to complement (and sometimes compete with) the mainstream theories. Both developments were incorporated, at different degrees, by approaches to regionalism such as the world order approach (Gamble and Payne 1996), the NRA/new regionalism approach (Hettne *et al.* 1999-2001), the humane global governance approach (Falk, 2003) and the new regionalisms/post-modern approach (Bøås, Marchand and Shaw 1999, Bøås, Marchand and Shaw, 2003). The first two look at regionalism in a systemic and structured way, elaborating on the effects of globalization and the shaping of a regional order. In sharp contrast, the new regionalisms approach rejects any universalistic logic and draws attention to the contradictory and conflicting elements of regionalization 'from below'. Falk's insights are somewhat different. In his writings, he tries to assess the potential contribution of regionalism to the achievement of crucial world order values like democracy, human rights and social justice. For him, regionalism is a positive trend as long as it contains negative globalism, copes with 'pathological anarchism' and confronts the 'empire-building' project of the United States (US) (2003).

## REGIONALISM BETWEEN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FORCES

### *The national dimension*

Although more interest has been taken on the structural linking points between the global and the regional level, some studies have also been carried out on the domestic forces that bolster regionalization. In terms of domestic agency, the process is taken on by governmental, economic or civil society actors. At the governmental level, the decision making process may lean towards regionalism when international bargaining power is at stake or when the distribution of welfare, in the era of global competition, is believed to better fit national interests through regional groupings. Geographical proximity and institutional empathy catalyse trade, economic growth and investment. At the economic level, multinational corporations not only stimulate state preferences/needs for more regional deregulation agreements and a free movement of economic factors but also have autonomy to take advantage of a regional division of labour galvanized, for example, by geographical (regional) boosts (Thomsen, 1994). Finally, regionalization can sometimes be a political attempt by the civil society to respond to the process of negative globalization, containing in itself the conceptual and institutional possibility to meet the goals of society. It is an intermediate position between the unfeasibility of a world government and the backlash of laissez-faire, or, as pointed out by Nye, “a halfway house between the nation-state and a world that is not willing to become one” (1968:v).

### *The global dimension*

Ernst Haas was right when he declared that one of the reasons why regionalism was obsolete was because not adequate attention has been given to the ‘externalization factor’ (1975:9). Unlike the old regionalism, the new literature is inexhaustible on the circular correlation between regionalism and globalism (see Figure 1). On the impact of regionalism to the global level the concern is mainly related to the effects of the regionalization of trade to the global multilateral economy. On the influence of globalism to the regional level the literature dwells upon the effects of globalization on the galvanization of regional constructions on the one hand, and on the increasing transference of competences on conflict management from the global collective system embodied by the United Nations to regional organizations on the other. The bottom line

idea is that globalism and regionalism are not antithetical but complementary processes, which feed on each other. Pettman is right when he asks: “what’s the point of dichotomizing regionalism and globalism when they would seem to be points [along] a continuum and not [really] opposed?” (1999:99)

On the correlation between regionalism and globalism, the central issue at stake for three decades now is “Is regionalism a stepping-stone or a stumbling block for multilateral economic interdependence?”<sup>6</sup>. Although the economic literature on this dichotomy is vast no compelling argument has yet been formed. The studies that posit that regionalism does not reduce the commitment to multilateralism underscore that incentives exist for an economic union to expand until it includes all states (Murray Kemp and Henry Wan, 1976), and that regional institutions reduce the number of actors engaged in multilateral negotiations, thereby muting problems of bargaining and collective action that can hamper such negotiations (Krugman, 1993; Summers, 1991). It also highlights that PTA’s can induce members to undertake and consolidate economic reforms and that these reforms are likely to promote multilateral openness (Lawrence, 1996). Also convincingly, it is argued that regional arrangements help developing regions and large companies in coping with the constraints of international competition. Moreover, as the argument goes, from an economic point of view, regional arrangements provide clear advantages in terms of location (trade and investment, saving in transport and economy of scale) (Teldò, 2001). As a bottom line, some authors argue, intra-regional trade (or investment) is growing faster than trade (and investment) in general (Thomsen, 1994; Yoshida *et al.*, 1994).

