

# Theories of Regionalism: Early, Old and New

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**

Introduction: False Presentism of Regionalist Thinking  
Early Regionalism  
Old Regionalism: Cantori and Spiegel  
*Critique of Cantori and Spiegel*  
Debates between Early/Old and New Regionalism  
New Regionalism: How, Why and Where It Is New?  
Comparative Regionalism: Problems and Prospects  
Conclusion

## INTRODUCTION: FALSE PRESENTISM OF REGIONALIST THINKING

While discussing theories of regionalism, we tend to, but should not, forget earlier studies which focused on regions in various parts of the globe in ancient, pre-modern or modern times as important units of study or activity. But normally, while talking about 'old regionalism' in mainstream IR, many do not include regional autonomy aspirations seen in ancient spatial systems of Greece and other parts of Europe, China or India against attempts of a particular imperial sovereign or a dominant national political unit to discipline discordant states or their associations. These are considered older forms of BOP rather than embryonic attempts at regionalism. Among a few scholars who decry the myopic scholarly neglect of these instances of 'early regionalism', Söderbaum urges a rethinking of regionalism from four interacting

perspectives: historical, spatial, comparative and global. He claims that such rethinking has been necessitated by the failure, even after more than six decades of academic argument and deliberation, to find 'satisfactory answers to questions about the origins, logic and consequences of regionalism'. Anchoring this rethinking in 'reflectivist and constructivist scholarship', Söderbaum warns from the historical plank against the 'common but misleading notion that regionalism is a phenomenon that "commenced" in Western Europe after the First or Second World War'. This 'short time horizon in most scholarship' is a limiting factor because it exaggerates 'the role of formalized regional organizations at the expense of more fluid types of regionalization and region building around the world'.<sup>1</sup>

## EARLY REGIONALISM

Among the most plausible instances of these 'explicit trajectories' of 'fluid types' of early regionalism that can be identified in Europe, where observers refer to centuries of shared history and political thought, Greece is a very good example. For, there, the 'construction of assorted regions' can be traced back historically across 'a rich variety of geographically traced empires, kingdoms, alliances, trade leagues, pacts, unions and confederations between a range of political units'.<sup>2</sup> Bauer and Doonan claim that the results of ongoing research about the ancient roots of the Black Sea world trade have established that since the third millennia, if not earlier, a 'regional identity' had started taking shape across the Black Sea that bound 'its communities more persistently than ties with island neighbours'. Additionally, their own research in Sinop in Turkey<sup>3</sup> indicates the persistence of a 'distinctive Black Sea culture' in the region today over several millennia, whose regional identity was further buttressed by wider historically continuing forms of diaspora, 'Ancient Greek, Genoese, Armenian, and Rhum diaspora created the close ties that facilitated trade by cutting across political and imperial borders'. With the concomitant emergence of 'cosmopolitan mercantile communities...within and among the region's port cities', this community feeling continued up to as late as the first two decades of the 20th century, so that in 1913–1914 Muslim merchants of Trabzon<sup>4</sup> refused to join 'larger Turkish boycotts of Greek businesses'.<sup>5</sup>

Ancient India was also marked by an early regionalism because contrasted with 'patterns in China, in which a single powerful state has been the norm and political fragmentation the exception', in India, 'notwithstanding the overarching cultural unity provided by Hinduism, pan-Indian empires were exceptional and relatively short-lived while varying and sometimes extreme degrees of political disunity were the norm.' Indologists and orientalist cite, as evidences of a 'keen awareness of regional diversity' in ancient Bhārata, 'Vedic hymns composed over a period of centuries beginning in the mid-2nd millennium BC', which are replete with references to 'the opposition of a group of invading Aryans and darker-skinned peoples, the presumed ancestors of India's present-day speakers of Dravidian languages and of numerous tribal peoples'. After the Aryans stabilized their control over north-central India, particularly the north-Gangetic plain, they 'referred to their new homeland as Madhyāmoa Di's, the central country, and invested it with a particularly sacred status'. The

mentions of scores of regions in Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, and numerous Purāṇas also betoken this ‘awareness of this regional distinctiveness’.<sup>6</sup> But let alone recognizing this ancient regionalism as an ‘important political reality’, scholars have soft-pedalled and underexplored even the exacerbation of the regionalist tendency during the period 800–1200, when the vision of India as a territorial unit was slowly replaced by localist visions that made political regionalism a pervasive factor in all major domains of India’s life and culture. This is strange in the backdrop of extant ‘historical memories’ of ‘ancient lineage of regional communities’, numbering ‘fifty-six in folklore’, and of a number of ‘Asokan edicts confirming the existence at that time of regional communities’, as more reliable historical evidence,<sup>7</sup> all ignored for reconciling, as a matter of pride, the ideal of Indian unity and the realities of regional communities. The perception of the Aryans regarding the importance of ‘the central country’ for controlling the leverage point in the continent’s regional balance was shared by their successors too. In the regional wars waged by the Gurjara-Pratihāra, Pāla and the Rāṣtrakuta kingdoms in the 9th and 10th centuries, which bled India too weak to resist the Turco-Afghan invasion in the 11th and 12th centuries, the Gurjara-Pratihāra kingdom made frantic efforts right from the mid-8th century to gain control of the Madhyadeśa (meaning ‘Middle Country’, or *Aryavarta*, the land-mass extending from the east of the river Sarasvatī to the Ganga plains). Their efforts were resisted by the Pāla and the Rāṣtrakuta kingdoms, which were unwilling to lose their monopoly of the Madhyadeśa, till the former under the able leadership of King Bhoja (840–885) neutralized their efforts.<sup>8</sup> This history proves the strength of regionalism in the political history of pre-modern India.

