

Élise Féron  
Jyrki Käkönen  
Gabriel Rached (eds.)

# Revisiting Regionalism and the Contemporary World Order

Perspectives from the BRICS and beyond

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## Notes on contributors

**Igor Adami** is a PhD candidate in political science at the Ural Federal University, Russia. He received a bachelor's degree in International Relations at UNIVALI (Brazil) in 2016, and a master's degree in International Relations at the Ural Federal University (Russia) in 2019. His interests include IR theories, discourse, nuclear non-proliferation, international security, and regionalism. His master's thesis was dedicated to the study of discourse in the field of non-proliferation, with a case-study about the North Korean nuclear crisis and Trump's distinct form of leadership. Largely operating within Pierre Bourdieu's ontology, Igor's present goal is to study the discursive practices of the world's leaders within the field of nonproliferation. His recent study focuses on the correlation between political discourse practices and political action.

**Dr. Giovanni Barbieri** is Adjunct Professor of History of International and Commercial Institutions at the University of Palermo (D.E.M.S., Italy) and project researcher in the *Kone Foundation Project "Regional Challenges to Multilateralism"*, based at Tampere University, Finland. He is also an external research collaborator at CRANEC (Research Center on Economic Analysis and International Economic Development) at the Università Cattolica, Milano. He holds a PhD (2017) in Institutions and Politics from Unicatt (Milano). He is also a contributor to several non-academic specialized publications, such as *Aggiornamenti Sociali*. His current research interests lie in the development of alternative theoretical approaches to International Relations and on rising powers and global hegemonic transition. Among his latest publications are: "One Belt One Road: Understanding China's Activism in Contemporary World. Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in China set off a tornado in Europe?", *Cardozo Electronic Law Bulletin – Global Frontiers of Comparative Law*, 2018, vol. 1; and "Regionalism, globalism and complexity: a stimulus towards Global IR?", *Third World Thematics – special issue*, under review, 2019.

**Dr. Élise Féron** is a Docent and a senior researcher at the Tampere Peace Research Institute (Tampere University, Finland), where she currently co-directs the Master programme in Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research. She holds an Accreditation to Supervise Research (Docent, 2003) and a PhD in Political Science (1999). She is an invited professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium), at Sciences Po Lille (France), at the University of Turin (Italy), and at the Université Lumière de Bujumbura (Burundi) where she co-convenes a Gender Studies Master Programme. She has launched and participated in various projects in Europe and in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and she has chaired six major international research projects over the past



fifteen years, among which is the current Kone funded project “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism” (2017-2020). Her research interests include diaspora politics, de- and post-colonial studies, and gender dimensions of conflicts.

**Marko Juutinen** is finalizing his doctoral dissertation about the legitimacy of transnational trade governance at the Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Finland. Besides regional and multilateral trade governance, he has been working on classical liberalism, non-Western international relations theory and BRICS studies. He has published two monographs (together with prof. Jyrki Käkönen), original articles in the *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, *Third World Thematics*, the journal of the Finnish Society for Political Economy Research, and the journal of the Finnish Peace Research Association. As a university teacher, Juutinen has taught on Adam Smith, transatlantic economic integration, and the political economy of the financial crisis, as well as regional and intra-regional organizations. He has gained expertise as a visiting researcher at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in New Delhi and at the Swedish Institute for International Affairs. While working on Dr. Élise Féron’s “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism” research project, Juutinen is also contributing to Dr. Kaarle Nordenstreng’s project on “Media Systems in Flux: The Challenge of the BRICS Countries”. In addition to scholarly work, Juutinen has written for various NGOs and serves as the secretary of the Tampere University Association of Researchers and Teachers.

**Benjamin Klasche** is a PhD Candidate in Government and Politics at Tallinn University (Estonia) and an adjunct lecturer of International Relations and Political Science. In his interdisciplinary dissertation he aims to connect the insights of relational sociology with the concept of ‘wicked problems’ that should help us to understand the constitution of the European Migrant Crisis, and how it can be studied by academics and tackled by policymakers. His further research interests are political theory, international relations methodology, the European Migrant Crisis and the Arctic. He holds a master’s degree (cum laude) in International Relations from Tallinn University and a bachelor’s degree in History from the University of Bonn. A German national, he also studied political minorities at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University near Budapest, Hungary.

**Dr. Jyrki Käkönen** is Emeritus Professor and a senior scholar in the Kone funded research project on “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism”. He was Professor in International Relations and European Studies at the Institute of Political Science and Governance at Tallinn University (2007-2015), and Jean Monnet Professor in the Department of Political Science and International

Relations at the University of Tampere (1998-2007). He was the director of the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tampere (2002-2007) and the director of the Tampere Peace Research Institute (1988-1998). His current research interest is in the changing international order and how the transition of the system challenges Eurocentric IR approaches. Among his recent publications are “Interpreting the Transforming World: Perspective from Peace Research”, *New Global Studies* 5(3) 2011; co-authored book, *‘Euro-Asia’ at the Crossroads. Geopolitics, Identities and Dialogues*, together with Sanjay Chaturvedi and Anita Sengupta, 2011; “BRICS as a New Power in International Relations”, *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations*, 6 (2) 2014; “BRICS as a new constellation in international relations”, in Kaarle Nordenstreng and Daya Thussu (eds.), *Mapping BRICS Media*, 2015; and together with Marko Juutinen, *Battle for Globalisations? BRICS and US Mega-Regional Trade Agreements in a Changing World Order*, Observer Research Foundation Monograph, 2016.

**Karim Maïche** is a Doctoral Student at the Tampere Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), University of Tampere, Finland. He has worked for the FYRN’s (Finnish Youth Research Network) *SAHWA Project* that investigated Southern Mediterranean youth, and participated in a research project concentrating on the daily lives of the unaccompanied asylum seekers in Finnish reception centers. Maïche graduated from the University of Lapland (M.Soc.Sc.) in 2011. His PhD research focuses on oppositional social movements in Algeria and North Africa, especially the autonomous trade unions. He has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Algeria since 2013. He will complete his PhD in 2019. Currently Maïche works for the project “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism”, funded by the Kone foundation. In this project, Maïche takes a critical approach to cultural-historical readings and interpretations in the context of contemporary regional institutions and multilateral interactions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Maïche also works for another Kone funded project called “Neighborhood Yurt”, which maps existing neighborhood dialogues in the multilingual and multicultural suburb of Hervanta, in Tampere, Finland. The project combines a yurt that travels around Hervanta with community art, and undertakes co-created research with the inhabitants.

**Terry McDonald** is a lecturer in International Relations and a PhD Candidate at Tallinn University, Estonia. His research focus is on currency policy, China, and issues in International Political Economy. He has an MA in International Relations from Tallinn University, and a bachelor’s degree (Political Science and Religious Studies), a Diploma in Public Administration, and a Diploma in Professional Writing from Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada. He

is one of the founding members of the “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism” Kone Foundation project. He has also undertaken study and research secondments at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Tbilisi State University, the University of Crete, and Sheffield Hallam University. He was born in the small town of Colliers, Newfoundland and grew up in Labrador, Canada. When not waiting for reviewer replies for his dissertation articles, he can be found producing the Tallinn University podcast or playing guitar and singing at Irish bars in whichever city he finds himself at the moment.

**Dr. Tuomo Melasuo** is Professor Emeritus of Peace and Conflict Research and the former Director of TAPRI at Tampere University, and Docent in Political History, University of Turku, Finland. He studied contemporary political history, political science, international relations and law in Finland and in France. Professor Melasuo has concentrated his studies on North Africa and the Mediterranean world, especially on Algerian history since the beginning of colonization. He has also worked on other Maghrebin and African countries as well as on political culture in Muslim societies. Since creating the TAPRI Mediterranean Studies Project, Tuomo Melasuo has been active in Euro-Mediterranean relations. He is or has been a member of scientific bodies such as the Advisory Council of the Anna Lind Foundation, the Academic Advisory Council at the Center for Mediterranean Dialogues at New York University, the steering committees of Femise and Sihmed, and he is also a member of EuroMeSCo. Professor Melasuo has served as the Vice-President of MOST (Management of Social Transformation) and as a representative of Finland in the Euro-Arab Task Force for Dialogue, both within Unesco. He has also been, for a number of years, board member and vice-chair in NSMES (Nordic Society for Middle-Eastern Studies). In addition, he has cooperated for several decades with CRESM-IREMAM-MMSH in Aix-en-Provence and was an associate research fellow in LIRESS, the *Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire de Recherche et d'Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, CNRS-Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan, Paris. Dr. Melasuo has published several books and articles in international and Finnish publications. Nowadays, he supervises doctoral students and continues his international scientific activities in peace and conflict research, especially in the area of Euro-Mediterranean relations.

**Dr. Ekaterina Mikhaylenko** is an Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations of the Ural Federal University, Russia. A graduate of the Ural State University (1998), she received her PhD in the history of International Relations and Foreign Policy in 2002. Dr. Mikhaylenko started her research in regional studies with the examination of EU Foreign Policy. Now she teaches and writes about the region-building processes in Eurasia, applying

and testing different theoretical approaches to regionalism. Dr. Mikhaylenko has more than twenty publications to her name, both in English and Russian, on European regionalism and projects developed in the post-Soviet space. Her latest publications are: “Revisionist regionalism of the Russian Federation in post-Soviet space”, in *Analele Universitatii din Craiova. Seria Istorie*, Vol. 21, (1). 2016, p.77-86; “The complexity of building Russian regionalism in the post-Soviet space”, in the *Bulletin of the Tomsk State University* No 400. 2015, p.81-87; and with V. Mikhaylenko, “New Forms of integration or alternative Regionalism in Governing for the Future”, *International Political Science Conference*, June 9-12, 2016/ Bucharest (Romania), MEDIMOND. Dr. Mikhaylenko is also a co-author of *Eurasia e jihadismo* (Carroccii editor, 2016), and *Asymmetries of Regional Integration Projects of the 21st Century* (Ural University Press, 2018). She is a member of the International Studies Association, the Central Eurasian Studies Society and the Association of European Researchers (Russia). Currently, she is working in the Jean Monnet Chair project “EU Regionalism and Foreign Policy”. In 2015 and 2019 Dr. Mikhaylenko was invited as a Visiting Professor at Masaryk University (Brno, Check Republic).

**Dr. Shraddha Naik** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Government College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Sanquelim, Goa, India. A graduate of Goa University, (2007), she obtained her master’s degree from the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, India (2009). She received her PhD in International Studies in 2017 from the Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Dr. Naik started her research into India’s foreign policy with an MPhil degree in International Studies, focusing on interregional groupings. Now she writes about the advent of regionalism in the Global South and interregionalism as a new phenomenon in the international system. Presently she teaches different theories of political science, concepts of human rights, and the Indian political system to undergraduate students. Dr. Naik has published in international journals and has edited books. One of her latest papers is (2018) “The Rising BRICS: A Path to Multipolar World Reality?” in *Comparative Politics Russia*, 9 (1): 100-108. She has also presented several research papers on BRICS, the IBSA Dialogue Forum and other aspects of interregionalism and human rights topics at national and international conferences. Dr. Naik is a member of the International Studies Association. Her research interests include: India’s foreign policy, theories of regionalism, interregional groupings, BRICS, the IBSA Dialogue Forum, political economy and human rights issues in the Global South.

**Bianca Naude** lectures in political studies at the Qwaqwa campus of the University of the Free State in South Africa. Her research interests include International Relations theory, psychoanalysis in IR, and research methodology. She holds a Master of Advanced European and International Affairs (summa cum laude) from the European Institute in Nice (France) and a Master's in Political Science from the University of Lyon II (France). Her doctoral thesis (University of Cape Town, South Africa) employs insights from the field of psychoanalysis to make a systematic study of the South African state's personality and its relationships with other state-persons in the international system.

**Matti Puranen** (MA, MSSc) is a doctoral candidate (Political Science) at the Department of Social Science and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, from which he graduated in General History and Political Science in 2014. His dissertation focuses on Chinese thinking on world politics and global governance, and especially on the use of traditional philosophical concepts (such as *tianxia*) in contemporary debates. Besides teaching at his home institution, Puranen has taught at the National Defence University of Finland and the University of Lapland, and works as a contributing editor at the Finnish online magazine on international affairs, *The Ulkopolitist*.

**Dr. Gabriel Rached** is a researcher and Associate Professor. He holds a PhD in International Political Economy (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). His thesis dealt with multilateral organizations and focused on the World Bank and economic development. He carries out research and teaches on the topic of political economy (Universidade Federal Fluminense), and is involved in undergraduate and graduate activities. Since 2012, he has been coordinating a research group on the state's role in the development process. Since 2016 he has been a Postdoctoral Fellow in International Studies (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy) conducting research into BRICS and the insertion of these emerging countries in the international arena. He was a fellow at the BRICS Think Tank in South Africa (HSRC), and visited the BRICS Research Group at Saint Petersburg State University. He has recently published a book on the World Bank (*Banco Mundial no Brasil e o contexto das transformações internacionais: como repensar o desenvolvimento para as próximas décadas*) and was the co-editor and chapter author of *Debates sobre Estado Empresário e Regulação*, both published in 2018. His current research deals with changes in the World Order and their impact on the international scenery – focusing on effects upon New Global Governance.