To balance this optimist stance, other authors have stressed the negative impacts of regionalism in trade liberalization. Bhagwati, one of its exponents, argues that “the need today is to intensify the commitment to the basic tenet of non-discrimination that the architects of GATT correctly saw as a principal virtue, not to undermine it [through preferential trade areas]” (1999:78. See also 1991). Along the same lines, Bond and Syropoulos indicate that increases in the size of trading blocs make cooperative agreements more difficult to sustain (1996:138).

On the correlation between globalism and regionalism, attention is devoted to the effects of globalization on regional integration. Regionalism is here seen as a reactive force to the de-

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<sup>6</sup> The question was phrased in these terms for the first time by Bhagwati, 1991.

governamentalization effects brought about by the intensification of contacts at the global level. In a period when the classic westphalian state system is crumbling, regionalism is seen as a political project that endeavors to reinvigorate the social contract between citizens and the political power (Gamble, 2001:27; Mittelman, 2000).

In the security sphere, the duel between global and regional approaches to international peace-building has walked through the twentieth century and is still being vehemently discussed. Globalists or advocates of the global level in conflict management would stress, like Woodrow Wilson or the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull did, the role of global norms or global collective security as the most appropriate strategy. Regionalists, like Churchill, Monnet or Franklin Roosevelt, would recognize that macro-regions have distinctive attributes to handle endogenously generated conflicts. Although these approaches are by no means mutually exclusive, some puzzling still exists over the best way to go. As Lepgold points out “there is no single formula for allocating security responsibilities either to global or regional forums. Conflict-management incentives vary according to the issues at stake, the actors involved, and the regional context in which a problem originates” (2003:10).

According to chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, regional organizations can, and have been, empowered to handle intra-regional and extra-regional conflicts. After the Second World War, several organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Arab League or the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were oriented to such a conflict-control role. However, their endeavors had limited importance (Nye 1971:172) since they were founded on the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in regions dominated by intrastate conflicts. Notwithstanding, over the last decade some changes in the global scene have spurred renewed attention to the potential role played by regional organizations in handling violent conflict. First, although the sovereignty axiom is still prominent, regional actors seduced by the potentially positive effects of economic integration and suffering the effects of globalization are showing signs of being less orthodox and more malleable about foreign interventions. Second, in the context of the Cold War regional conflicts were subordinated to the particular interest of the superpowers. Within their alliances, the Soviet Union and the United States were effective in suppressing or triggering regional turbulence in order to maximize their strategic interests. After the Cold War, a renovated interest in the global level and in the possibility of a new approach in terms of international peace building was generated. However, the weak financial conditions of

the United Nations (UN), the poor record in its peacekeeping missions of the 1990s (Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti) and political pressure from Western powers for reform is obscuring the feasibility of the UN and the global level as a self-sufficient conflict management tool. As Haas pointed out “regional security arrangements grow in direct proportion to disappointment with the UN collective security system” (1969:93). These flaws are leading the UN to empower regional organizations to manage their own conflicts, particularly in Africa.

Given this panorama, regionalism is neither a formula that can be applied interchangeably nor a template that brings good or bad consequences when put into practice. Regionalism, as pointed out by Robert Gilpin, may have benign or malevolent strains (1975: 235); it may promote peace and economic stability on the one hand, or have a mercantilist stance and catalyze uneven distribution of welfare. Each region has a particular identity and pedigree.