Even in the case of China, the orientation towards a single powerful state and averseness to political fragmentation is overstated. For, towards the end of the 4th century BC, when incessant internal wars had drastically brought down the number of major states in China from 100 in the last century to just 7, the major states of Yan, Qi, Zhao, Han, Wei, Chu and Qin, a regionalist solution was sought to counter strong imperialist pressures from the Qin on others to toe its line. In these trying circumstances, Su Qin quoted an old Chinese proverb, ‘寧為雞口，無為牛後’, which meant that ‘it is better to be head of a small group than to hold a less powerful position in a large group’. Not construing this ‘telling phrase’ as betokening older BOP, Hamanaka relied on it to ‘construct a theory of regionalism based on Asian experiences’.<sup>9</sup>

Coming down to pre-modern times, we see that a large number of varied ‘early’ visions of European cooperation and unity sprang from ‘divergent views about the importance of culture and identity, security, political economy and law’. This plurality of perspectives in European region-building efforts comes out in the following: (a) the pleas of humanists from various nationalities in the 16th century to combine against an imminent Turkish threat; (b) the outline for a European League of Nations in the late 17th century; (c) Immanuel Kant’s proposals in the late 18th century for a cosmopolitan, not just European, federation of states<sup>10</sup>; (d) the wide-based popular following and support for a united Europe in 1848, the famous year of revolutions; (e) advocacy by iconic French author Victor Hugo for a United States of Europe based on political democracy and respect for human rights and (f) new plans of federalism floated between the First and the Second World wars after tiding over the dampening effects of the First World War.<sup>11</sup>

## OLD REGIONALISM: CANTORI AND SPIEGEL

The myopia of theoretical neglect of these early beginnings of regionalism from ancient to pre-modern times was even more pronounced when extended to 'old regionalism'. It included not only the approaches to integration discussed in the last chapter but also those of regional sub-systems which appeared in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and took regional studies beyond Europe.<sup>12</sup> Among the latter, Cantori and Spiegel are taken up here, first for providing a really detailed framework for analysing regional IR as evinced by 5 of the 15 subordinate systems strewn around the world, selected because they were geographically far-flung, yet representative<sup>13</sup>; and for linking up with the systems theory chapter, where they were shelved for discussion in this chapter. According to them, affected by three dominant nodes of the play of IP, 'the globe, the region and the nation state', these five subordinate sub-systems of the Middle East, West Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia and West Africa are classifiable into 'dominant, the subordinate and internal political systems'. Comprising one, two or more geographically proximate and interacting states endowed with some degree of common ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical bonds and an identity sometimes heightened by the actions and attitudes of other states external to the system, each of these sub-systems contains three sub-divisions: one (or more than one) 'core sector', comprising a shared social, political, economic or organizational background or activity among a group of states which generates the focal point of IR in it. Every subordinate system can, however, contain more than one core sector; a 'peripheral sector', comprising 'all the states which, are in some measure, economically, organizationally, socially or politically separated from the core sector' and an 'intrusive system' composed of 'the politically significant participation of external powers in the IR of the subordinate system'.

Avowedly, these three subdivisions are contingent on 'four subordinate system pattern variables', including '(a) nature and level of cohesion, (b) nature of communications, (c) level of power and (d) structure of relations'. Together with geography, these factors fix 'the boundaries of the individual subordinate systems'. Cohesion, meaning 'the similarity or complementarity of the properties' of the political units under discussion, as well as the degree of interaction between them, has social, economic, political and organizational aspects and elements. Communication, whether understood generally as exchange of ideas, people or specifically as economic through the 'exchange of entities of trade' is further classifiable into personal communications, mass media, exchanges among elites and transportation. Power signifies 'the present and potential ability and willingness of one nation to alter decision-making processes of other countries' to tune with its own policies. The 'structure of relations' consists of relations among the countries engaged in cooperation and conflict in the region, which constitutes its IR. Understanding of this structure needs exploring the 'causes of relations' (i.e., 'basis of their amity and antagonism') as well as the 'means of relations' (i.e., 'the instruments of war, types of amelioration of conflict and methods of cooperation'). A 'relative weighing' of the pattern variables helps one diagnose the existence and nature of a subordinate system.

Application of this broad conceptual framework to the five subordinate systems mentioned above helps Cantori and Spiegel to identify six core sectors (including two of Southeast Asia for having maritime and mainland cores), all of which are

characterized by 'a relatively high degree of cohesiveness and a greater degree of balance between intersector (core—periphery), intrasector and extra-subordinate system diplomatic relations'. Regarding social cohesion, measurable through complementary, compatible or similar 'ethnicity, language, religion, culture, history and a consciousness of a common heritage', the five subordinate systems were gradable. While the core sectors of the first three were characterized by high cohesive factors of ethnicity, language and religion, West Europe scored high in the first and the third; and Latin America shows high compatibility in the second and third. The Southeast Asian maritime core came below the Latin American since despite high scores on ethnic and linguistic cohesion; it still had no single language, only related ones. Islam was numerically preponderant. But Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and even Christianity had significant followings. Buddhism was the source of cohesion only in the Southeast Asian mainland core. West Africa was the least cohesive socially because of the 'multitude of ethnic and linguistic groupings...reinforced by animism'. It was only in a few of the states within the core that Islam and Christianity provided a measure of religious cohesion.

Cantori and Spiegel hypothesized about the differential integrative capability of different aspects of *cohesion* from this framework. Social cohesion avowedly had the least impact on regional stability, since, revealingly, West Africa, Latin America and the Southeast Asian maritime core, which were 'the most tranquil internationally', showed 'little correlation with the social cohesion of each of these areas' and among the two core sectors that were least stable, the Middle East was 'highly cohesive', while Southeast Asia mainland was 'highly incohesive'. Economic cohesion was hypothesized to be measurable through (a) the extent of 'complementarity in economic resources in the core and the periphery' and (b) 'such complementarity' existing, the way its 'potential' was realized in 'trade patterns within the core sector'. Here, the West European core possessing actual complementarity; the Latin American core possessed potential complementarity, since in it and more so in others, cultivation of a single raw material led to 'extra-subordinate system-oriented trade patterns'. Examples were oil in Latin America and the Middle East; tin and rubber in Southeast Asian maritime; and coffee and cocoa in West Africa. Consequently, against 40 per cent or more import–export percentages of trade among members of the West European core, states in the Latin American and the Middle Eastern cores, barring a few, had figures lower than 15 per cent, and the Middle East, West Africa and Southeast Asia mainland and maritime cores had still lower figures.