## List of abbreviations

AAU	Arab African Union
ACCT	Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation)
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEF	Afrique-Equatoriale française, (French Equatorial Africa)
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AL	Arab League
All-GEP	Comprehensive Greater Eurasian partnership
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
ANC	African National Congress
AOF	Afrique-Occidentale française, (French West Africa)
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APR	Asia-Pacific Region
ARC	African Regional Centre
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcast Corporation
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India, China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAEU	Council of Arab Economic Unity
CARI	China Africa Research Initiative
CCFM	Community of Common Future for Mankind
CCIT	Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
CFA	Communauté financière africaine (African Financial Community)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CIVETS	Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa
CLs	Compulsory Licenses
CNOOC	Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation

COMALFA	Comptoir maghrébin de l'alfa (Maghreb Counter of the Alfa)
CONCP	Confederação das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colónias Portuguesas (Conference of Nationalist Organizations of Portuguese Colonies)
CPCM	Comité permanent consultatif du Maghreb (Maghreb Standing Advisory Committee)
CPLP	Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Language Countries)
CRA	Contingency Reserve Arrangement
DDR	Doha Development Rounds
DHA	Descendent-Hierarchical Analysis
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EC	European Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEA	European Economic Area
EEAS	Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ES	English School
EU	European Union
EUROMED	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FELAC	Forum for East-Asia and Latin America Cooperation
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
FLN	National Liberation Front
FOCAC	Forum for China-Africa Cooperation
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front)
Frente Polisario	Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro)
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G5Sahel	institutional framework for the coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters of five Sahelian states
G7	Group comprising the seven largest world's economies
G20	Group of twenty of the world's most influential economies

G24	Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development
G77	Group of Seventy-Seven of the world's least developed economies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEP	Greater Eurasian partnership
GVCs	Global Value Chains
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICSID	International Court for Settlement of Investment Disputes
IEP	Eurasian Partnership Initiative
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Liberal Order
IMC	Inter-Maghreb Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IPE	International Political Economy
IR	International Relations
IRT	International Relations Theory
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LDCs	Least Developing Countries
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MINT	Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
MRGI	Mega-Regional Geo-Economic Initiative
MRTA	Mega-Regional Trade Agreement
MRTD	Mega-Regional Trade Diplomacy
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
NDP	National Development Plan of the Republic of South Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission of the Republic of South Africa
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group



NSR	Northern Sea Route
OAU	Organization for African Unity; predecessor to the African Union
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
ODI	Outward Direct Investment
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (International Organization of the Francophonie)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
POLISARIO	Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreements
PUF	Presses Universitaires de France (University Presses of France)
R5	Real, Ruble, Rupee, Renminbi and Rand
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RDA	Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (African Democratic Assembly)
REE	Rare Earth Elements
RIC	Russia, India, China
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RWP	Responsibility While Protecting
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Coordinating Conference
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDR	Special Drawing Rights
SEATO	South Asian Treaty Organization
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
TNC	Transnational Company
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership

TRIPS	Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
TS	Text Segments
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference Related to Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNO	United Nations Organizations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US, USA	United States of America
VDC	Valdai International Discussion Club
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization



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# **Introduction**

## **An elusive changing international order**

**Élise Féron**

*TAPRI, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

**Jyrki Käkönen**

*Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

The expression “the international system is in transition” has become a truism during the 2010s. However, it is not at all clear what is changing. Since the 2008 financial crisis, at least some of the institutions for global governance have not been functioning properly anymore. International trade negotiations in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have made only minor progress. And it looks like the Western powers and Japan, first of all the USA, have lost their determining role in the WTO. The power shift in the WTO context had already begun in the early 2000s. Donald Trump’s presidency has meant that the US has withdrawn from some institutions for global governance. Worst of all, the international system seems incapable of dealing with human-made climate change and environmental problems. The post-World War II international order thus appears to be facing unprecedented challenges at the economic, financial, political, and normative levels. Its inability to quickly adapt to new challenges and to an evolving context seems to have opened spaces for other forms of international cooperation, further challenging the existing order (Mahbubani 2008, 2013; Tharoor 2012; Acharya 2018a; Jacques 2012; Kupchan 2012; Creutz *et al.* 2019). But there are important questions regarding the scope, nature, and impact of these changes: what exactly is changing? Are these new forms of international cooperation stable? And, perhaps most importantly, what responses do they propose to the challenges the world currently faces?

## 0.1. A new system or a reorganization of an old one?

In the discourse on the changing international system, there is no consensus about what is changing. It is true that, since 2009, some emerging powers in the context of BRICS (the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa grouping) have occupied a visible role. They are presented as challengers of the so-called liberal democratic international order, the Western-centric international order (Creutz *et al.* 2019). They might be a challenge to that order, but not necessarily to the system on which that order is built, since all emerging economies are based on capitalist modes of production and markets (Bond and Garcia 2015). And the rise of those countries is the result of a modernization of their economies, although it has not necessarily led to the establishment of parliamentary democratic political systems (Li 2018; Mahubani 2013; Chen 2010).

The question of what is changing in the beginning of the third millennium is not just rhetorical. It is possible to talk about several overlapping Western-centric orders which are affected in different ways by the current changes. Is it just the US-led post-World War II rule-based international order that is breaking down? (Acharya 2018b) Or is it the so-called state-centric Westphalian international order? Or, finally, is it the colonial order that is challenged when the powers that have been colonized and dominated by the West are rising and demanding more weight in global governance? Colonialism did not end with the political independence of the colonized people. We still live in the world created by the former colonial powers. So, do the current changes in the international system imply an eventual end of the colonial order? (Mignolo 2011)

Although the global economy is in turbulence, the US is still the leading power in the economic, military, higher education, and popular culture fields. The US is still a great power, and China as a potential challenger is still lagging behind. So, as a single power, the US is still great, but its current administration has turned down its institutional and political leadership. The US-dominated international order is eroding and emerging powers from the South are creating competing or parallel and complementary institutions for regional as well as global governance. This is one of the reasons why hegemonic multilateralism is in crisis, and why the US is dissatisfied with the current global governance (Acharya 2018b). It does not guarantee the best deals for the US anymore, and from the US perspective, it has benefitted its rivals like China. However, a new system has not (yet?) overthrown the dominant one, and it is difficult to say whether, and when, it might do so.

### **0.1.1. Challenges to Western approaches to regionalization and globalization**

One of the ways in which the post-World War II order has been most directly challenged pertains to the emergence of alternative regionalization processes, which entail a different relation to, and perspective on, globalization (Voskressenski 2017). In Western-centric discourses on globalization, the idea has been that there is a universal process of modernization that eventually leads to liberal parliamentary democratic orders. In this process from nation-states towards a global order or, according to a concept of the English School, to international society, regionalism has been understood as an interphase or road to globalization. (Hall 2018; Spybey 1996; Robertson 1992; Rubert and Smith 2002; Telo 2001; Albrow 1996)

In this mainstream discourse, European integration has functioned as a model for the rest of the world (Acharya 2018a). The success or failure of regionalization in different parts of the world has been assessed by comparing it to European integration, at least as long as it has been a success story. The European integration model has been assumed to be a universal one, although conditions for regional integration have been diverse in different parts of the world. Now emerging states are frustrated because of their marginal role in the institutions of global governance, and they are organizing their cooperation either for stressing their interest in reforming the institutions of global governance, or for establishing parallel institutions without any Western influence (Acharya 2018a). In addition, these new types of cooperation often take on very different forms than the European ones. For Western powers, even the smaller ones, this is estimated to be a threat to the norms and rule-based international order (Creutz *et al.* 2019).

In the early third millennium, there have been several ideas and initiatives for regional cooperation initiated by non-Western countries. From the Western perspective or the perspective of the sustainability of the liberal international order, the most threatening ones may have been the foundation of BRIC(S) in 2009, the establishment of the New Development Bank in 2016, the foundation of the China-led Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank becoming operational in 2016, and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. All these initiatives aim at increasing the weight of the non-Western world in global governance. And they have little to do with the European integration model. However, these regional and regionalization initiatives from the South should not be interpreted as being against norms and rules. On the contrary, they show that rising powers, and more generally the South, want to have a role in making the norms and rules of the future game. In this way, they might also change the



existing order (Li 2018; Ayres 2018; Sidhu, Mehta, and Jones 2013; Mahbubani 2013).

It is possible to understand regionalism led by the South as a resistance against Western dominance. It has a long history dating back to the colonial era. The Non-Aligned Movement was one of the earliest manifestations of this resistance. But many of these early efforts have not been success stories, notably because of the strong hegemonic position of the US since World War II and the rigid bipolarity of the Cold War structure. Now the situation for BRICS and for other new non-Western institutions is different because of the end of the Cold War and the gradual erosion of the US-led international order, the Pax Americana.

Among all non-Western initiatives, the association of the BRICS countries is undoubtedly the one that has attracted the most academic and policy attention. The BRICS countries are not happy with the Western-centric international order and their role in it. In this respect they aim for a more equal, multilateral, and pluralist international order. Pluralism here means that the BRICS countries are not against modernization, but against the Westernization of their societies and political orders. BRICS countries do not require their members to harmonize socially and politically. In this respect, it is possible to say that BRICS cooperation is based on different conditions than the traditional Western-centric theories presuppose (Juutinen and Käkönen forthcoming).

## **0.2.Theoretical challenges**

Turbulences in the international order also challenge traditional Western-centric international relations theories. Until now, the cultural and historical experiences of the non-Western world have been neglected in theory construction (Hobson 2012; Acharya and Buzan 2010). It is quite obvious that, for instance, colonial history is experienced in different ways by the colonizing (“civilizing”) and colonized (“uncivilized”) worlds. There is no universal history. And history is one of the factors that determine the policies of emerging states. So far, however, Western-written versions of history still dominate, including in Southern countries, where indigenous histories are often overlooked (Mignolo 2011; Dussel 2011).

It is also important to understand that Western-centric international relations theories tend to neglect issues like the environment, the fight against climate change, and indigenous people’s rights (Thomas 1992; Soroos 1987; Coates 2004). Mainstream theories focus mainly on the interests of states;

other interests are subordinated to national interests. The ways in which the current rush into the resources of the Arctic is understood provide good examples of this approach. When mainstream international relations theories are applied for understanding Arctic international politics, economic growth, (un)available resources, and modernization are the essential aspects that stand out. There is less interest in indigenous people living in the Arctic, and in how climate change is affecting, and will further impact their lives and cultures. Under the dominant capitalist norms, further economic growth needs its resources, even though this is unsustainable because natural resources are in limited quantity (Kanth 2005; Latour 2017).

International relations theories are not neutral. They have a role in constructing a sustainable future for humankind. Therefore, post-Westphalian or global international relations theories are needed. For these to emerge, the experiences and worldviews of non-European civilizations are needed (Acharya 2018a). But it is equally important to track down international relations beyond nation-states in the time they did not exist. The issue is not just about the states and their survival, but also about people and their survival (Latour 2017; Ghosh 2017).

### **0.3.Presentation of the book's contents**

The volume is designed to closely mirror and reflect upon the questions and challenges listed above. It gathers contributions that critically study the ongoing changes in the regional, intra-regional, and global dynamics of cooperation from a multidisciplinary and pluralist perspective. It proposes to advance a global international relations understanding of the post-hegemonic world, and weaves together the pluralist and multidisciplinary perspectives of scholars located all around the world. The book is based on the realization that in the post-hegemonic world, the formation of regions and the process of globalization can be largely disconnected from the orbit of the US, and that a plurality of powers and worldviews is challenging the US hegemony. Unlike the hegemonic regionalism of the twentieth century, twenty-first-century regionalism is characterized by an increasing plurality and by intensifying antagonisms. The positive relation between regionalism and multilateralism thus seems to be broken, or at least challenged. The book therefore centers on the potentially destructive dynamics of regionalism and on the deepening crisis of multilateralism. It analyzes the scope and depth of political cleavages between regional blocs and examines how and to what extent the political discourses between

competing blocs actually exacerbate differences. But in parallel, the book also looks at cooperative regionalism as a potential way to revive multilateralism.

The book explores different questions, amongst which are the status and role of BRICS in the changing international order; how countries in the Global South can use regionalism to change the world order; the competing worldviews that manifest themselves in the institutional variety of regionalism; and, most importantly, how all these changes push international relations as a field to become more global, or at least to go beyond Westphalian thinking – thus bringing back to the discussion what the role of multilateralism is.

The volume brings together an international team of senior but also young scholars from political science, international relations, peace and conflict studies, economics, and development studies. The contributors come from all around the world and are based in universities and research centers located on four different continents. The book is one of the outcomes of an ongoing discussion launched within the framework of a research project called “Regional Challenges to Multilateralism” (2017-2020), funded by the KONE Foundation and hosted by the Tampere Peace Research Institute at Tampere University in Finland.