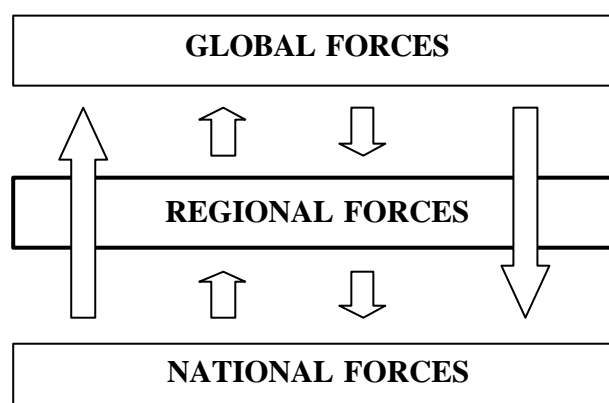


Fig. 1 Mechanisms of power: economy and security

### LOOKING AHEAD

The debate on regionalism has reached today a higher degree of maturity and a broader geographical outlook. Scholarship is less interested in reviving the old discussions of the past and is engaging in epistemological and ontological ardent discussions on the cognitive identity of different regions and on the positioning of regions vis-à-vis other regions and other global actors.

### REGIONALISM BEYOND EUROPE



Traditionally, Europe monopolized studies on regionalism; either inductively, as a ground from which theories and approaches derived or deductively, as a general phenomenon scholars wanted to replicate in the continent. Ernest Haas to a large extent was right when he noted that as regional integration studies were being monopolized by Europe and as their replication capacities outside Europe were poor, then regionalism was becoming increasingly obsolete as a discipline. Over the last decade, however, regionalism (academically and politically) became a truly universal occurrence and innumerable studies have been carried out on/in South America, East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. What stands out clearly from a comparison between different regional formations is that the heavily legalized and institutionalized European experience is an anomaly when contrasted with regional integration in, for instance, Asia, where the process is driven by informal mechanisms based on consensus (Solingen, forthcoming 2004). As regionalism and regionalization transcend the European territory, the next step will be a convergence of attention on African regionalism. The second step will be a reassessment of the role of the United States vis-à-vis regionalism.

In the moment the African continent is at a crossroads in terms of policies and development performances (Shaw and Nyang'oro, 2000), several mainstream studies on regionalism still ignore the impact of the regionalization of security and economy in that continent (Mansfield and Milner, 1997; Adler and Barnett, 1998; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1997; Mattli, 1999). Africa has been a laboratory of both the old and the new regionalism. In the past, regional organizations as the Organization for African Union (OAU) were created by heavy state policies and did not produce tangible results. The new regionalism has been more prolific as portrayed by the establishment of formal regional organizations as SADC, and ECOWAS, the transformation of the OAU to a refreshed AU (African Union) and the emergence of market led micro-regionalism as the Maputo Development Corridor or the Trans-Kalahari Corridor.

The US policy on regionalism has been cyclical and fomented by different goals. In the aftermath of the Cold War, Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower looked at regionalism as a strategy, strictly applicable to Europe, which aimed at the containment of communism and Germany. This policy, embodied in NATO, was not pursued in other parts of the world, because only with Europe the US was culturally, politically and religiously compatible (Katzenstein, forthcoming 2004). In economic terms, the mood was different. Only in the 1980s, the US

inverted their usual universal and multilateral policies realizing that the strengthening of regional projects could enhance its national and international policies. Symptomatic in this regard are the creation of NAFTA in 1994, and the encouragement of regional activity all over the world. According to Jagdish Bhagwati (1999:10), the main driving force of regionalism in the 1990s is the US policy to promote regional initiatives under GATT's article 24.