Political cohesion, understood as the 'relative homogeneity of the types of regimes in a core area', was considered more important for registering 'the presence of other underlying factors of cohesion'. It is found only in the West European Core, which is 'remarkably homogeneous' with their democratic regimes, against all others, which are 'extremely heterogeneous with certain types' pre-eminently characteristic in certain core sectors. Examples are 'military regimes and conservative oligarchies' in Latin America and 'reform military regimes and conservative monarchies' in the Middle East.

Finally, organizational cohesion, claimed to promote 'regional consciousness', is measurable through membership in regional and extra-regional organizations, and bloc voting in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and other regional bodies. Important in the 'assessing' of the 'cohesive effects of such membership' are the proliferation of such organizations, and the frequency of common participation in them. That these

different dimensions of cohesion 'reinforce one another' is best manifest in the West European core, with others remaining at descending levels of cohesion.

The second of the four pattern variables, *communications*, encompasses the following: (a) 'personal communications' (mail, telephone, telegraph and so on), (b) 'mass media' (newspapers, radio and television), (c) 'exchanges among the elite' (regionally based education, tourism, diplomatic tours and meetings, and so on) and (d) 'transportation' by road, rail, water and rail. Cantori and Spiegel hypothesize their positive impact on the reinforcement of the 'characteristic cohesiveness of a core sector'. Measured whether by 'intra-core telephone communication', 'a developed system of radio and television broadcasting', 'exchanges among the elite', 'extensive exchanges of tourists and students within their respective cores', students seeking higher education in regional centres of excellence, or interstate diplomatic participation, as indicators of cohesion, West Europe or the Middle East were much better off than other cores, and West Africa lagged behind in all of them.

As to the third pattern variable of power—in all its material, military and motivational dimensions in a comparative perspective, and indirect components of power like population—size, GNP, energy consumption levels and so on—the equality of West European states glaringly contrasted with the lack of 'a general level of power' in the other cores, manifest in the 'profound disparity' between the seven giants (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru) and the remaining eleven pigmies in the Latin American core; the pre-eminence of Indonesia in the Southeast Asian maritime core; similar predominance of the United Arab League in the Middle East; the competing disparities between erstwhile North Vietnam and South Vietnam on one side and Laos and Cambodia on the other in Southeast Asia mainland and the graded hierarchy in which Senegal and the Ivory Coast quite some notches below overshadowed the remaining five states of West Africa. Since conflict is 'greatest in the cores with the greatest disparity', the only possible exception being 'the US-dominated Latin American core', Cantori and Spiegel think that the third pattern variable supplies a golden ground of testing both classical and modern theories of BOP. 'The relationship between level of conflict and both distribution and level of power may also be studied in comparing the effects of both cohesion and communications in determining the pattern of competition or cooperation.'

Even for the fourth pattern variable, the structure of regional relations and causes and means of relations, Cantori and Spiegel found that West Europe's lead was great. In the matter of the spectrum of relations, the pattern of cooperation in the West European, sustained by the craving for economic benefits from the Common Market, troubled only by occasional hiccups and hitches in French policy, was absent in the other cores. In Latin America, a low level of conflict was generally kept on a simmer by border disputes (Chile versus Peru and Bolivia, Peru versus Ecuador, Argentina versus Chile), and competition for prestige (Brazil and Argentina). A simmering 'stale-mated conflict' characterized the West African core also, where the conflict involving Guinea, Mali and Senegal versus Ivory Coast-led states acquired a 'radical-conservative' dimension. Cooperation happened mainly under the aegis of Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM), an alliance-type forum designed for common benefits. In the Southeast Asian Maritime, core regional relations varied from the highly conflictual to moderately cooperative, as seen in direct separate wars between Indonesia and the Philippines with Malaysia, and the Maphilindo group formed at the initiative of the Philippines, as well as a partial betterment of relations after Suharto's

ascent to power in Indonesia. Nagging conflict marked the whole gamut of relations in the Middle Eastern core, between conservatives (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf states) and radicals (United Arab Republic, Iraq, Syria and so on) mobilized against Lebanon and, for some time, against Sudan in the middle. Only relations between the radical states of United Arab Republic and Syria were partially stabilized by the 1967 war. Conflictual relations in the Southeast Asian mainland core included direct military confrontation between North and South Vietnam and North Vietnam and Laos; less intense conflict between North Vietnam and Cambodia; and also 'stalelated traditional conflict relations' between Cambodia and South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, and Cambodia and Thailand. The only oasis of cooperation involved Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam around the Mekong River Development Project.

Regarding regional conflict and cohesion in the five subordinate systems and their six cores in terms of these four pattern variables, 'widespread racial uniformity and the consciousness of a common heritage' helped tide over in West Europe 'perceived ethnic and actual linguistic diversity'. Cooperation congealed under NATO, and the EEC helped transcend conflictual scenarios. But in the Latin American Core, despite ethnic dissimilarity and linguistic variegation (though of a lesser degree due to dominance of Spanish, it was a 'single cultural identity' than 'factors of political and economic cohesion' that muted the effects of power disparity and isolation and absence of relations between the countries). Contrasted with these two preceding cores, the near-complete absence of economic cohesion and the predominance of conflict in the structure of relations in the Middle East dissipated the 'capital' of social cohesion. The Arab League could not match the integrative potential of the EEC or the Organization of African States (OAS), and the UAR used 'its pre-eminent power position' to forestall multilateral regional cooperation. The West African scenario deviates even more radically from the preceding three and is more akin to the two Southeast Asian cores in greater desiderata in social, economic or political cohesion. In West Africa, the cohesiveness imparted by the legacy of French elite culture and the organizational cohesion of OCAM contrasted with the Southeast Asian Maritime core, where a 'high level of social cohesion' was debilitated by the near-complete absence of supportive economic, political and organizational factors; and even more with the least cohesive Southeast Asian mainland core, where minimal regional cohesion facilitated by the cementing factor of Buddhism was offset by 'an overlapping series of ethnic, ideological, ideological, territorial and historical rivalries' among core members, exacerbated by great power interferences from the outside.<sup>14</sup>