The volume is organized in three sections broadly matching the questions and challenges outlined in the beginning of this introduction: the first section of the book focuses on the emergence and challenges of regionalism, and reviews the difficulties and obstacles faced by the new forms of regionalism that have emerged in the recent decades. The second part of the volume analyzes contemporary forms of regionalism and their promotion of non-Western models of regionalization; authors in this section try to assess whether non-Western regional groupings have really managed to contest the dominant international order, and how regional cooperation can be employed to strengthen international cooperation instead of competition. The final part of the volume explores new theoretical perspectives on the changing world order and highlights the limits of traditional international relations theories for understanding and taking into account the major challenges that the world now faces.

The first part of the volume, “Emergence and Challenges of Regionalism,” opens with Tuomo Melasuo’s contribution. Melasuo retraces the emergence of an imposed regionalization in Africa and shows how the creation of regions was a strategic option that colonial powers applied in order to organize their administration and domination on the African continent. Melasuo explains how this creation of regions in Africa has had long-term impacts far beyond the decolonization period. His contribution demonstrates that it is not just the Westphalian post-World War II liberal international order that is currently

challenged, but also colonial structures that have endured despite decolonization processes.

In Chapter 2, Shraddha Naik analyzes the emergence of BRICS as a hybrid form of interregionalism that transcends traditional typologies, and studies the grouping as an emerging powerhouse from the Global South, which demands a greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the established powers from the Global North. The chapter also examines the various challenges and divergences the group is facing to achieve its said goals. Naik notably shows that the BRICS countries have been very active in pressing for a greater realization of the needs of countries from the Global South. This, she argues, underscores a shift in geopolitical relations that notably materializes in demands for early negotiations and non-discriminatory behaviors towards developing countries, especially with regard to the Doha Development Rounds, climate change negotiations, and reforms in the international financial institutions.

In turn, Gabriel Rached, in Chapter 3, reflects upon the development of the BRICS grouping ten years after its creation. While the BRICS countries have some uniting elements and aspirations, the main challenge for them has been to design and implement a common platform to achieve a greater influence at the international level, and to counterbalance the international liberal order. Rached explores the strategies that have been implemented in order to further the objectives of BRICS and ponders whether their influence impacts international forums, and also what these developments can mean for the Latin American region.

In Chapter 4, Bianca Naude discusses regionalism from the specific perspective of a country, South Africa, that still experiences its relationships with former colonial powers as exploitative and unjust. Naude draws on theories of identity and insights from postcolonialism to explain how states such as South Africa establish solidarities across borders through their mutual experiences of an unjust states system, and how these states aim to transform the international political reality through non-discursive acts of resistance. Naude critically analyzes the claim that South Africa experiences its relations with its peers from the Global South as more beneficial and just than the exploitative relationships it has with the Global North. Naude also explores South African imagination of a “transformed global order” and explains how this new global order would help soothe the feelings of shame and humiliation that South Africa has historically experienced in its relations with Significant Others.

The second part of the volume, dedicated to the examination of practices of contemporary regionalism, opens with Karim Maiche’s exploration of regionalization processes in the Maghreb in Chapter 5. Maiche shows that multiple political disputes, issues pertaining to the region’s socio-economic

development, military conflicts, as well as internal and external economic interests have significantly hampered regional cooperation within the Maghreb. The chapter notably builds on the case of the Arab Maghreb Union and tries to assess the role of culture in regionalization and multilateral processes. The chapter also asks whether the failure of regionalism in North Africa can somehow promote more efficient forms of multilateralism.

In Chapter 6, Ekaterina Mikhaylenko and Igor Adami examine regionalism from the perspective of Russia. They focus more specifically on the “Great Eurasian Partnership” (GEP) project that was introduced by Vladimir Putin in 2015, but that has since then been put on hold. Interpreting the GEP as a first-generation hybrid type of regionalism, Mikhaylenko and Adami further identify the project’s main features and challenges according to the expertise of the Valdai Discussion Club. Their analysis suggests that Russia should break down its interregional aspirations into steps and meanwhile prioritize the Eurasian Economic Union as a basis for creating the GEP.

Situated within the broad context of the crisis of trade multilateralism, Chapter 7 by Marko Juutinen examines the interplay of geo-economics and legitimacy in the dynamics between regionalism and multilateralism. The chapter provides perspectives into regional foreign trade policies as a means to build a more legitimate international trade system. Juutinen argues that the recent re-emergence of regionalism and regional rivalries has not made multilateralism obsolete, and that there are both normative and geo-economic reasons for consolidating legitimate multilateralism in the contemporary era. Finally, Juutinen argues that constructing legitimate forms of multilateralism requires new types of intra-regional trade cooperation, and leadership by the European Union (EU). To revive multilateralism, the EU cannot sit back and wait for post-Trumpist times, but needs to engage with other middle powers like India and Japan.

Examining China’s investments in the Arctic in Chapter 8, Terry McDonald and Benjamin Klasche analyze the strategy and goals China has set out for the Arctic region. They examine the actions China has taken in the Arctic region, and what implications this holds for the current members of the Arctic Council. They show how some Arctic states and regions that need development capital, such as Greenland, Iceland, and Russia, have been increasingly turning to China as their source for development funds. Using this opportunity, China is adopting a slow geo-economic strategy to gain a say in the establishing of Arctic norms. McDonald and Klasche conclude that if the Nordic countries believe China to be a challenger in the region, then they need to partner with the EU, Canada, USA, and other interested parties to pool the resources necessary to counter Chinese advances, especially if they want to be able to determine the future of Arctic development.

In the third section of the book exploring alternative theoretical perspectives on the changing world order, Giovanni Barbieri argues in Chapter 9 that the regionalism vs globalism opposition is in large part fueled by biased approaches grounded in different paradigmatic traditions, thus stalling the debate in a purely ideological way. Based on China's behavior on the international stage, Barbieri observes that regionalism and globalism can assume different contents and scopes of application depending on where they are applied. More specifically, Chinese understanding of international affairs differs from Western ones at both the ontological and the epistemological level, thus leading to a different ontological understanding of the international system.

In Chapter 10, Matti Puranen pursues the discussion on the ways in which China's rise challenges the liberal international order, especially in the realm of ideas. He examines China's complicated historical relationship with the international order during the modern era and shows how the Chinese leadership has been increasingly bold in offering its alternative worldviews, notably through its new framework for reforming the international order, the Community of Common Future for Mankind.

In the final chapter of the volume (Chapter 11), Jyrki Käkönen argues that current globalization processes are converting the international community into a post-Westphalian order. Käkönen observes that the Other is no longer just beyond geographical borders, but also within those borders. Based on the Finnish mythic epos *Kalevala* as well as on Kees van der Pijls' three-volume study (2007), the chapter redefines international relations beyond state-centric perspectives. In a globalizing world, Käkönen argues, international relations are no longer merely transactions between states. And as the former hegemonic West has to encounter powers such as China and India that may not be Westernized into liberal, democratic market economies, it is time to learn to accommodate diversity in order to avoid potential future conflicts.

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# **Part 1**

## **Emergence and Challenges of Regionalism**



# Chapter 1

## Africa and World War II: The emergence of an imposed regionalization

**Tuomo Melasuo**

*TAPRI, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

### Abstract

This contribution is an attempt to understand the importance as well as the role of regions and of region formation in Africa after World War II. Of course, this “regional dimension” has existed since time immemorial. In modern African history, it has been there since the beginning of European colonialism, especially since the nineteenth century. It was a part of colonial conquest in different ways – a tool of colonial expansion and a tool of administration and governance. This regional dimension has occurred in political, economic, cultural, social, and military-security domains. In a more significant manner, there are different phases in the recent African past when this regional dimension has taken different forms in the decades from the end of World War II.

After the War, there has been a succession of phases in which, first, this regional dimension aimed to prevent decolonization, and second, it tried to protect all the possible privileges of the former colonial master. After the independence of the African countries, the regional dimension approach was applied within development politics. Here also the role of the former colonial master has often been overwhelming. This development approach is still continuing today in many ways. The last dimension concerns military-security issues, which is also the most recent approach of this regional dimension, especially in the Sahel. These security issues are coming back for several reasons and in different parts of Africa.

Today’s evolution contains many particularities and even serious problems. The “international community” is using the regional approach to impose its more or less questionable approaches to African societies and countries as a condition sine qua non of their security-development cooperation. Different operations in the Sahel show us the gravity of this issue.

The creation of the AfCFTA, the African Continental Free Trade Area is a sign that we can still believe in the future.

**Keywords:** Africa, colonial, decolonization, region formation, regional dimension, imposed regionalization, development politics, security issue

## 1.1.Introduction

Most of the African continent, especially south of the Sahara, was subjected to European colonialism mainly in the second half of the nineteenth or in the beginning of the twentieth century. At the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the main European colonial powers had decided the guiding principles on how colonial conquests should be organized. This “Scramble for Africa,” the dividing of the continent in the proposed zones of influence, was, in that epoch, already the pattern for the regional internal organization of the colonial empires. The division of these European empires or the demarcation of their internal boundaries completely disregarded the African realities. (Rodney 1974; Rosenberg 2019)

The “Scramble for Africa” has an important impact even today. Within the process of decolonization, when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was created, one of the most important legal and political principles concerned respect of the borders inherited from the colonial empires. Politically, any other principle would have been unwise at the time. (Rodney 1974). As already indicated, the principal European colonial powers accomplished their main and final colonial penetration into Africa and African societies at the end of the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century. By doing so, they also created the embryos of the local and regional structures of their political rule and their colonial administration. In fact, the creation of regions was a strategic option for the colonial powers which they applied in order to organize their administration and domination.

This creation of regions has had long-term impacts far beyond decolonization and the independence of the former colonies reaching up until today. The UK with its Brexit problems and France with its military intervention, Operation Barkhane, in the Sahel are examples of this “imposed regionalization” in 2019 (Le Cam 2019; Tilouine and Zerrouky 2019). The more or less “imposed” regions are also a kind of intermediary structures between African states and societies and the rest of the world.

In 2019, within its Brexit negotiations, the UK has tried to use its former colonial regionalization to restructure relations after Brexit between the UK and the East African countries. France aims to get the regional organization, the G5 Sahel, to take the main responsibility for the security issues in the Sahel and replace its own Operation Barkhane there (Le Cam 2019; Tilouine and Zerrouky 2019).

This study aims to investigate how regionalization, understood as imposing regions, has played an important role in African history since the nineteenth-century colonization until today. All the stakeholders – the colonizers, the colonized, but also the “outside world” and international organizations, including development agencies – have used or are using African regions as a tool and instrument in their performances. Different actors have different aims and goals when using the regional approach, they could even be totally opposite and used in different ways. We can find at least five different principal ways of how regional approaches have been used in Africa.

Primo, a regional approach was there already at the beginning of the colonial conquests: this was very visible in both the British and French empires. They created or wanted to create regions in order to rule and master huge territories and large human entities using this regional approach. This was also a weapon to keep other European pretenders out, as we can see at the Berlin Conference or in the aftermath of World War I, for example.

Secondo, the colonized learned quickly how to use this regional approach for their own political and even emancipatory purposes. Good examples of this can be found in North Africa where the diaspora in Europe mobilized around *La Revue du Maghreb* (*La Revue du Maghreb* 1916-1918) with a regional sensitivity already during World War I. In the second half of the 1920s, Algerians in Paris created their first movement for independence and named it the North-African Star.<sup>1</sup> Even though it was an Algerian movement, it had a clear North African, that is regional, vocation.

On a more general level, this kind of regional sensibility of the colonized can be found in different Pan-African structures since the beginning of the twentieth century. These regional movements occurred in almost all colonized societies. Their aim was to have an impact on political and socio-economic evolution in their countries and regions. Pan-Arab and pan-Islamic movements already at the end of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century were a part of this phenomenon as were the Fifth Pan-African

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1 Since 1951, a Finnish board-game called "Star of Africa" has become very popular. Some five million copies have been sold to date. Therefore, I wonder if this board-game has the North-African Star as the main model for its name.

Conference and the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) during and after World War II.

Terzo, the importance of a regional approach in the decolonization process was crucial for all the stakeholders: the colonial masters tried to use regions as a platform for organized decolonization, and the colonized societies and their independence movements used them in order to negotiate the best possible result from the process for independence. Moreover, the former colonial masters tried to use them to maintain maximum influence in the new “neo-colonial reality.”

Quarto, after the independence of the former African colonies, the regional heritage imposed by the colonial empires was used, firstly, to organize the “neo-colonial structures” where the former masters tried to obtain the maximum benefit from their influence. Secondly, all kinds of development cooperation and aid programs were and still are often organized and structured by the regions created during colonialism. This can be seen in national development agencies like the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) or international ones such as the Red Cross.

Quinto, today the international community tries to impose a regional approach on all kinds of African problems. The attempts are often located in the economic, environmental, or even security domains. This last one is an innovation where outside superpowers have tried to impose a regional approach and compel African countries to take collective regional responsibility for security and to fight the regional “troublemakers.”