## REGIONALISM AND PEACE

Given the rising importance of regions in the international system and the fact that inter-state wars are overwhelmingly fought among proximate states, the issue of regional peace becomes therefore very relevant. As pointed out by Lake and Morgan (1997:5), "efforts to cope with violent conflicts, as well as to achieve order and security, will primarily involve arrangements and actions devised and implemented at the regional level". The literature on the nexus of regionalism and peace, can be divided into two different categories. Within the old regionalism, classical studies include Deutsch's considerations on sentimental relations and security communities (1957. See also Merrit and Russett, 1981 and Adler and Barnett, 1998), Mitrany's functionalist theory based on the integrative role played by technical elites on low-politics (1966; 1975), Russett's study on regional integration and conflict (1967), and Nye's survey of micro and macro-regional organizations (1971). These studies focused on the likely peace opportunities provided by specific regional actors such as functional institutions (in the case of Mitrany), security communities (Deutsch) or micro-regional economic organizations and macro-regional political organizations (Nye). The major shortcoming of this literature is that although in a way 'revolutionary' the three theories were nevertheless produced within an academic atmosphere dominated by political realism and designed to interpret a world in which sovereignty, anarchy and security were formative principles. Within the 'new regionalism', the attempts to analyze the link regionalism/peace are broader in scope and more diversified in methodology. We find liberal mathematical experimentations on the nexus trade/peace (Oneal and Russett, 1997; Polachek *et al.*, 1999; Hegre, 2000), post-modern security studies with a focus on regions as a new referent (Hentz and Bøås, 2003), regional empirical assessments of the democratic peace theory (see Kivimäki, 2001 for Southeast Asia; and Geeraerts and Stouthuysen, 1999 for Europe) or descriptive studies, with a focus on security, of particular areas or regions of the world like

Europe, South African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) (Laakso, 2002); West Africa (Francis, 2001); Asia (Hettne, 2002) or Southern Africa (Maclean, 1999). Another way to approach regional peace is by conceptualizing the evolution of a region as a 'zone of peace'. This specific literature normally defines a zone of peace as a geographical region in which a group of states have maintained peaceful relations among themselves for significant period of time (Kacowitz 1998:9) or as an area dominated by modern and economically wealthy democracies (Singer and Wildavsky 1993:14). Other authors highlight the construction of regional security orders (Lake and Morgan, 1997) or regional security complexes (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). Despite the quality of these works I content that the most viable way to grasp the regionalism/peace nexus is notwithstanding by creating a holistic, multidisciplinary and encompassing framework that reflects the current context of global politics. This approach, which is based on five levels of regionness: regional space, regional complex, regional society, regional community and regional institutionalized polity (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000) aims to unveil the agents, instruments and characteristics of peace at each level of regionness (Tavares, 2004).

## INTER-REGIONALISM

Studies on inter-regional relations are still a novelty. Although regions are increasingly gaining a preponderant position in the universe of international relations, very few studies have pinpointed the mechanisms of power that connect and disconnect regions. The European Union has for some time now established direct political relations with international (regional) organizations as NAFTA, NATO, ASEAN, or the MERCOSUR or with countries as India and the United States. At the same time mega reunions as Europe-Asia, Europe-Africa or Europe-Latin America have been convened. Also attached to this discussion, organizations as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum or the East Asia Latin America Forum (EALAF) bring together regional and national actors together. Despite the empirical examples of inter-regionalism, and with the exception of Kaiser (1981), "most of the existing work on inter-regional relations has been descriptive, is lacking a comparative dimension, and tentative at best in theoretical terms", as Jürgen Ruland (2002) notes. But although modest, some work has nonetheless been produced in this area. The most prolific one is on the categorization of the

different kinds of inter-regional relations. Aggarwal and Morrison (1998), and Yeo (2000) conceptually differentiate between inter-regionalism and trans-regionalism. While group-to-group dialogues without common institutions fall into the label of interregional relations, transregional fora are seen as having a more diffuse membership. More interestingly and innovatively, Hanggi (2000) distinguishes between (a) relations between regional groupings, (b) biregional and transregional arrangements, and (c) hybrids such as relations between regional groupings and single powers. The first relates to the tradition group-to-group dialogues between regional organizations (e.g. EU-Andean Community or SAARC-ASEAN), the second reflects the diffuse arrangements that bring together independent countries working under a geographical regional framework (e.g. APEC, ASEM, Africa-Europe Summit), and the third translates the meeting between regional groupings and independent countries (e.g. EU-China/Russia/India/Japan/United States or EFTA-Mexico). From the epistemological point of view the debate is poorer and less ground-breaking. States are replaced by regions as the central level of analysis and inter-regional relations are explained using the classic terminology of IR theory. Realists and neorealists focus on the balancing nature of inter-regionalism. For Waltz (1993), world regions are manifestations of the distribution of capabilities in the international system and an indicator of a return to a multipolar balance of power system. To firm up their postulates they may present as empirical evidences APEC, which was formed in response to the European Single Market, or the EU initiative to set out contacts with MERCOSUR as a mechanism to curb the gradual penetration of the US in Latin America. Liberal institutionalists underscore the importance of institutional cooperation as a way to manage complex interdependence on an inter-regional level and social constructivists would stress the formation of regional perceptions and identities triggered by inter-regional interactions.