## Critique of Cantori and Spiegel

Scholars disagree about whether the regional sub-systems theory of Cantori and Spiegel can be really considered a precursor of theories of regionalism. Teixeira says no, since the concept of a regional sub-system implies that component states possess a degree of interdependence meant as activities of other members in the region, whether cooperative or antagonistic, in the determination of its foreign policy. Such activities may be cooperative as well as antagonistic because the very idea of a system is neutral as to the nature of the relationship. This is 'a key difference between the literature on regional sub-systems and the literature on regionalism/regional

integration',<sup>15</sup> even if many other scholars do not make such fine distinctions, and from the mid- and late 1950s, when Padelford penned a 30-page bibliography on burgeoning researches in regionalization driven by cooperation and the formation of formal institutions,<sup>16</sup> to when the literature on regional sub-systems suffered a decline at the end of the Cold War, more often than not they were treated as synonymous.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of whether it qualifies as regional studies, Cantori and Spiegel's framework has some shortcomings. Although they provide 'a useful analytical framework for analysing to what extent a particular region fits their model', their 'work seems to prejudice the nature of the regions as world system theorists also seem to do when their views are applied to regional studies'.<sup>18</sup> Of course, Cantori and Spiegel's work is appreciated for its refreshing departure from both contemporary theories of 'systemic polarity and the inductive critiques it had generated', reducing regional theory to 'no more than a smattering of illustrative data', and also for its extension of this line of research to construct 'an empirically grounded theoretical framework that focused on the comparison between different regional systems'. But their 'ambitious scheme' might have been 'marred by a proliferation of variables', which rendered it 'at best, a comprehensive taxonomy'.<sup>19</sup> But whatever may be the weaknesses of the framework of Cantori and Spiegel, it will be difficult to ignore it in any study of old regionalism. In the 1970s, both integration theorists and regional sub-systems theorists criticized each other's approach to regionalism. While Cantori and Spiegel critiqued the narrow, inward-looking, integrationist approach to regions, enjoining attention to the 'IR of regions', neofunctionalists such as Haas criticized the regional systems as overly descriptive and reiterated the distinctive foci of regional integration scholars and regional sub-systems scholars.<sup>20</sup> But, for us, both are representatives of old regionalism.

## DEBATES BETWEEN EARLY/OLD AND NEW REGIONALISM

The critique offered by new regionalism of old regionalism (for Söderbaum, the early debate on regionalism) went beyond the debates among federalism, functionalism, neofunctionalism and transactionalism between the 1940s and 1950s about the nature of regional integration, and beyond the learning about European integration from these theories and the empirical knowledge imparted by it to integrationists. This was because overriding the consciousness of the neofunctionalists about the Eurocentrism of their theory, European integration was being treated as the representative exemplar of integration elsewhere. EC was being taken as its model as well as a measuring rod. Wherever less rigorous and more informal models of integration arose, they were measured against the European standard. But this euphoria was rudely shaken in the early 1960s by a mismatch between the depiction and prescriptions of the neofunctionalists and the realities of the empirical world dominated by Gaullist nationalism. Keohane and Hoffman rubbished the claims of neofunctionalism about automatic transition from low politics of economics to high politics of security even after the successful evolution of EC into the EU, when they said that the EU 'is an experiment in pooling sovereignty, not in transferring it from states to supranational institutions'.<sup>21</sup> The charge of the intergovernmentalists that regional integration progressed so long as it coincided with the national interests of the states was



validated by later empirical research which showed the EU as an 'economic giant but political dwarf', a 'secondary actor', 'lacking...resolve...lacking the political muscle that would correspond to its economic strength'.<sup>22</sup> Anyway, once Eurosclerosis was tided over with the signing of the White Paper about internal markets in 1985 and the SEA in 1987, regardless of its questionable impact on state sovereignty, the subsequent spurt in the momentum of European integration was termed by some as new regionalism. Although some commentators sought to ascribe the newness of new regionalism to 'the revival of protectionism and neo-mercantilism', others were quick to contend that closure of regions was never on the cards. Rather, what the current debate signified was 'a transformation of the Westphalian nation state', transcending of its national borders, and a consideration of the question of 'how to navigate politically in the context of globalization'.

So one of the insights that the recent debate on regionalism threw up was that regionalism has to be viewed both from endogenous and exogenous perspectives. While the former suggests that regionalism results from the working of numerous intra-regional factors, the latter posits that regionalization and globalization are 'intertwined articulations of global transformation'. Quite apart from and independent of the theoretical attention to systemic variables in neorealism, it is the deepening of globalization that has primarily incited and quickened the rise of the exogenous perspective and is one of the reasons why it is called 'new regionalism'. By contrast, the endogenous perspective, which has more affinity with functionalist and neofunctionalist views about regional integration, the importance of agency, and the long-term dissolution of territorial identities, makes or accepts no distinction between old and new regionalism. But still, unlike the times of Haas, Deutsch and others exclusively preoccupied with European regionalism, these endogenous scholars too recognize many regionalisms which have supplied a wider base for theorizing that has changed both ontologically (about the object being explored) and epistemologically (about the way of exploring it). The upshot is a new evolving political chorography of regionalism where an 'expanded cast of actors (state and non-state)' is acting in the regional scene, impacting across the interconnected aspects of security, development, trade, environment, identity and so on.<sup>23</sup>