This study is structured in four main parts. In the first section, we try to see how the roots of the regional approach were established in the early phase of the colonial enterprise and how they were developed in the 1930s. Then we will focus on World War II and attempt to understand how this regional approach was a crucial part of warfare in Africa leading to impactful changes in the colonial relationship. Third, during the last years of World War II, all the stakeholders of the colonial relationship started to prepare themselves for the new post-War world. In the fourth and last section, we examine the different decolonization processes through the decades of development until today, when it seems to me that the former colonial masters and their American cousins are dictating their security wishes with regard to troublemakers and potential human mobility on a regional basis. In the last section of this chapter, because of the Sahel, we will concentrate more on the French domain over other external actors in Africa.

## 1.2. Ante-inferno

At the beginning of World War I in 1914, the European colonial empires had already built up the structures of their colonial domination in Africa. Both World Wars challenged this domination and the structures, as did the two decades between the Wars. Though Indian historian Kavalam Madhava Panikkar called World War I a European civil war, it provoked such fundamental changes in the colonial order that the premises of decolonization were already evident in the aftermath of that War (Panikkar 1953).

Both the main European empires – the British and the French – tried to renew their colonial system between the two World Wars. Already in spring 1917, during World War I, Britain had increased the statute of her main dominions in the Imperial War Conference. Following that reasoning, India joined the Paris peace negotiations and also signed the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. The British government announced in the Balfour Declaration at the 1926 Imperial Conference that Britain and its dominions agreed they were equal in status and united by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, which was officially created by the Statute of Westminster in 1931 (Melasuo 1983a; Melasuo 2019). During World War II, it became clear that there was no possibility of restoring the colonial status quo ante at the end of the War. The British Commonwealth was ended by the London Declaration in 1949 and it became the Commonwealth of Nations where member-states were “free and equal” in theory. It is clear that using this “Commonwealth” philosophy, Britain wanted to create and maintain, if not regional, at least a kind of organic unity with its dominions and colonies. The statute of the Commonwealth of Nations prevailed until Britain joined the European Union (EU) in 1973. Entering the EU reduced the UK’s commercial connections with its dominions and colonies, which no longer enjoyed the earlier privileges of free entry to British markets. As pointed out earlier, Brexit might change this situation, but we do not know yet in what direction (Tilouine and Zerrouky 2019).

France re-enforced the organization of its African “territories” in such a way that they clearly formed French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, both of them being rather artificial political and administrative structures, with no regard for traditional political, cultural, and social heritages. France’s colonies in Africa consisted of two major areas, *Afrique-Occidentale Française* (AOF, or French West Africa) and *Afrique-Equatoriale Française* (AEF, or French Equatorial Africa). French West Africa comprised nine colonies, and its capital was first Saint-Louis and then Dakar, both in Senegal. The nine colonies were Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Bénin. French West Africa was created in 1895 and its



structures were modified several times. It was only in the mid-1920s that its structures and practices became more stable.

In fact, the beginning of the French colonial empire in Africa was the creation of the Four Communes of Senegal, which were administrated more or less as French communes, electing their “maires” (chief municipal officers). These four communes were Saint-Louis, Corée, Dakar, and Rufisque. Dakar and Saint-Louis had been partly considered to be French communes since the seventeenth century. In 1848, the inhabitants of these four communes got full citizenship of the French Republic. (Abbé Boilat 1853/1984)<sup>2</sup>. French Equatorial Africa was created as an administrative entity just a few years before World War I, in 1910. It consisted eventually of five large colonies in central Africa, with its capital in Brazzaville (today in Republic of the Congo). The five colonies were Gabon, Republic of Congo, Chad, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. However, the history of French colonialism in equatorial Africa had started already in the middle of the nineteenth century. In fact, the formation of French Equatorial Africa was a kind of regional administrative reform in 1910.

Both these huge entities formed two federations whose administrative structures and organization were modified after their contribution to World War I from the mid-1920s onwards. In the early 1930s, they had their African representatives in the colonial councils, a kind of indigenous council or assembly that dealt with issues concerning African inhabitants. Those Africans having French citizen rights participated even earlier in the election of the representative that the federation sent to the French National Assembly in Paris. The first African deputy, Blaise Diagne, was elected to the French National Assembly in 1914. Diagne was re-elected to the French National Assembly until his death in 1934. He was also the first African to become a member of the French government as undersecretary of state in the ministry of colonies (Chathuant 2009). After the reforms of the early 1930s, the two structures of the AOF and AEF remained unchanged until World War II.

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<sup>2</sup> This literary work of Abbé David Boilat was one of the first modern historical studies done by a scholar of African origin. As a matter of fact, this work of Abbé Boilat was originally published just a few years after the confirmation of the “Four Communes.”

### 1.3. World War II

World War II had a major impact on the regional formations in Africa. This was because Africa had an important role in the war efforts of both main colonial empires – France and the United Kingdom – and they were obliged to improve the living conditions and the general situation of their colonies. At the beginning of World War II, the French colonial empire in Africa was rather clearly divided into three regions. The first one, North Africa, or the Maghreb countries, comprised Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, each of which was administered differently. Morocco and Tunisia were protectorates and under the French Foreign Ministry. Algeria formed three French departments and so was a part of the French Republic administered by the general governor and the Ministry of the Interior. The southern part of Algeria, which includes the Sahara desert, was under the military, that is under the administration of the French Ministry of Defense and the Armée d’Afrique (Army of Africa) (Lormier 2006).

When World War II broke out, it took until summer 1940 before it was extended into Africa. After the armistice between Germany and France, the British Royal Navy attacked the French Navy in the military port of Mers-el-Kebir, near the city of Oran, in Algeria in early July 1940. The attack killed some 1,300 French marines besides incurring material losses like damaging five battleships and sinking one (Brown 2004; Lacouture 1984). This incident had long-lasting impacts on British-French relations and it made the joining of the French military in the Free French Forces of General Charles de Gaulle much more difficult. The British reasoning for the attack was based on the real risk of the French Navy joining the Axis powers’ operations against the Allies or against the French empire. After Mers-el-Kebir, the French Navy did not fight the Axis powers any longer, but it did fight the Allies on several occasions. Only the modest navy of the Free French Forces participated in the Allied operations. At least partly because of the tragedy of Mers-el-Kebir, North Africa remained with Vichy France until Operation Torch, the Allied landing on 8 November 1942. It was only at the end of November 1942, after the Allied disembarkation to North Africa that the Vichy France sank its own naval fleet in Toulon to avoid its capture by Germany (Brown 2004; Lacouture 1984).

In the second region, French West Africa, during the last days of September 1940, the Allies and the Free French Forces tried to conquer Dakar and to convince the local Vichy France authorities to join them. However, they were not successful as Vichy France fought back vigorously (Lacouture 1984; Smith 2009; Thomas 1995). The Allies’ failure had two main consequences. Firstly, French West Africa stayed under Vichy France’s command until the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. Secondly, the political clout of

the Free French Forces and General Charles de Gaulle among the Allies was reduced. This meant that in near future, the Free French Forces based its own military activities, especially its African activities, mainly in French Equatorial Africa.

The third region, French Equatorial Africa (AEF), under the governorship of Félix Eboué, was thus the only one of the three regions to join the Free French Forces almost from the beginning of the War in Africa, in August 1940. The Vichy government condemned Felix Eboué to death, but de Gaulle nominated him Governor General for all of AEF in November 1940. This was a huge territory from the southern part of the Sahara Desert, from Chad to the Congo River. French Equatorial Africa was thus extremely important strategically for the Free French Forces. It was the first territory it administered in its own name and authority. And it was the base for extending the Free French Forces' war efforts across the Sahara Desert to North Africa and even to the Middle East and Europe.

With regard to the British colonial empire in Africa, only East Africa and the military campaign to free Ethiopia from Italian occupation had similar impacts on regionalism. These impacts became more real and visible after the War when regional cooperation between the former British colonies really started to develop. As a matter of fact, the East African campaign during World War II might have been perhaps one of the last, if not the very last, episodes of the pure colonial wars, where European colonial powers abused the African countries, the African populations, and the combatants just to protect their own colonial interests. The way in which the East African societies reacted to "European colonial warfare" has not really been studied yet. In the decolonization after World War II in Eastern and Southern Africa, these societies followed the more general trends seen in British and Portuguese colonial empires in Africa. Ghana was the first to gain her independence already in 1957, but the others got it only in the 1960s. Still this happened much sooner than the expectation of independence through what Harold Macmillan then British Prime Minister, called the "Wind of Change" which would take two centuries along him.

In fact, British imperialism had major plans for regional integration in Africa already in the early twentieth century. British governor and businessman Cecil Rhodes planned to have a kind of mega-region from Egypt to South Africa and a north-south Cape to Cairo railway connection. The German East Africa was an obstacle to this plan, but after World War I, when Tanganyika became a mandate of Britain by the decision of the League of Nations, the British plan was close to being accomplished, at least for some years.

During and after World War II as well as after the decolonization, the independence of the former colonies, the British attempts to foster some kind of

regionalization in eastern and southern Africa remained rather far from Cecil Rhodes's hopes and plans for a well-connected region reaching from the Cape to Cairo. The political leaders of the former British colonies in Africa, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, and Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia paid maybe more attention to the "pan-African" Organization of African Unity (OAU), which is today called the African Union (AU), than to the Commonwealth of Nations. Anyway, these former British colonies had a more important role in all-African structures like the OAU than was expected in the immediate post-World War II period. This strong impact of the former British African possessions took place especially in the 1960s. Among these British colonies in Africa, the most difficult independence processes took place in Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya in the early phase of British African decolonization. Later, in the 1980s, the transition in Southern Rhodesia, called Zimbabwe today, was also rather violent.

The southern African countries, which participated in World War II more "individually," but still in a very important manner, joined the regional cooperation efforts within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992, much after World War II.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the South African apartheid regime had had an important impact as an outsider on this cooperation before the end of that regime in 1994, when South Africa also joined the SADC. The evolution of Zimbabwe also strongly influenced the whole region. Since its beginning, the SADC paid its main attention to the economic development of its members. The Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), the term of which lasts until 2020, tries to encourage economic cooperation between its member-countries.

The independence struggle of Namibia also had a general impact on international, or it might be better to say interregional, relations in southern Africa. However, this might not have much to do with the imposed regionalism during World War II. Until World War I, Namibia had been a German colony called "Deutsch-Südwestafrika," and it was then given to South Africa, on behalf of the UK, to be administered as a mandate of the League of Nations. When it began its independence struggle, it was connected, first of all, to the South African anti-apartheid struggle, but also to the Angolan and Zambian cases (Katjavivi 1988).

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<sup>3</sup> The SADC had several predecessors. First came, in 1975, the Frontline States, then in 1980, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), and finally, in 1992, the SADC, or the Southern African Development Community. Its members are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The Portuguese colonies in Africa – Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and Cape Verde – got their independence only in the mid-1970s after very difficult wars. Thus, their decolonization occurred about a decade later than those of the main empires did. In spite of the delay, the importance of their difficult decolonization process was reflected in the political evolution of many independent African countries and in how the outside world saw the continent. In fact, those difficulties had an impact on global international relations because the main Cold War antagonists were involved in those processes directly or via their proxies. For instance, Cuba showed strong anti-colonial solidarity by involving itself in the Angolan independence war (Melasuo 1983b).

We cannot speak about regionalization in these former Portuguese colonies in the same way as the British and French colonies, but there certainly is a kind of “lusophone sensitivity,” a loose feeling of belonging to the Portuguese speaking community and the sense of sharing a common history under the same colonial master. This common affinity is interesting and perhaps best reflected in the strengthening relations between Brazil and Portuguese-speaking Africa. Let us also remember that Portugal was a kind of forerunner of European colonialism and, together with Spain, one of the two main colonial empires from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

Partly because of the length of Portugal’s colonial experience, human contact between the mother country and the colonies was perhaps more dense than in many other cases. Let us remember that already in the year 1500, the African origin population was about 15 percent of the total population in Lisbon. Brazil was an important part of the Portuguese empire, and during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese royal court was established in Rio de Janeiro and governed the “transatlantic kingdom” more or less until the independence of Brazil in the mid-1820s. During World War II, Brazil participated in the military operations with the Allied forces in Europe, especially in Italy.

In the 1920s, a Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre<sup>4</sup> formulated a kind of cultural ideology called “Lusotropicalism” to define, in particular, the Brazilian cultural evolution. After World War II, “Lusotropicalism” became the official doctrine of Portugal, aiming to stress the racial, ethnic, and cultural harmony prevailing in Portugal, her African colonies, and Brazil as well as in their reciprocal relations. It was natural for this special cultural relation to continue even when other European colonial empires failed. In reality, the Portuguese colonial system was as racist and problematic than those of the other European nations, and there was no kind of “cultural” reason why it should have continued in Africa (Melasuo 1983b).

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4 The sociologist Gilberto Freyre should not be confused with the well-known pedagogue, Paulo Freyre, both from Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil.