#### REGIONAL INSIDE/OUTSIDE MECHANISMS

Whatever the definition of region we are inclined to adopt, regions have borders. They can either be cognitive borders (we/they), physical borders (inside/outside) or political and economic borders (member/non-member). What are the implications of this separateness? As indicated by Andrew Hurrell (1995:44):

“For those outside the region, regionalism is politically significant to the extent that it can impose costs on outsiders: whether through the detrimental impact of preferential regional economic arrangements (so-called malign regionalism that diverts trade and investment) or through causing a shift in the distribution of political power. It is also politically significant when outsiders (...) are forced to define their policies towards individual regional states in regionalist terms. For those inside the region, regionalism matters when exclusion from regional arrangements imposes significant costs, both economic and political (such as loss of autonomy or a reduction in foreign policy options) and when the region becomes the organizing basis for policy within the region across a range of important issues.”

One of the points underscored by Hurrell – the ‘openness’ of regional trading arrangements – has been widely discussed over the last years. It has at least two meanings: openness in the sense of exclusivity of membership to a certain regional institution or trade pact, and openness in the sense of contributing more to the process of multilateral economic liberalization than it detracts from it (Cable, 1994:8). Other aspects to take into account are individual political participation and identity. Critical theorists, conventionally unsympathetic with the ideas of exclusion and particularism that sovereignty and nation-state entail (Linklater, 1998; Smith, 1999:104) look at regional formations as an intermediary step towards an emancipatory world order predicated on the individual. It is still not clear how the mechanisms of inclusion would develop and what excludes the ‘outsider’ from being let in. Beyond pointing at class, gender or nationality as triggering factors of exclusion, some elaboration should also be done on what are the elements of human conduct that facilitate inclusion and exclusion (in a region or any other type of political construction).

## MICRO-REGIONALISM

The challenging of the state system is not only made by the creative creation of macro-regions but also by the gradual autonomization of micro-regions. Despite the abundance of theoretical approaches on regionalization and although some of them (mainly the reflectivist ones) acknowledge the heterogeneity and the pluralism of the process, microregionalism is still under-assessed. Micro-regions are political constructions under the state level of analysis that have a legal, political, economic or cultural singularity and which may or may not fall into the legal

borders of a state<sup>7</sup>. They are often constituted by “a network of transactions and collaboration across national boundaries, which may very well emerge as an alternative or in opposition to the challenged state, as well as to formal state regionalisms” (Söderbaum and Taylor, 2003). Micro-regions take different forms: distinct identity or ethnic regions, economic zones, growth triangles and polygons, development corridors, administrative regions, transfrontier growth areas, spatial development initiatives or fully-fledged regional governments (Keating and Loughlin, 1997; Breslin and Hook, 2002; Perkmann and Sum, 2002). As pointed out by Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (1995), “micro-regional schemes for economic integration stand together with arguments for macro-economic or ‘bloc regionalism’ built around the triad of Europe, the Americas and Japan”. This additional layer in political governance is not configured in the same way all over the world. In Europe, micro-regionalism is fomented by state policies and supported by the European Union has a strategy to draw investment, boost welfare, grant cultural rights to distinct ethnic groups or to minimize the harmful consequences of uneven distribution of welfare. Regions as Catalonia, the Basque Country, Rhone-Alpes, Wurtemberg and Lombardia are illustrative (Katzenstein, forthcoming, 2004). In Asia and Africa, the autonomization of micro-regions is a market-driven process and carried out, with the tolerance of central governments, in an informal and little institutionalized way (Breslin and Hook, 2002; Mittelman, 2000, Kalam, 2001; Söderbaum and Taylor, 2003). The few studies devoted to micro-regionalism are particularly accurate in explaining the causes of the emergence of sub-political autonomies and in pinpointing their structural contours. They are less successful however, in assessing the impact of this phenomenon on national and macro-regional governance and in highlighting the role played by international development cooperation agencies, who are showing interest in participating in such cooperative efforts.