This multifaceted and plural nature of regionalism, in Europe and outside, led to the accretion of numerous partly renovated or wholly new views of regionalism and culminated in a theoretical explosion starting in the 1990s. Edited volumes highlighted different aspects of it, such as forms of institutionalism, security complex theory and an ensemble of constructivist, critical and new regionalism perspectives such as the world order approach, new regionalist approach and the region-building approach (RBA; Söderbaum and Shaw); a host of neorealist and neoliberal intuitionist theories, new trade theories, neoinstitutionalism and so on (Mansfield and Milner); comparative regional integration perspectives on governmentalism, power, constructivism, neofunctionalism and historical institutionalism (F. Laursen); a rich brew of schools of European integration theory such as federalism, neofunctionalism with 'liberal governmentalism, multilevel governance, policy networks, new institutionalisms, social constructivism, integration through law, discursive approaches and gender perspectives' (Wiener and Diez) and theoretical innovations preoccupied with analyses of Asian regionalism as well as comparative regionalism (Acharya and Katzenstein). In consequence, comparative regionalism has become one of the most dominant trends in studies of regionalism.<sup>24</sup>

But as a result of all this new churning and plethora of perspectives, some confusion has crept in about the meaning of old and new in the signification of regionalism, so much so that Hettne has urged casting off the label of 'new' in it, though he is not averse to identification of the continuities and discontinuities in the evolution of regionalism.<sup>25</sup> I touch upon it in the new section.

## NEW REGIONALISM: HOW, WHY AND WHERE IT IS NEW?

Despite differences of new regionalism from its earlier versions, there have been no straight clues to locate just where this newness lies. Söderbaum tries to provide some in the context of comparative regionalism. Aware of the need to explore in greater depth 'ideas about regions and regionalism from different time periods, discourses, disciplines and regional specializations', and of a sustained historical perspective to grasp the 'global heritage' of regionalism and shun the current presentism in its study, he suggests some complex path-clearing tasks. The difficulty of dispelling the confusion between old and new regionalism, even after instilling through this differentiation of some historicity into the discourse, owes partly to the problem of different meanings of regionalism. Being 'badly misunderstood as well as misused', they have 'reinforced existing divisions' in the studies. So, first, Söderbaum sets about differentiating between old and new regionalism from 'temporal, empirical as well as theoretical perspectives'. Clear temporal division is, however, hindered by continuities and similarities between them, since a host of regional projects and organizations launched during the old regionalism of the 1950s–1970s have been either revived or restarted during the new regionalism of the late 1980s–1990s, though with a new nomenclature or a broadened membership, making separation of the 'historical from the contemporary' difficult. Söderbaum cites Hettne, arguing that rather than pinpointing a new era or wave of regionalism, one should point out situations where new patterns exist side by side with older ones. This would necessitate treating regionalism from the empirical rather than from the temporal perspective. Söderbaum mentions yet another meaning of regionalism linked with theory, where the prefix 'new' is employed to distinguish theoretical novelties absent or lacking in older frameworks coming from 'new political economy, new political science, new security studies' and so on. These help scholars to move beyond or challenge classical and orthodox assumptions and methodologies of old regionalism.

After this path clearing, Söderbaum finds the newness of new regionalism inhering in its 'resurrection and redefinition'; its linking with 'academic and policy debates after some decades of neglect' and its new status as 'a set of middle-level adjuncts in policy, practice as well as analysis', amid hegemonizing attempts of globalization and the resultant backlash of anti-globalization. Besides, in the post-bipolar world of the mid- and late 1990s, shaken by the events of 9/11 and after, new regionalism has come to stand for 'a range of formal/informal mid-level "triangular" relations among not only states but also non-state actors, notably civil societies and private companies' as 'a central aspect of the "new-, inter-or transnational relations"'.

Coming to the ground realities which have sparked off theoretical innovations in regionalism, enabling it to acquire the epithet 'new', Söderbaum refers to different forms of regionalism and regionalist practices all around the world that went beyond

the ‘widening and deepening of the EU’ (even though it was its focal point) to focus on processes of regionalization evidenced elsewhere in the rise, rejuvenation and spread of regional initiatives and projects. Examples are the Southern Common Market/*Comisión Sectorial para el Mercado Común del Sur* (MERCOSUR), the ASEAN, the NAFTA, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and so on. Söderbaum points out that this revived and global trend of regionalism is not limited just to ‘formal interstate regional organizations and institutions’, but it is rather marked by its ‘multidimensionality, complexity, fluidity and non-conformity’, which facilitates the engagement of a variety of state and NSAs who frequently combine in ‘rather informal multi-actor coalitions’. This makes it incumbent on us to discuss regionalism more in the plural than in the singular through novel theoretical endeavours that will capture the diversity of regionalization processes in the world.<sup>26</sup>

The newness of new regionalism would also be evident in its revived relevance in academic and policy debates. If we compare the Google n-grams chart frequencies of the terms ‘European integration’ and ‘regional integration’ in all Google books from 1950 to 2019, we will see that, in respect of European integration, the graph reveals a steady rise from the 1950s to the 1960s. A fall occurs after 1965, which continues up to the 1980s, to be followed by a steep upturn in the mid-1980s, succeeded by another decline after 2005, though at a higher altitude. The fluctuations run parallel to the vicissitudes of the EC and EU over the years and are supported by substantial research area.