Can we speak about some kind of “lusophone” entity or “virtual region” in Africa? During the decolonization process, there was clear cooperation between the three main African colonies and their liberation movements. In Guinea-Bissau the African Party of the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), in Angola the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in Mozambique<sup>5</sup> coordinated their efforts for independence via the Conference of Nationalist Organizations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP), created in 1961 in Rabat, Morocco. The CONCP went on until the independence of Mozambique in 1975. Its importance in concrete, especially military, cooperation was modest, but in the political arena and in international relations, the CONCP was a part of the “Third World”<sup>6</sup> movement that tried in several ways to improve the decolonization process and the position of the newly independent countries in the world. From the point of view of later “lusophone” regional cooperation, an important and leading figure in the CONCP was Aquino de Bragança, originally from Goa, an intellectual, scholar and journalist who became a Mozambican citizen after the country's independence in 1975. He was instrumental in fine-tuning the coordination efforts of the three movements. From the early 1960s, Amílcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon, together with Aquino de Bragança, made considerable efforts to boost the decolonization process.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that the fact that they had the same colonial master somehow pushed these far-spread countries to engage in cooperative action, “lusophone” cooperation in this case of the former Portuguese colonies. The Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP, Community of Portuguese Language Countries) was created in 1996 and today it consists of nine countries and 19 observers and encompasses a population of almost 300 million.<sup>8</sup> This kind of community, more virtual than geographically coherent, is a clear legacy of European colonialism.

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5 PAIGC was the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) and led by Amílcar Cabral. MPLA was the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), and FRELIMO was the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front).

6 “Third World” or “Tiers monde” is a concept created by geographer Alfred Sauvy in the publication edited by Balandier, Georges (1956): *Le Tiers Monde. Sous-développement et développement*. Paris: PUF, Presses Universitaires de Franc see also Melasuo (1983c).

7 CONCP, or Confederação das Organizações Nacionalistas das Colonias Portuguesas (Conference of Nationalist Organisations of Portuguese Colonies). See more in de Bragança (1990).

8 CPLP refers to the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese Language Countries).

As already mentioned, today, there are many different kinds of relations within the lusophone world, especially between Brazil and the African countries. The Portuguese themselves, facing economic difficulties in their own country, are now moving and investing much more in their former colonies in Africa than at the end of the twentieth century, in the same way as they did in Brazil in the early nineteenth century. Between 2000 and 2010 their number in Africa increased by 42 percent (Poli, Alexandra 2019). Brazil is also increasing its economic activities in southern Africa, especially in Angola and Mozambique, with the aim of counterbalancing its dependence on Europe and North America. With the re-enforcement of African cultures in Brazil, there are attempts, based on local linguistic studies, to better understand the origins of the cultural heritage emanating from different parts of Africa. Besides the Serer in Senegal and the Yoruba in Nigeria, the cultural importance of the Bantu civilizations in southern and south-western Africa are today better recognized in Brazil than a few decades ago (Pessoa de Castro 2009). This is important for understanding these cultural affinities, but also in order to strengthen economic and political relations, within the lusophone world, between Brazil and Africa. It is difficult to say whether this kind of “lusophone evolution” has a future in today’s world. It seems that the presidential elections that took place in the autumn of 2018 in Brazil might be catastrophic to all its lusophone and African activities because the new regime stresses white superiority and holds in great admiration the military dictatorship that prevailed in Brazil from the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

#### **1.4. In the twilight of the War**

Coming back to the evolution of the French colonial federations in West and Equatorial Africa connected to World War II, two things have been extremely important for the imposed regionalism here: the Conference of Brazzaville in 1944 and in 1945 the creation of the common currency, the CFA (since the 1960s onward Communauté Financière Africaine) franc.

In autumn 1943, France started to design her post-War policy in response to colonial questions, particularly in North Africa but also more generally. This became visible in the discourse of General Charles de Gaulle in Constantine in

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<sup>9</sup> The autumn 2018 presidential elections brought Jair Bolsonaro into power and now Brazil follows Washington, DC, USA, and Tel Aviv in many international issues. O tempora, o mores!

December 1943 about the reforms for the Algerians. In the Conference of Brazzaville at the end of January 1944, de Gaulle drafted the modalities to organize relations between France and her colonies after World War II in general. As a matter of fact, the basic principles for the Union Française (French Union), which defined the relations between France and its colonies from 1946 to 1958, from the beginning of the 4th Republic to the beginning of the 5th Republic, were drafted in Brazzaville (Mortimer 1969; Nouschi 1962/1979; Nouschi 1999).

The Conference of Brazzaville examined how World War II was changing the geopolitical realities in Africa, but especially in the French West and Equatorial Africa. In reality, the Conference of Brazzaville was the beginning of decolonization in Africa, and it affected all the European colonial empires. At the Conference of Brazzaville, France determined her conditions and goals for the ongoing war. De Gaulle spoke about the “Spirit of Brazzaville,” proposing a better future for the colonies, but not independence in any way at all. Still, the African political leaders played an important role at the Conference of Brazzaville and had a strong impact on its debates by orienting their content toward more African responsibility in future. The fact that the indigenous leaders of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) had weighed in with the Free French Forces of General Charles de Gaulle increased firmly their political weight at the Conference of Brazzaville.

This meant that their countries now stayed firmly behind the Free French Forces and that all attempts to divert them from supporting the Allies’ and de Gaulle’s war efforts were in vain. However, more than in the North African and European war theatres, the consequences of the Conference of Brazzaville were particularly important to regional development in Africa after World War II. All in all, it resulted in the emergence of several new political parties. There was also an important attempt to unify all these new forces in a regional movement.

At the Conference of Bamako<sup>10</sup> in 1946, these new parties created RDA the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA, African Democratic Assembly) as their common transnational political tool. By the second half of the 1940s, 16 national political parties had joined the RDA, so it was the largest party in whole Africa at that time. In spite of the difficulties, the RDA was able to keep its unity in preparing a peaceful decolonization for the French African colonies, which was realized in the early 1960s, by which time the RDA was no longer in existence. In fact, the RDA had an incontestable regional role and it was one of the first really pan-African movements. Its story ended with that

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<sup>10</sup> Bamako is today the capital of Mali. Since the colonial conquest Mali was called French Sudan until it gained independence in 1960.



of the French Union when the 4th Republic was replaced by the 5th Republic in 1958.

In line with her attempts to renew her colonial empire and both federations – the AOF and the AEF – France developed a common currency called the “CFA franc”, which was in use already since 1939, but was officially established in December 1945. Its name indicates from the early 1960s, since the independence of African countries Communauté Financière Africaine (African Financial Community). In reality there has been two separate and parallel CFA francs, one for West Africa and the other for Equatorial Africa. However, they have both always had exactly the same value and fixed parity, that is also the fixed exchange rate with the French franc, and the French Treasury guarantees them. Their exchange rate has been changed only twice, in 1948 and in 1994. (Roussy *et al.* 2019)

Since the beginning of January 1999, the fixed parity between the euro and the CFA franc is also guaranteed by the French Treasury. Of course, during the last more than 70 years, there have been different phases in the history of the CFA franc, and the number of its member-countries has varied from time to time. Economic and financial specialists have debated whether the CFA has benefited the development of these countries or not. Without entering into this debate, we can say with confidence that it has had a strong impact at the regional level on the relations between its member-countries as well as with its former colonial master, France, and today with the European Union (EU).

The CFA franc has also facilitated all kind of gross border economic activities between its African member-countries. It has facilitated in 1975 the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which is a regional economic organization that includes earlier British, French, and Portuguese colonies in the area. It can be said that the CFA franc and ECOWAS have an impact on economic cooperation in the region, and also with the European Union. Today, the critical debate follows more or less the same paths as the one concerning their effects on their member-countries’ development policies. In spring 2019, the Italian minister of interior accused France of maintaining a colonial and neo-colonial relationship with the CFA franc countries in Africa. He saw this as an opportunity to justify his refusal to allow African migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to land in Italy. This is an example of regional evolution in post-World War II Africa till the present time (Roussy *et al.* 2019).

When it comes to the political mobilization of Africans for improving their conditions, the consequences of World War II elsewhere in Africa were much in line with the evolution witnessed in the French African colonies. With regard to British possessions in Africa, and more generally the whole British colonial empire, the 5th Pan-African Congress, held 15–21 October 1945 in

Manchester, was an important landmark. Besides the African leaders, the Manchester Congress participants included as well those of African origin in the Caribbean and in the USA.

Besides decolonization, which was the main theme debated at the Manchester Congress, an impressive part of the discussions concentrated on questions of racism in general. Thus, the Manchester Congress had an impact on debates of racial relations and discrimination globally. Following the Manchester Congress, political movements in all the British African colonies accelerated their activities. In what way the Manchester Congress impacted the general evolution of regionalization in Africa is difficult to assess. It seems that the impacts of the Manchester Congress are different when related to different epochs and different regions (Shepperson and St. Clare Drake 1986/2008).

The pan-African story began with the Pan-African Conference of 1900 in London, which was followed by the first Pan-African Congress of 1919, also in London. The 5th Congress was preceded by the foundation of the Pan-African Federation in Manchester in 1944. The Manchester Congress in 1945 brought together a number of persons who became important figures in the various African independence movements and in the human rights organizations in the Caribbean; among them were Jomo Kenyatta, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Kwame Nkrumah. The Manchester Congress also led to re-enforcement of the dreams about pan-Africanism, even about “The United States of Africa,” by Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta in 1946. The All African People’s Congress in 1958 in Accra, Ghana, can also be seen as one of its successors.

The Manchester Congress of 1945 was originally planned to take place in Paris. It is clear that the impacts of that Congress are extremely important in different environments as shown by the 50 Years Memorial Congress in 1995. The Memorial Congress as well as its published material in 2005 should also be considered in order to understand the long-term impacts of the Manchester Congress (Høgsbjerg 2016; Shepperson and St. Clare Drake 1986/2008).

## **1.5. Long way to independence**

Once World War II ended, there was a move to ensure that a war of similar magnitude never happened again. One fallout of this was the creation of new international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and its special organization the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The period immediately after the War also saw new regional

actors and structures like the League of Arab States, which had an impact especially on North Africa. Just after World War II, the prevention of decolonization was the first task of imposed regionalization. In the second phase, in the mid-1950s, there was an attempt to organize the decolonization in such a structured way that the interests of the colonial masters were maintained to the maximum level. For this end, efforts were extended towards making the interests of the colonized and the colonizers converge as far as possible.

Because of space constraints, the remaining part of this chapter will concentrate mostly on still in the 1950s French colonies, especially in West Africa. One of the reasons for this is that during the last half of the century, the different experiences of region formation were particularly rich and multiform in this part of the continent.

With reference to its empire, in 1946, at the same time as the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, France created the Union Française (French Union), in which, as per the Constitution, all the inhabitants of the colonies became citizens of the French Union with equal rights and duties. The creation of this union was an attempt to re-enforce the cohesion of France's colonial empire and to prevent its drive for independence. Nevertheless, in the end, the French Union and its successor, the Communauté Française (French Community), became the political structure within which decolonization took place.

In the French case, this happened via the "Loi cadre" of 1956 and via the referendums two years later, under which the former colonies were given a choice between full independence or remaining within the French Union. The formation of regional organs and structures in the Maghreb was different to that in sub-Saharan Africa. The then still French protectorates, Morocco and Tunisia, refused to join the French Union in 1946, but all four departments of Algeria were included into it as a part of the metropolitan France. Further, Morocco and Tunisia became independent less than ten years later in spring 1956. In the middle of the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962), the situation remained the same with regard to the creation of the French Community in 1958: Morocco and Tunisia stayed out, but Algeria was included by the French authorities as a part of the metropolitan France (Ageron 1994).

From the point of view of regional development in the Maghreb, the Conference of Tangier in 1958 was extremely important in at least two senses. First, political leaders and the main political parties of Morocco and Tunisia showed France and the rest of the world that they strongly supported the Algerian independence struggle. They also managed to mobilize popular support among their own people for the Algerian cause. Secondly, the Conference of Tangier was seen as the first real attempt at Maghreb unity and was intended to develop cooperation between the three countries. Unfortunately, the

Maghrebins have not been able to realize this pan-Maghrebin idea, only the common secretariat in Tunis functioned for about two decades (Jaabouk 2015).

The most serious attempt at North African unity was the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989 in Marrakech. The AMU consists of five countries - Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. In spite of the real proximity of their people and largely common history, the AMU has not really advanced even though it had decided from the beginning to concentrate on economic cooperation and avoid political matters. Maybe the close proximity of the European Union as well as the concurrence of the Barcelona Process and Union for the Mediterranean since 1995 onwards, can partly explain these difficulties.

The main reason for the poor performance of all the attempts at Maghrebin cooperation is the unresolved crisis of the Western Sahara, which Morocco has occupied since 1975, first together with southern neighbor Mauritania. All UN attempts to solve this crisis have failed. Besides the Western Saharan liberation movement, Frente Polisario, neighboring Algeria has also been involved in this crisis, as was Libya under Muammar Gaddafi in the 1980s. The Western Sahara crisis is a serious obstacle for all kinds of Maghrebin cooperation. After more than 30 years of boycotting it, Morocco rejoined the African Union (AU) in 2017. Thus, today, there is hope that some kind of regional solution can be found for the Western Sahara crisis. It is obvious that different regional and international organizations and aspirations play a role in this crisis. This role can wear multiple faces: it can make the crisis more difficult; it can offer a forum for debate on the issues at stake; and it can help to solve it. Nevertheless, it is clear that this crisis must be resolved in order to make headway in any kind of regional cooperation so needed in the Maghreb. (Ghiles 2010; Middle East Eye 2018).