## REGIONALISM AND ACADEMIA

The academic discipline of regionalism and regional integration, which had Europe as the theoretical reference point, was by and large a discipline fomented by the American academia. Ernest Haas (1924-2003) at the University of California, Berkeley; David Mitran (1888-1975)

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<sup>7</sup> In case a region does not follow under the territorial jurisdiction of only one state and comprise contiguous subnational units from two or more states it is conventionally called ‘cross-border region’ (CBR).

at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, Karl Deutsch (1912-1992) at the MIT, Yale and Harvard, and Leon Lindberg at University of Wisconsin Madison were the first initiators of a discipline that today has largely transcended the American spectrum and developed in several other countries. In Europe, strongholds of research on regionalism are the University of Sheffield/Political Economy Research Group, which fathered the world order approach to regionalism (Gamble and Payne, 1996; Grugel and Hout, 1999; and Hook and Kearns); Gothenburg University/Department of Peace and Development Research (PADRIGU), the nest of the NRA/New Regionalism Approach (Hettne, 1999-2001; Schulz *et al.*, 2001; Söderbaum, 2002; Tavares, 2004); the United Nations University/Comparative Regional Integration Studies<sup>8</sup>, involved with indicators of regional integration, regional security vis-à-vis the United Nations, the link between regional integration and identity and formal and informal approaches to regionalism in Africa; the Center for the Study of Globalization and Regionalization at the University of Warwick, which puts a heavy emphasis on the correlation between regionalism and globalization (Higgott and Ougaard, 2001; Scholte, 2000); and, finally, the Center for International Studies at Oxford University<sup>9</sup>, which is developing a project on international (regional) organizations and the security issues of the post-Cold War era. Outside Europe, some departments are also significant nests of theoretical undertaking. The School of International Studies at Jawarlalal Nehru University, New Delhi (JNU), is a reference in South Asian security and regional integration in Asia (Muni, 2000; Bajpai, 1999) as the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta are recognized institutes on Southeast Asian regionalism. In the United States, the enthusiasm of the 1960's has faded and very few departments have nowadays a strong expertise in regionalism (as distinct from area studies). Research is mainly conducted by economists who are still dwelling upon the regionalism/multilateralism question, by liberal institutionalists who elaborate on the correlation between PTA's and likelihood of conflict or by political scientists with rational and state-driven orientations.

At top academic gatherings as the British International Studies Association, the International Political Science Association or the International Studies Association there has been an increase in the number of panels on the subject. They tend to focus, however, more on empirical findings

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<sup>8</sup> Website: [www.cris.unu.edu](http://www.cris.unu.edu)

<sup>9</sup> Website: <http://cis.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

and descriptive regional economic studies than on the theoretical underpinnings of regionalism and macro-regions.

## CONCLUSION

Writing an article of this nature is like writing a dictionary: when we get to finish it is already outdated. We tried nonetheless to earmark the main features of regionalism by bringing in, with a historical posture, its main empirical and theoretical attributes. At the end three main conclusions are worth mentioning. First, regionalization is not a recent phenomenon. Spanning several centuries, it is a process that has had different outlooks and has been molded by different actors obeying different imperatives. Although since the 1980s regionalism entered into a new phase where new agents, directions and motivations came into play, military regionalism (regional empire) was a common feature in international relations until the First World War. Second, in terms of theory, the discipline of regionalism has witnessed a flurry of publications over the last years bringing in the postmodern apparatus and focusing on areas outside Europe. Thirdly, in empirical terms, as regionalism is by now a granted feature of global social relations new concerns are under discussion as micro-regionalism, the nexus regionalism/peace, or inter-regionalism.

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