Contrasted with this, the trend of ‘regional integration’ on a Google n-gram graph for the terms ‘European integration’ and ‘regional integration’ between 1950 and 2019 point to a more recent but steadily growing scholarship on extra-European regionalism, which received a theoretical fillip after the demise of the Cold War, so that the curves that were insignificant up to 1960 registered a slow rise from 1960 to 1980, a slight fall between 1980 and 1990, but a sharp rise afterwards which flattened out a kind of median after 2010.<sup>27</sup> The rekindled theoretical interest was reflected in publications between 1995 and 2012.<sup>28</sup>

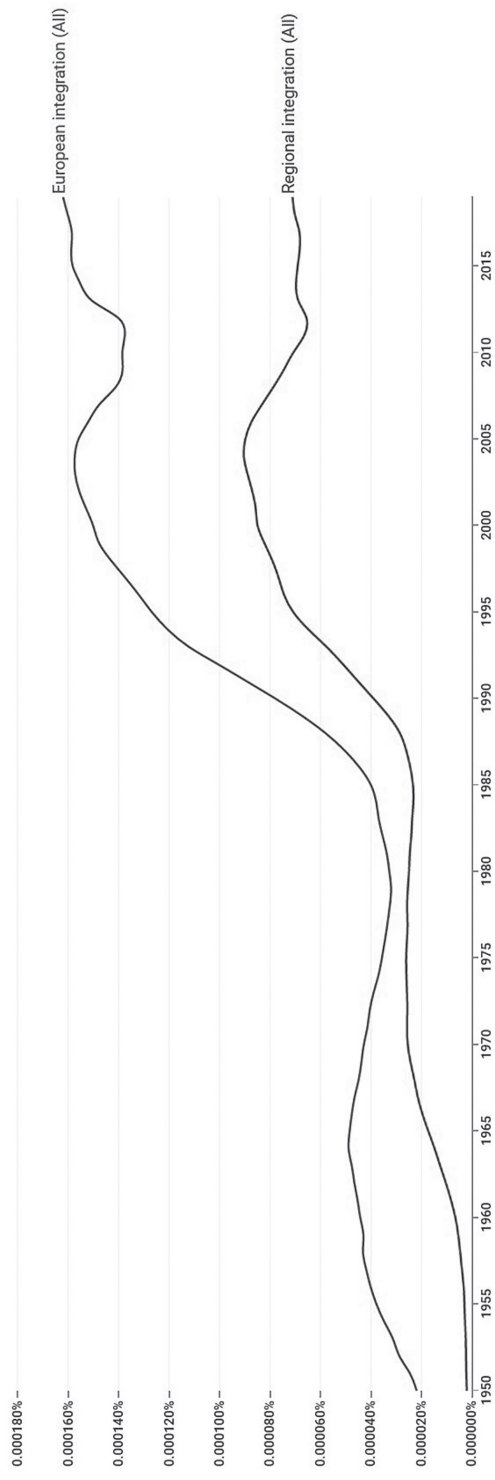
Many facets of the new brand of regionalism are discussed in a great number of edited books and articles.<sup>28</sup> But these also betoken ‘deep intellectual and disciplinary rivalries’ in the approaches of the scholars to regions, regionness, regionalism and regionalization. So we start with Hettne’s chart of the aspects in which new regionalism is different from the old one.

- Contrasted with old regionalism, forged in the Cold War bipolar context, the new version is being wrought in a multipolar one since, even with their military superiority, the former superpowers are reduced to regional powers, contesting with emerging regional powers. If the previous superpower-centric world could be conceived as ‘premature globalization’, the downgrading of superpowers betokens a certain ‘deglobalization’.
- Compared with old regionalism, designed or fashioned from the above by the superpowers, new regionalism is a more spontaneous phenomenon. It is intra-regional in source, springing ‘from below’ and is the handiwork of constituent states and increasingly other actors.
- Against the ‘inward-oriented and protectionist’ nature of old regionalism, especially in respect of economic integration, the new regionalism is more

# Google Books Ngram Viewer

Q European integration,Regional integration X ?

1950 - 2019 ▾ English (2019) ▾ Case-Insensitive Smoothing ▾



Source: Google.

'open', even though a small measure of preferential treatment within the region is implicit in its meaning.

- While old regionalism was more circumscribed as to its objectives, focusing on security or economic benefit, new regionalism signifies 'a more comprehensive, multidimensional process', going beyond 'trade and economic integration' to encompass environment, social policy, security and democracy, all within a general context of accountability and legitimacy.
- While old regionalism was state-centric and preoccupied with relations among sovereign states, new regionalism is tied to a global structural transformation where NSAs exist and exert influence at several levels of the global system. So new regionalism is not intelligible from the perspective of a single region and is rather 'a world-order' concept, in which changes in the regionalization process in any region has systemic consequences for all single regions and the entire power structure of core and even peripheral regions. Core regions too have their centre periphery and North–South divides.<sup>29</sup>

Additionally, most of the prominent scholars found the new brand of regionalism, which started since the 1980s and gathered momentum in the early 1990s, to be characterized by 'a more varied institutional design and a more active role of business and civil society actors', and inextricably connected with a host of intertwined structural transformations of the global system, including demise of bipolarity, accentuation of economic globalization, intermittent and periodic anxieties about the soundness of the multilateral trading order, streamlining of the nation state and the questioning of neoliberal economic reforms and political development in developing and post-socialist countries. A host of new theories sought to capture the richness and complexity of regionalism in the new 'multiplex' and multipolar world, ranging from neorealist and neoliberal institutional theories, new trade theories, new institutional theories, multilevel governance approaches, diverse constructivist and discursive approaches, security complex theory and so on, to assorted critical and new regionalism approaches (NRAs). The ferment was rich, indicating theoretical progress in this area. But this inevitably led to confusion, since a great many scholars, aligned with the opposing 'rationalist' and 'reflectivist' camps or with the 'constructivist' camps occupying the middle ground,<sup>30</sup> differed about the meaning of theory.