In sub-Saharan Africa, following the “Loi cadre” of 1956, in the referendum on the colonies’ status within the French Union two years later, only Guinea Conakry voted for its independence in 1958 (Migani 2012).

In fact, the Algerian independence war signified the end of the French Union and its replacement by the “*Communauté Française*”, 1958-1960/1995, at the same time as the 5th Republic was created. However, already in early 1960s, the French Community had ceased to exist institutionally de facto, but it remained de jure until 1995 in the French Constitution, as several of its members never formally withdrew their membership. In 1995, the French constitutional reform ended it officially (Bat 2010; Stamm 2003).

Until the end of the French Community in 1960, the content and substance of regional politics were at their most “political”, which meant that the political aspects of the community were the most important and most visible side of the activities of its members. After the de facto end of the French Community in

1960, there were several attempts to maintain the closest possible cooperation between the former French colonies in Africa and France.

The official French development cooperation has played an important role in this exercise since the mid-1960s. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie in 1967 was the first attempt to reorganize this community institutionally; in 1970, the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT), which had about 30 member-states, was a more serious effort to maintain and further develop an African regional formation. Since the 1960s, maintaining development cooperation in order to support different kinds of development efforts has been the main activity of the regional organizations. Today this cooperation continues in the form of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (International Organization of the Francophonie, OIF), which counts 88 states and governments as its members. Demographically, the number of Africans is increasing significantly. Today the OIF has as its president Louise Mushikiwabo, a former Rwandan minister. In 2019, a new chair for Francophone literature was created at the College de France, which was awarded to Haitian writer Yanick Lahens (Mwai 2018; Verdier 2019). The nomination of the two women to these high positions shows how “virtual regionalism” can strengthen the global visibility of Africa and thus also improve its development efforts.

Besides African and other former colonies, countries such as Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, but even Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are also members of the OIF. This signifies that the OIF is no longer seen only as a tool used by former colonizers to maintain their influence in the world. Instead, it aims to defend cultural and linguistic plurality at the global level and focuses its actions on development of solidarity among its members. Canada plays an important role by accepting many migrants from the Francophone world who could not enter, for instance, the European Union. This can be understood as a positive aspect to today’s virtual regionalism.

Getting back to the long-term imposed regionalization in Africa, post-World War II, many particular and sectorial structures were created that still exist today. With regard to French-speaking Africa, we have had also the rather questionable, even negative, phenomenon called *Françafrique*, which denotes a special relationship between the African and French political elites, wherein each side supports the other in an unorthodox and often even corrupt way and bears at the same time a strong flavor of neo-colonialism. Whether *Françafrique* continues to exist is a question that persists even in the Emmanuel Macron era. (Boisbouvier 2018; CIIP, Centre d’Information Inter Peuples 2018).

A kind of sectorial regionalization can be found in several economic and monetary fields, as also in security cooperation. West Africa has the already mentioned ECOWAS, which has 16 member-states. Its particularity is that it

is common to English-, French-, and Portuguese-speaking countries, and its main *raison d'être* lies in boosting development efforts and economic cooperation. It indicates the growing importance of economic development on the agenda of the governments in their regional efforts.

## 1.6. Instead of conclusions

In this chapter, attempts have been made to understand the importance and the role of regions and of region formation in Africa after World War II. Of course, the region dimension has been in existence since time immemorial. In modern African history, it has been there at least since the beginning of European colonialism, especially in its second phase starting in the nineteenth century. It was a part of colonial conquest as both a tool of colonial expansion and a tool of administration and governing. The region dimension has also occurred in different domains, as, for instance, in the political, economic, cultural, social, and military-security fields. In the same way, but in an even more significant manner, there have been different phases of where and how this region dimension has taken form in the decades since World War II until today.

After World War II, there has been a succession of phases in which this region dimension tried in *grosso modo*, first to prevent decolonization, and then to manage how it took place by trying to protect all the possible privileges of the colonizers. After the independence of the African countries, the region dimension approach was applied within development cooperation. Here also the role of the former colonizers has often been overwhelming. This development approach still continues today in many circumstances. The last dimension concerns military-security issues, which is also the most recent approach, especially in the Sahel.

Unfortunately, these security issues are now resurfacing due to various reasons and in different parts of Africa. How much this has to do with the heritage of World War II or the colonial past is difficult to say.

In Sudano-Sahelian Africa, especially in the Sahel, the new violence, stemming from environmental difficulties, political turbulence, and different kinds of radicalization, has provoked main concerns outside of the continent as well (Casola 2019). France has been intervening militarily since 2014 via Operation Barkhane to counter different guerilla and “terrorist” organizations in the area. Barkhane is like a follow-up to Operation Serval in 2013, when the Malian government asked France to intervene militarily to stop the advance of the islamist guerilla movements towards the Niger Interior Delta. The USA

(United States of America) is intervening in the Sahel, with its plan to create a kind of “drone base” in Niger. Whether it will be able to realize its plans is open to debate (Barrera 2015; d’Evry 2015; BBC News (Afrique) 2018).

The current crisis started already in the 1980s when a severe drought struck the Sahel, local governments and international organizations were unable to give a serious response and relief to this catastrophe. Three decades later, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attacked Libya, which led to the collapse of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2011, and provided perhaps the most important push towards the current crisis. The civil war and the chaos following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime saw the return to the Sahel of Sahelian foreign fighters (mostly the Tuareg and the Toubou) with their war experience, their arms, and their financial resources. This changed dramatically the situation in northern and eastern Mali since 2011. The continuing chaotic situation in southern Libya now throws into relief the possibility of a new civil war.

In 2019, Operation Barkhane consists of 4.500 soldiers. It has its headquarters in Niamey, Niger, and an important operational base in Sevare, Mopti, Mali. Today the main *raison d’être* of Operation Barkhane is to promote co-operation between the Sahelian countries and to fight the violent extremists by special forces.

Today, we see a new kind of local and regional cooperation wherein five Sahelian countries, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger, have been asked by outside international actors to form what is called the G5 Sahel. The G5 Sahel aims to pool military forces to reassure the security of this very large area. This can be seen as the last extension of regional cooperation in Africa – now in the sector of security and also imposed by the outside world.

Since the contemporary Sahelian crisis in 2011 and the internal violent conflicts in Mali, many outside actors have promoted their own programs, together or individually, in order to address the general situation. The UN, in several of its Security Council resolutions, has expressed its mandates and plans for intervening in the Sahelian crisis. In addition, regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union have been active both in proposing different options and taking part in concrete programs.

The United Nations created its peace-keeping force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), already in April 2013. In 2019, the MINUSMA consists of more than 12,000 soldiers from different, mainly African, countries. Even Nordic countries such as Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden are participating in these efforts by training MINUSMA troops or strengthening various development plans.

The European Union has developed its own instrument, called the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, EEAS”, to help resolve the

Sahelian crisis. The G5 Sahel countries have clearly shown these organizations that all security efforts and attempts to manage population movements and migration from the Sahel require cooperation in the field of development and economic performance. The G5 Sahel has thus succeeded in putting these requirements at the top of the security agenda as a kind of *sine qua non* condition for all military cooperation (Aïda Ammour *et al.* 2013).

On the flip side, we find the attempts of different radical movements to mobilize the Fulani people in their activities, including violence. The Fulani are a semi-nomadic ethnic entity mostly devoted to a pastoral economy and covering the huge Sudano-Sahelian area from Senegal to Sudan. The appeal of radical and violent movements is based on their regional expansion strategies (Guibert, Douche, and Bensimon 2019).

In spring 2019, a new internal crisis occurred in Mali. Hundreds were killed in the clashes between sedentary and pastoral ethnic entities; it is thought that especially Islamist guerilla movements are involved in promoting these clashes. Once again, there are clear regional dimensions to this internal crisis, which then requires regional interventions in order to be solved.

In more general terms, it seems that West Africa, and the Sahel in particular, are a kind of textbook example for studying region formation, region imposition, and the region dimension in Africa. One of the reasons for this is the large number of different regional structures prevailing in the area. They occur in different domains – economic, security, politics, etc. – and they are initiated by a whole variety of internal and external actors. In this sense, the Sahel is certainly the most “regionalized” area in Africa (Aïda Ammour *et al.* 2013). This is also why this part of the chapter has chosen to focus on the Sahel.

The desire to propose a region as a political entity and an instrument of domination has almost always existed. In Europe, the plan for a confederation governed by a kind of European council was proposed by Pierre Dubois as early as the fourteenth century. After the end of the Cold War, the concept of New Regionalism was presented in order to propose a much more diversified understanding on possible roles and profiles of region formation. Today, it could serve also to maintain or enable the re-emergence of a multipolar world order, like the BRICS countries are also drafting (Hettne 2002; Palacios 2017).

The main aim of this article has been to study how the evolution of Africa since the beginning of World War II created new regional structures and re-enforced old ones in such a way that they are still clearly important today. The dialogue of many African countries with outside actors and between themselves often takes place within the regional structures, which have been inherited from the colonial period. But there are also signs today of a new kind of thinking on these patterns.



In the end of the nineteenth and in the beginning of the twentieth century, the first pan-African ambitions occurred at the same time as hectic colonial expansion. Today, these ambitions are resurfacing. When the African Union celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2013, the heads of its states called for a borderless Africa by 2020. That may not be achievable in the envisaged time frame, but the idea is making progress. Carlos Lopes, an economist from Guinea-Bissau, has long been advocating the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Thus, the AfCFTA, which was signed off by 44 countries in 2018, became effective on 30 May 2019. The AfCFTA is also the largest free trade zone in the world, when the number of states involved are considered. Another African economist, Samir Amin, advocated in one of his recent books that the creation of effective regional organizations is a tool for promoting a multipolar world order free from colonial heritage (Amin 2005; Caramel 2019; African Business Magazine 2019).

All this recent evolution means that we need to understand better how to develop a regionalization, a region dimension, for Africans and on terms set by the Africans.

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## Chapter 2

# The emergence of BRICS: An extension of interregionalism to the Global South

**Shraddha Naik**

*Department of Political Science, Government College of Arts, Science, Commerce, Sanquelim- Goa, India*

### **Abstract**

The emergence of new powers in the world system has initiated a new discourse in international politics. The rise in economic and political relevance of several countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) from the non-traditional powerhouse club depicts a change in the current global power equation. These countries, commonly defined as “emerging economies” or “rising powers,” are working towards a new framework in international relations, termed interregionalism, through which they are exercising their bilateral, regional, and global interactions and aspirations. Interregional interactions have led to the unification of countries from varied regions that share certain similarities and have common objectives to achieve. The emergence of BRICS as an interregional grouping from the Global South can be highlighted as a “hybrid interregionalism” that extends from the traditional definition of interregional typologies, such as bi-interregionalism, mega-interregionalism, and trans-interregionalism, as these countries from different regions ranging from Latin America to Africa, Eurasia, and Asia come together to form a “region” of their own.

The BRICS grouping has completed a decade, more if you consider the initial introduction of the term BRIC by the investment company Goldman Sachs in 2001. The group has broadened its cooperation, which now goes beyond providing an investment hub to demanding the formation of a “multipolar world order.” The coming together of these five countries represents their aspirations for an increased role in global affairs and access to decision-making powers. The formation of the New Development Bank (NDB) marks a significant contribution of the group that aspires to address developmental projects and financial liquidity measures for the member-countries. Besides these, the

group has been very active in pressing for greater realization of the needs of countries from the Global South, which primarily emphasizes a shift in the geopolitical relations of power by demanding early negotiations and non-discriminatory behaviors towards developing countries, especially with regard to the Doha Development Rounds, climate change negotiations, and reforms in the international financial institutions.

While highlighting BRICS as a hybrid form of interregionalism, the chapter will study the group as an emerging powerhouse from the Global South that demands greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the established powers from the Global North. Further, it will also examine the formation of the NDB as an alternative or supplementary body to the existing financial institutions in addressing the developmental goals of the region.

**Keywords:** BRICS, emerging powers, Global South, interregionalism, New Development Bank

## 2.1. Introduction

The onset of globalization and interdependence among the countries of the world have created a series of regional groupings and multilateral interactions. In the present times, every modern state, be it developed, developing, or least developed, has realized the necessity of forming regional connections that emphasize their unique similarities and the common objectives they wish to achieve at the group and international levels. These interactions, when extended from region to region and individual countries from different regions that come together to engage and cooperate, form a new type of larger grouping that can be termed as interregionalism. The introduction of interregional interactions in the present global system has achieved great prominence. Interregionalism is considered the third layer of interaction among countries after multilateral and bilateral interactions. Such groupings are also considered to be supplementary organs to the existing multilateral world order which aims to address the multidimensional relations between states, and they move beyond political cooperation to cover as well economic, security, social, and governance aspects (Hänggi 2006; Ruland 2006).