Of course, even in this cacophony, some efforts at consensus building were visible. In tune with the 'neo–neo synthesis', or the synthesis between later developments in realism and liberalism mentioned in Chapter 1,<sup>31</sup> even while disagreeing about the importance of power versus the autonomous impact of institutions, diverse rationalist approaches began veering around one another during the 1990s, much unlike the days of old regionalism. Rationalists did not merely start sharing common epistemological and core ontological assumptions but also began developing a common research agenda about the provenances, forms and impacts of diverse regional arrangements and initiatives. The agenda explored why states preferred to enter regional organizations, why integration made better progress in certain policy spheres than others and why some institutional forms proved more effective than others, why they deepened and what impacts they had on trade, finance, development, security and so on. But this emerging consensus between rationalist approaches could not cross over to the constructivist and reflectivist camps, diverse approaches of which continued to question all core rationalist assumptions. These concerned the split

between subject and object, and fact and value, the state centrality of rationalist ontologies and the role of norms and identities in the development of informal and formal regions. But while some constructivists took on rationalists directly, the radical and critical, in short reflectivist approaches, addressed the nature of structural transformation of which new regionalism is a manifestation and the targeted beneficiaries of regionalism, to contend that regionalism was nothing but an expression of 'economic globalization and prevailing forms of hegemony'. Along with constructivists, reflectivists debated the relative merits of regionalism as a states-led initiative, contrasted with 'regionalization', which emerged from intra-regional 'growth of societal integration' and 'undirected processes of social and economic interaction'. While the former, called formal regionalism, was favoured by the majority of rationalist scholars, a significant minority regarded it as a political project but not dominated, let alone monopolized, by states. Naturally, while rationalists were busier with putative regional demarcations and arrangements, constructivists and reflectivists concentrated more on how regions were 'constituted and constructed', some of them, such as the proponents of the NRA, even claiming that no such things as 'natural regions' existed, all of them being subject to making, remaking and unmaking. Iver B. Neumann's RBA shared with NRA a rejection of any fixed and preordained definition of regions and the 'territorial trap of the nation state'.

The new intellectual ferment contained another source of tension between the 'structural and macro-oriented approaches' and the agency-centred micro-oriented approaches, partly cross-cutting the rationalist-reflectivist divide. While the former focused on 'historical structures and the construction of world orders', the latter was more concerned with 'particularities of agency and lived social spaces'. Although there have not been significant attempts to balance the 'outside-in' and 'inside-out' perspectives, their juxtaposition is less than problematic since each has its appropriate methodological advantage. Structural analysis is more apposite when research attention is on the causal importance of regions in world-scale transformation, agency-based explanation is more relevant when the task is to spell out in detail the particularities of agents and microprocesses.<sup>32</sup>

## COMPARATIVE REGIONALISM: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The ferment and fragmentation of regionalism in the theoretical field have been evenly matched by the diversity of regionalisms in various domains on the ground in the post-Cold War world. In the political field, the re-emergence of regional mammoths such as the Organization of African Unity and the OAS coincided with the arrival of a host of aspiring micro-regional groups. These are the Visegrad Pact and Pentagone in Central Europe,<sup>33</sup> the Arab Maghreb Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East and ECOWAS with a rejuvenated and South Africa-led SADC. These are complemented by institutionally loose meso-regional security outfits such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, presently OSCE) and the ASEAN Regional Forum. In the economic domain, micro-regional initiatives for economic cooperation and integration, such as the MERCOSUR, the Andean Pact, the Central American Common Market (CACM) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM),

as well as efforts to broaden economic integration within the ASEAN and the founding of free trade areas, coexist with pleas for macroeconomic or 'bloc regionalism' constructed around broadened EU, the NAFTA and open-regionalism APEC.

This diversity of concrete regionalisms has brought out four characteristics of new regionalism: (a) a 'North/South regionalism' best typified by the NAFTA but germane to developments in Europe and Asia too; (b) great divergences in the level of institutionalization since many regional alignments consciously eschew the institutional and bureaucratic paraphernalia of regional bodies typified by the EU; (c) increasing difficulties in separating economic and political regionalism since new regionalism is propelled by the end of the Cold War, 'decentralization or regionalization of security concerns' and changes in the global economy and (d) significant escalation of regional consciousness or awareness, an upshot of resurgent concerns with identity, in many parts of the world, even though it has not been 'always easily or unproblematically translated into concrete schemes for regional cooperation'.<sup>34</sup> Scholars are also speaking of many types of regionalism, such as 'post-hegemonic regionalism' (Riggirozzi and Tussie, Telò), 'post-neoliberal regionalism' (Riggirozzi), 'heterodox regionalism' (Vivares), 'porous regional borders' (Katzenstein), 'regional worlds' (Acharya), 'converging regions' (Lenze and Schriwer) and 'networking regions' (Baldersheim, Haug and Øgård).<sup>35</sup>