The evolution and process of interregionalism have attracted great attention from the academic world, which highlights the importance of regional amalgamation of countries at the regional as well as cross-regional level. Scholars of regionalism (Hurrell 1995; Page 2000; Breslin, Higgott, and

Rosamond 2002; Bowles 2002; Hettne and Söderbaum 2002; Foque and Steenbergen 2005) credit the phenomenon of regionalism with molding the international system. Many interregional groupings have been active for many decades. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED) and the Forum of East Asia–Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC) are two of the more notable interregional interactions in the Global North, many of which have been initiated by the European Union (EU). The advent of interregional interactions in the Global South<sup>1</sup> has been in the limelight as many of the countries in this region have initiated joint ventures in realization of their similarities and common objectives. The notable rise in the economic conditions of many countries such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Argentina, Nigeria, Turkey, and Indonesia have led to interregional unifications that aim to achieve common global and regional goals.

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) Dialogue Forum, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Group of 20 (G20) are some of the prominent interregional groupings of emerging economies in the Global South. Besides these emerging economy groupings, interregionalism has also been extended to the new economies, where many have engaged in initiating interregional units such as the Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey grouping (MINT). Among these groups, BRICS can be highlighted as a promising endeavor for generating a cooperation that strengthens the bilateral relations among the member-countries and achieves group-level projects and a place in the global decision-making process that has an impact on the entire Global South.

Scholars in recent years have focused on studying the formation and functioning of these interregional groups. However, there is a visible lack of scholarly analysis to explain the emergence and growth of these interregional groupings in the Global South. There is also limited literature available on the comparative study between the groups from the North and the South, which have functional differences.

This chapter offers a broad overview of the emergence, various typologies, and theories of the interregional groups, with a brief look at the special features of the traditional European interregionalism representing the Global North. While giving an account of the various interregional groupings in the Global South, the second section examines the framework of BRICS as an

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dados and Connell, the Global South refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, primarily considered as politically and culturally marginalized. They are also referred to as the “Third World” or “Periphery”. The rise of the North and South terminology basically depicts the distribution of power, privilege, wealth, and development between the two regions (Dados and Connell 2012).



interregional grouping and its attempts to strengthen South-South Cooperation and to create a niche in the international paradigm.

## **2.2. A discourse on interregionalism**

Interregionalism is considered to be an important phenomenon that tries to evolve as an instrument of “cooperative competition” between the world regions and the leading powers of all the regions. The notion of interregionalism begins with the process of regionalism which had intensified in the twenty-first century and covered an extensive part of the globe. According to Farrell, “the twin movement of integration and fragmentation dominates the world system ever since the former Soviet Union was disintegrated” (Farrell 2005: 1).

As a process, the origin of interregionalism can be traced back to several historical events. It became much more visible during the two World Wars when the countries of the world aligned on two opposing sides by joining either the Axis or the Allied powers. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War and even the formation of the Commonwealth of Nations by the newly independent countries of the British colonial empire are fine examples of the interregional connections that manifested in international affairs. It is important to study the growth and theories of regionalism that has further paved the way for the development and strengthening of interregionalism. Page defines “Region as a group of countries, which have created a legal framework of cooperation covering an extensive economic relationship, with the intention that it will be of indefinite duration, and with the possibility foreseen that the region will evolve or change” (Page 2000: 5). It has become an increasingly important phenomenon in International Studies during the last 60 years, and the study of integration theory and political economy explains the behavior of states and the need for clubbing together to form a region, (Bowles 2002; Breslin, Higgott, and Rosamond 2002). Fawcett states that “the growth of interregional grouping has come about because of the presence of certain identifiable traits which regional units, zones, states or territories share. Such groupings are smaller than international system of states, as compared to larger international organizations such as the IMF, the WB and the WTO, but larger than any individual state or non-state unit, their nature is of a permanent or temporary kind, whether institutionalized or not” (Fawcett 2005: 24).

Moreover, the new interregionalism tends to have a much greater impact on the international system than the old one. The rapid growth of the network of interregional relations in the 1980s and the 1990s, which also led to the

gradual integration of almost all countries to a greater or lesser extent into this network, makes interregionalism a lasting feature of the international system (Hänggi, Roloff, and Ruland 2006).

The United Nations (UN) looks at regional groupings as beneficial to the overall regional, economic, and social climate, and has made the various regional groupings a part of its activities. According to Breslin, Higgott, and Rosamond, due to the introduction of new challenges such as security dilemmas and integration theory, the first wave of regionalism was evident from the 1940s to the 1960s in Europe. Moving further, the period of the 1980s marked the rise of a new regionalism also called the second wave of regionalism. This form, according to Breslin, Higgott, and Rosamond, emphasized globalization and other systemic factors, and was more multifaceted and comprehensive (Breslin, Higgott, and Rosamond 2002: 4; Shaw 2011: 5).

Globally, there are several functional interregional groupings that are formed by countries aspiring to achieve similar goals in their global political and economic endeavors. Some of the active groups include the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Rio Group Forum for East Asia-America Cooperation, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), the Forum for East Asia and Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), the Africa-Caribbean and Pacific (ACP), and the European Union-Latin American and Caribbean Countries (EU-LAC) (Roloff 2006).

Interregionalism is described as the third wave of regionalism as it started gaining momentum in the 1990s. It aimed to restructure the post-Cold War international system. Roloff describes the process as a “method of widening and intensifying political, economic and societal interactions between international regions” (Roloff 2006: 18). Now we can also add the independent states to this definition.

### *2.2.1. Types of interregionalism*

The EU remained an important hub of interregional arrangements until the rise of new actors in the field. With the rising number of participants, there are now multiple layers of classification to the phenomenon. The concept of interregionalism has been prevalent in world affairs since the period of the Cold War; it was predominantly headed by the EU and is now classified as the old interregionalism, and it is also highlighted as pure interregionalism for being actor-centric (Hänggi 2006: 32; Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2005: 258). The

new interregionalism, as Gaens describes, is more system-centric and is notable for its multidimensional character. This is further categorized into different forms such as quasi-interregionalism, which is a relationship between a regional group and a third state in a different region, as, for example, the EU and India (Gaens 2011: 73; Fawcett 2004: 429-426).

A grouping where two or more sub-regions from different continents come together to build a bigger collaboration can be defined as a form of mega-interregionalism as is the case with APEC (Aggarwal and Kwei 2006). When different regional actors such as the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) collaborate with each other and with other regional groupings such as ASEM in order to achieve common goals, it can be categorized as trans-regionalism (Robles 2008). Similar cooperation, when it exists between states from different regions, can be termed as extra-regional. Cases where the states may not have regional coherence with respect to geography or economy, but can be defined under the rubric of an interregional grouping, are described as hybrid interregionalism; this is also classified as a common meeting ground between bilateralism and interregionalism. BRICS, IBSA, and MINT can be taken as examples of this form of hybrid interregionalism (Hänggi 2006: 32-42; Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2005: 258-259; Gratius 2008: 28).

### **2.3. The EU as an interregional grouping in the Global North**

Interregionalism is a major phenomenon in the Global North, and the EU is known as a prominent actor in its active promotion. It has played a powerful role as an initiator of the process of interregionalism. It is one region that has constructively built a relation with almost all the countries of the world by putting in place a range of interregional frameworks (Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2005: 250; Sbragia 2011).

The EU was instrumental in creating group-to-group dialogues from the period ranging from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s. EU members emphasize the inclusion of region-to-region relations in their external policies. The introduction of European Political Cooperation and new economic and foreign policy priorities helped the group foster its interregional links with countries from different regions. It extended its participation as far as the Mediterranean countries by signing the Euro-Arab Dialogue and formulating the Lomé Convention between the European Community (EC) and the African, Caribbean, and

Pacific (ACP) states, which created a broader interregional interaction with countries from wider regions (Doidge 2007: 229-230).

The EU's participation in the MERCOSUR, or the Southern Common Market, has guaranteed its entry in the Latin American region to promulgate the Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement (Faust 2006). The relations built with the Southeast Asian countries in the form of ASEAN has led to the formation of a bigger interregional dimension of transnational interregionalism (Robles 2006; Dent 2006).

By signing the Cotonou Agreement, the EU has also extended its partnerships to the countries in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Africa. European interregionalism is noted for being multidimensional in its agenda of relations, and the EU insists on constructing an institutionalized relationship between three regions (Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Africa) which are guided by a defined set of frameworks and rules (Aggarwal and Kwei 2006).

## 2.4. The Global South and interregional groupings

According to Hänggi, “regional grouping acts as a link between groups of states. Each state represents a region which accordingly can be ‘constructed’ or even ‘imagined’. The prime focus for these groups of states to come together is for the purpose of specific interregional interaction” (Hänggi 2006: 42). According to Amitav Acharya, “the regionalism in today’s sphere has achieved more open, inclusive and multidimensional features and this has also led to the new non-European regional groupings that cannot be neglected in the present world order” (Acharya 2014). Interregionalism in the South has been molded in a “hybrid” form of interregionalism, making it a reinvented version of the traditional region-to-region connections, which now focuses more on individual countries from different regions coming together to achieve common goals, thereby making it a unique structure that has attracted the participation of many rising countries of the region (Gratius 2008: 28; Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2005: 258).

The Global South consists primarily of Africa, Central and Latin America, and Asia.<sup>2</sup> The region faces several challenges, but, at the same time, also

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<sup>2</sup> Alden, Morphet, and Viera (2010), in their seminal work, *The South in World Politics*, define South-South Cooperation as a phrase used to describe those regions of the globe that have in common a political, social, and economic history rooted in the inequalities of a colonial or imperialist past. It is also understood to be an ideological expression for the range of concerns facing developing regions, which

offers real opportunities. It faces challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, human and civil rights abuse, ethnic and regional conflicts, mass displacement of refugees, hunger, and disease (Dados and Connell 2012; Prashad 2012). According to Mahler, “in the recent years the term Global South is employed in a post-national sense to address spaces and peoples negatively impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization” (Mahler 2018).

In the past decade, the countries from the Global South have witnessed a rise in the formation of interregional groups. As the countries in the European region passed through tumultuous structural changes in the twentieth century, so too the Southern developing world has been experiencing changes since the last decade. Owing to changing political and economic scenarios, the countries from the South that are experiencing good economic growth have taken a step forward in engaging in group-level interactions (Stuenkel 2015).

The advent of interregionalism in the Global South was experienced in a traditional form, wherein the unification of all of Asia was a dominant discourse in the post-colonial period for the leaders of many countries such as India and Indonesia. The Non-Aligned Movement, a wider discourse from predominantly Southern countries, was acclaimed as a decisive force that created a third party that kept its distance from Cold War politics. Groupings such as the Group of 77 (G77) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) tried to represent the voice and concerns of the Global South on the international stage. However, these alliances do not represent the current changes in the global order as many countries in the Global South since their decolonization have achieved economic growth, technological advances and deeper relations with the countries from both the developed and developing world, unlike the earlier times when they maintained a separate identity of being newly independent countries and affinities of self-determination (De Sa e Silva 2010).

The current scenario of interregionalism in the South is mainly attributed to the growing aspirations of the emerging powers. The newly emerging economies from the Southern region such as Brazil, South Africa, India, and China are extending their relations to different countries to move beyond the regional domain, creating a transformation in not just hard power capabilities, but also in their soft power proficiencies (Antkiewicz and Cooper 2011: 300).

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themselves are growing in economic and political diversity and experience. In this sense, it serves as a mobilizing symbol for a diverse set of developing countries and is part of a strategy for maintaining relations with the more powerful industrialized countries of the world through its decision-making groupings, such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Group of 77 (G77), and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

There has been a considerable rise in the number of interregional groupings in the South. These groups tend to achieve common objectives in bilateral, regional, and international areas. Some of the most sought-after groups from the South are:

1. The IBSA Dialogue Forum: The rising economic credentials of India, Brazil, and South Africa led to the formation of a grouping which aimed to enhance trilateral cooperation among the three members and revitalize and strengthen South-South Cooperation in the larger regional paradigm. This grouping, which represents different regions of South Asia, Latin America, and Africa, comprehensively covered a major portion of the Global South that aims to gain major benefits through the international institutions and better bargaining power (Alden and Viera 2005; Bajpai 2009);
2. BIMSTEC: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established in 1997 and comprises seven members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It is deemed one of the success stories of Southern regionalism. BIMSTEC has been applauded for its success in creating a bridge between the countries from South and Southeast Asia. It is considered to be a solution to the transnational challenges that are affecting the countries of the two regions (BIMSTEC n.d.);
3. G77: The Group of 77 (G77) was established in 1964 by 77 developing countries. It has the largest governmental organization of developing countries in the UN with current membership standing at 131. The G77 strives to bring all the developing countries under one umbrella and work for the economic advance and long-term peace of the developing countries; (G-77 n.d.)
4. G20: The Group of 20 (G20) was established in 2003 and comprises 23 members, representing 60 percent of the world population. The G20 represents the emerging economies of the developing world. The member-countries have made demands to rebalance global governance by reforming the global financial institutions and also to check on anti-protectionist measures adopted by the developed states. The G20 also played a vital role in containing the ill effects of the financial crisis of 2008-2009 (G-20 n.d.); and
5. G24: The Group of 24 (G24) was formed in 1971 to coordinate the developing countries' efforts in the areas of economics and development. The G24's chief goal is to press for the creation of non-discriminatory international financial institutions (G-24 n.d.).