Such rich fragmentation made comparative regionalism a very obvious subject for theorizing. But as Lombaerde et al. rightly point out, this task proved difficult because of three interrelated problems: conceptual, theoretical and methodological. The conceptual problem flows from the fact that wide variations exist in the definitions of region, regional integration, regionalism, regionalization and allied concepts in academic writings. The theoretical problem arises from the fact that while theories proliferate and belabour different but related aspects of the greater regional riddle, the proneness to use European integration as a standard for comparing with other regions lingers. The problem of empirical methodology concerns the dilemma about choosing between idiographic and nomothetic researches. But its resolution is not difficult since both quantitative and qualitative empirical methods are applicable. The initial preference for qualitative approaches, especially single-case study methods, was possibly due to (a) a perceived want of comparable cases caused by the perceived heterogeneity and complexity of the reality of regionalization, (b) the influence of area studies environments where studies of regionalization and regionalism very often started and (c) disciplinary conventions and practices in political science and IR. But Lombaerde brushes the methodological tangle away by suggesting that 'the comparative element in regionalization studies' cannot be grasped through any theoretical monism. Rather comparativity 'should be developed along different tracks, as it will be crucial for enhancing communication between various theoretical standpoints and regional specializations'. Besides, when pursuing comparative research, 'it is crucial to move beyond the "false universalism"' involved in 'a selective reading of regionalism' that considers only the core and the EU. Methodologically, Lombaerde suggested retrieving 'a middle ground between context and area studies on the one hand, and "hard" social science as reflected in the use of "elaborative" comparisons on the other' since this middle ground has been hailed as the "eclectic centre" of comparative studies'. It is hoped that, this way, one can steer a middle course between excessive contextualization and overgeneralized theory.<sup>36</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After mentioning trajectories of identifiable early fluid regionalisms in Greece and the Black Sea area in Europe, ancient India and India, early visions of regional cooperation in pre-modern and early Europe, and vestiges of 'old' regionalist thought in Cantori and Spiegel's sub-systemic perspective, as well as theories of European integration, notably neofunctionalism, this chapter has shown how new regionalism has transcended the limitations of the old regionalism. From a discussion of the disciplinary and contextual sources and indicators of newness of it, and rivalries between its many strands claiming to monopolize the elements of newness, it has shown how comparativity across the rationalist–reflectivist divide the best clue to it. Of course, the theoretical ferment and fragmentation of comparative regionalism is also beset by conceptual, theoretical and methodological problems. But it has made some start because of many reasons, of which the first is its changing context. Contrasted with new regionalism, which was propelled by the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, neoliberalism, economic globalization and so on, the current phase of regionalism owes its origins to a 'global order' marked by diverse contradictory pushes and pulls, starting from an America-and-the-West-sponsored war on terror that is called global, changing views on government and governance, 'a multi-layered or "multiplex" global order', rise in the influence of BRICS and the middle powers, recurrent global financial meltdowns, proliferation of cross-cutting regional and interregional plans and initiatives in various areas of the world and so on. As a result, no more pitted against globalization and no more assailed by doubts about its worth, regionalism has established its salience as a 'structural component of today's global politics'. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's phrase, a 'global order of strong regions', catches the mood.

This new reality and its awareness have also changed our imaginings of the relationship among micro, meso and macro modes of government or governance. During the days of old regionalism, regional integration was viewed either as a zero-sum game of shifting of allegiances from the nation state to supranational bodies, or as a process which strengthened the nation state. By the time of new regionalism, the issue became the mutual harmful or salubrious impacts of regionalism and globalization for each other. But during the current phase of theorizing, the entire vista of the global–regional nexus has changed. The complexity of regionalism and the multiple interactions between state actors and NSAs, institutions and processes occurring at various interacting planes, starting from the bilateral through the regional and interregional to the global informs the new discourse on regionalism. As a result, the binaries between formal and informal regionalism, soft and hard regionalism, regionalism and regionalization, state and NSA-led regionalism and so on are transcended. Regionalism is also spreading to far more policy domains than was the case during new regionalism, such as monetary and financial governance, gender and social policy, migration, asylum, democracy and human rights.

Theoretically and methodologically, the eclectic middle ground that we have quoted Lombaerde to suggest has been searched through dialogues, replacing rivalries of new regionalism. The intractable discrepancies and discontinuities between instances and manifestations of regionalism such as European, Latin American, Asian and African have been sought to be made theoretically pliable through dialogues between rationalism, constructivism and diversified reflectivist approaches. In the second volume of this book, I will deal with these local expressions of a global phenomenon. Anyway,



what Acharya called the 'global heritage' of regionalism, and with which we started this chapter, has been accorded due recognition.

Of course, the comparative element has to be further deepened. Some theoretical path has to be found for comparing 'in time as well as within and across different spaces' regions and forms of organization, 'comprehensive and multidimensional regions at different scales' and distinct more or less rigorous institutional forms, such as 'trade blocs, security regions, cognitive regions and river basins', with and without the EU as a measuring rod.<sup>37</sup> There are some heartening thoughts about the possibility of such deepening. For, after being 'consigned for many years to the murky margins of the history of geographical thought, somewhat surprisingly the region has come to occupy a central place in both social scientific discourse and political debates'.<sup>38</sup> Beyond supplying a point for imbrication of concerns with economic, social, political, cultural and ecological change, it is in the backdrop of renewed interest in cross-disciplinary researches providing a platform for analytical integration or synthesis across disciplines such as economics, geography, planning, politics and sociology.<sup>39</sup> This augurs well for the end of fragmentation in the regionalism theory field and the development of consolidated knowledge.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Is regionalism a recent idea, or does it have old examples? State with reasons.
2. Assess Cantori and Spiegel's regional sub-systems approach as an early precursor of regionalism.
3. Comment on the sources and types of newness of new regionalism.
4. Write a short essay on comparative regionalism. Does it represent an advance in regionalist studies?

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. *Ibid.*, 17.
3. Historically known as Sinope, located on the northernmost edge of the Turkish side of the Black Sea coast, in the ancient region of Paphlagonia.
4. A city on the Black Sea coast of north-eastern Turkey and the capital of *Trabzon* Province, an important transit point on the historical Silk Road, with consequent intermixing of religions, languages and cultures.
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14. *Ibid.*, *passim*.
15. Carlos Gustavo Poggio Teixeira, *Brazil, the United States and the South American Subsystem: Regional Politics and the Absent Empire* (Lanham, MD; Boulder, CO: Lexington Books, 2012), 19–21.
16. Norman J. Padelford, 'A Selected Bibliography on Regionalism and Regional Arrangements', *International Organization* 10, no. 4 (1956): 575–603, cited in *Ibid.*, 24.
17. See, for multiple references in this regard, Teixeira, *Brazil*, 24.
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27. Created by me for the terms 'European integration' and 'regional integration' between 1950 and 2019.
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29. Hettne, 'Globalization and the New Regionalism', 7–8.
30. This will be discussed in Chapter 25.
31. See notes 65–67 of Introduction.
32. The foregoing portrayal of the varieties and dimensions of new regionalism draws entirely on Söderbaum, 'Old', 26–29.

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