## 2.5. BRICS as an interregional grouping of the South

Within a short period of time, the BRICS grouping has gained prominence at the international level. The BRICS member-countries mark its main goal as “to act as [a] positive catalyst in forming an inclusive change in the transformation process that will enable in creating a new and more equitable global order” (BRICS 2014b). BRICS has attracted attention from not just prominent world leaders, the media, and academics, but is also keenly observed by economists, the business community, cultural organizations, and civil society members. From the global perspective, BRICS is deemed powerful with strong economic powers such as China, the geographical presence of Russia, along with India, Brazil and South Africa representing both the strength of its resources and human force with diverse cultures.

Most of the interregional groupings in the Global North or in the Global South emerged for specific reasons, and each group has specific goals to achieve. For example, groups such as ASEM, APEC, and EU-LAC were primarily Eurocentric and economy-oriented. The groupings in the Global South, such as IORA, IBSA, G20, and SCO, have also been formed to achieve specific goals. Thus, BRICS is distinctive as an interregional grouping because it addresses “multidimensional issues” concerning the Global South. The member-countries have constantly kept in close interaction with each other at the international, group, and bilateral levels. The annual summit meetings of the heads of state and the yearlong activities have kept up the momentum of the growing cooperation within the group.

This is also evident from the number of demands for membership and extensions BRICS receives from other countries. It has evolved from a mere idea for an investment hub to a full-fledged grouping that has now also initiated a larger process of institutionalization in the form of the New Development Bank (NDB), the Contingency Reserve Arrangement (CRA), and the Outreach Programmes with other regional groups. The group’s membership also overlaps with that of IBSA in that India, Brazil, and South Africa are all members of both groups with certain similar and different objectives. However, IBSA has been inactive for some time since the rise of BRICS.<sup>3</sup> This also shows the importance that IBSA members attach to BRICS and its relevance to their global aspirations.

The idea of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) was first introduced by Jim O’Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, who defined it as a group of rising economies with the potential to become an investment hub. The already

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3 The last annual meeting of the IBSA leaders in the form of an IBSA Summit was held in 2011 at Pretoria, South Africa.

functional combination of Russia, India, and China (RIC) contributed to the establishment of BRIC, which could cater to economic, political, and other comprehensive relations. The BRIC meetings of the finance ministers of the four countries were initiated in 2006 to discuss the possibility of establishing an interregional grouping among themselves. The first BRIC summit was held in 2009 in Yekaterinburg, in Russia. At this meeting, the members emphasized the need to develop an alternative financing system. At the second summit, held in 2010 in Brasilia, Brazil, the group pressed the need for a stable and predictable currency system. The third summit, held in Sanya, China, in 2011 was significant for the induction of South Africa in the grouping, which changed BRIC into BRICS. The fourth summit was held in New Delhi, India, in 2012. The fifth summit was held in Durban, South Africa, in 2013, and here, the focus was on giving credits and making trade payments in each member-country's national currency; there was also a proposal for political negotiations to resolve the then prevailing crises in Syria, Libya, and Iran (BRICS 2013).

The group consistently outlines its agenda as “not centered around any specific country or any specific country-related issues but aims to have a joint common vision that will enable the members to identify the common areas of cooperation” (BRICS 2014b). The rising power credentials and the economic growth of these countries also showcases their readiness and capabilities to organize big event such as the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010, the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi in 2010, the Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games in Sochi in 2014, the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014 and in Russia in 2018, and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2014. Along with these major global sports events, India among the BRICS countries has been selected to host the G20 annual summit in 2022 that will discuss primary global concerns with the major economies of the world.

## **2.6. Cooperation among the BRICS member-countries**

BRICS has initiated a three-fold interaction (regional or group level, international level, and bilateral level) among its members that also tries to address the concerns of the developing and least developed countries (LDCs) in the Global South. The grouping demands for reforms in major global institutions such as the IMF, the WB, the UNSC, and practices such as compulsory licensing and dominance of US dollars in international trade.

1. *A voice against unilateral dominance and stress on building a multi-polar world order:* In all the BRICS declarations and communiqués,



the members have consistently stressed on adherence to the multilateral organizations and sternly opposed the unilateral sanctions and dominating behaviors of certain states. The BRICS members have opposed hostile language, sanctions and counter-sanctions, and use of force in the international arena, and they have extended their support to multilateral institutions such as the UN (BRICS 2014b). The members consistently demand the establishment of the multipolar world order and a bigger role and bargaining power for countries from the Global South that will ensure cooperative relations, mutual respect, and coordinated action (BRICS 2009, 2010).

2. *Reforms in the international financial institutions*: BRICS has pressed to initiate reforms in the international financial institutions, among them the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB), to make them more representative of all the members. The BRICS members ask for transparent, open, and non-discriminatory practices with regard to processes and the selection of the heads of these institutions. It has asked the World Bank for equal treatment of all countries and for it to not act as a North-South or donor-recipient mediator (Skrzypczynska 2015; BRICS 2012). The BRICS countries have demanded early conclusion of the Doha negotiations, and raised a voice against the protectionist measures adopted by the developed countries and many developing and least developed countries. Both China and Russia have recently been at the receiving end of stringent trading policies of protectionism and economic sanctions from the developed states, especially the US. Both these countries have asked the BRICS countries to reject this protectionism “outright” and promote trade and investment liberalization. Demanding dialogue-based solution of the trade issues, Chinese President Xi Jinping has asked the BRICS countries to “work together at the UN, G20, WTO to safeguard [a] multilateral trading regime” (BRICS 2017; Monteiro, Tanas, Bax 2018).
3. *Reforms in the United Nations Security Council*: India, Brazil, and South Africa have made strong demands for the expansion of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Russia and China, which are permanent members of the UNSC, have extended their support to this demand through BRICS declarations (BRICS 2009, 2016).
4. *Expansion of Special Drawing Rights (SDR)*: The provision of Special Drawing Rights with regard to the Reserve Currency System has always been considered to be discriminatory against the developing states because it does not include any developing country currency. The inclusion of the Chinese renminbi in the SDR quota basket in

2016 was considered to be a move in the right direction in this context (BRICS 2011).

5. *Issuance of Compulsory Licenses*: BRICS and IBSA have raised concerns about the discriminatory policies on life-saving drugs imposed by the developed states. The two groups demand the issuance of Compulsory Licenses (CLs) in the WTO's Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for life-saving drugs, especially those for HIV/AIDS (Beri 2008; Ward 2014).
6. *Replacing the US dollar in intra-BRICS trade*: The BRICS countries have demanded a currency swap and to limit their reliance on the US dollar. This would involve a devaluation of the trade in dollars and emphasizing bilateral trade in their respective currencies. The trade between Russia, China, and India meets this demand to some extent, reducing transaction costs and also symbolically showcasing the beginning of an alternative medium of trade that highlights the strength of the economies of these countries. Thus, the grouping also terms itself as the R5 to represent their respective currencies: the real, ruble, rupee, renminbi, and rand (BRICS 2015; Chellaney 2012).
7. *New Development Bank*: The setting up of the New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS Bank, has been considered one of BRICS' prominent achievements. The NDB has moved the group closer to the process of institutionalization. In a very short period of time, the NDB has drawn wider goals for itself and is highly regarded by the member-countries and also deemed beneficial to other countries in the region. The NDB was realized from the BRICS countries' aim to form regional monetary arrangements (BRICS 2014a; Kamath 2016). Each of the five BRICS member-countries has contributed US\$100 billion to the NDB. In addition, there is the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), towards which China has contributed US\$41 billion, Russia, India, and Brazil US\$18 billion each, and South Africa US\$5 billion. These two institutions illustrate the capabilities and willingness of the BRICS countries to advance developmental projects in their region. The NDB focuses on funding hard infrastructure projects and liquidity arrangements to help during times of economic emergency (NDB 2016a; Chun 2013).

Along with the hard projects, the BRICS members, especially India, Brazil, and South Africa, also demand funding in soft projects that will focus on human capital investments (NDB 2016b). Highlighting the major objectives of preserving the environment, the president of the NDB, K. V. Kamath, has claimed that the bank "is committed to green and environment friendly

projects that will focus on the new kind of developmental initiatives and will generate maximum benefits to the people” (Kamath 2016). The NDB has focused on infrastructural and energy needs through projects such as solar power projects, small hydro projects, onshore and offshore wind energy projects, and green energy projects (NDB 2016b).

The NDB cannot be regarded as an alternative to the international financial institutions; it supplements them. Moreover, it has been criticized for being too nuanced in the already established international financial system, and experts say it will take some time to settle in the market. The NDB also prioritizes projects that will benefit the BRICS countries (Fioramonti 2014).

In addition to these cooperative ventures, BRICS has also initiated a discussion on strengthening interactions on terrorism and other threats to the security of its member-countries. As most of them face severe threats from terrorism, all the members have demanded an early conclusion of the negotiations in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), and also expressed concerns about the rising incidence of cybercrime (BRICS 2016). The member-countries have resolved to support the Sustainable Development Goals, energy cooperation, and collaboration in the climate change negotiations, where the countries have demanded a “common but differentiated responsibilities”<sup>4</sup> for countries from the Global South. The member-countries have also developed a special interaction at the bilateral level, where their leaders make it a point to engage in a meeting at the sidelines of the annual summit and endeavor to deepen their economic, political, cultural, security, and strategic relations (BRICS 2018).

## 2.7. Conclusion

BRICS has gained momentum in the international scenario as an important voice from the Global South. The North has long witnessed interregionalism in the different sets of interregional interactions that are mostly dominated by the EU. However, the BRICS grouping is one of the first exercises in

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4 The concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities was discussed as the International Environmental Law at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. It puts the stress on establishing effective and inclusive environmental governance, where the developed countries with historical advantages should take higher responsibilities regarding environment protection (Charlotte, Epstein n.d.)

interregionalism that comes from the Global South and its members aim to cooperate with each other to represent the concerns of the countries in their regions.

BRICS focuses on major international issues that have an impact on the developing world. The engagement of BRICS in different activities also showcases their capability and readiness to play a major role in the international arena. The NDB serves to further prop up the infrastructural development needs of the BRICS countries and countries that are in need in the larger regional paradigms. The newly established African Regional Centre (ARC) can be considered as a futuristic project that will enhance and support African industrial and infrastructure development agendas (BRICS 2018).

The BRICS outreach programme that entails to interactions with other countries from the region has been a next major attraction for this initiative. It guarantees an assurance of comprehensive representation and connection with the larger region of the Global South. At the 2017 Xiamen Summit, in China, a BRICS Plus concept was introduced, which entailed dialogue with emerging markets and developing countries that are not part of BRICS. The success of BRICS Plus can be witnessed in the whole-hearted participation in it of different regional groupings, and it has paved the way for greater expectations from BRICS. Through this outreach program, the group aims to enhance and deepen interaction and participation amongst countries of the Global South with a focus on development and economic growth through trade and investment integration and cooperation, global governance, financial, economic, and political institutions, and securing sustainable and inclusive growth for the prosperity of the Global South (BRICS 2018).

The relevance and impact of the BRICS grouping can be analyzed also from the negative reporting on it by most of the Western media and leaders, wherein many have dubbed it “a mere talk shop” (Blackhurst 2015) and a “fallacy” (Pant 2016), criticizing it for the numerous divergences among its members, their recently declining economies, and their political instability. It is true that BRICS does face a number of challenges and that it has many objectives to achieve. Especially with regard to India-China relations, there is always speculation about a political stand-off between the two. However, BRICS has shown maturity in this aspect by balancing political relations with economic and strategic relations. The conduct of the BRICS summit during the Doklam stand-off<sup>5</sup> between India and China in 2017 was a remarkable example of how

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5 Doklam is a disputed territory bordering India and China. It is also an area of strategic importance for Bhutan, China, and India. A military stand-off occurred between China and India in 2017, when China attempted to extend a road on the Doklam Plateau. The stand-off continued for two-and-a-half months, which is

bilateral tensions were sidelined to address important group-level and international cooperation.

BRICS has to manage its divergences with regard to political ideologies and the falling economy. It also has to showcase a valued relationship among its members and develop both partnership and trust in the larger Global South region. As a group that aims to represent and highlight the concerns of the developing and least developed states of their respective regions, the member-countries need to initiate a bigger role in addressing immediate issues such as the Venezuelan economic crisis and issues of migration, the Rohingya crisis, and complaints of high debts issued by China to countries in Africa for structural development projects. While promoting the concept of Responsibility While Protecting (RWP), the member-countries should accept greater obligation with regard to the refugee exodus from West Asian countries such as Syria and Libya. The member-countries should also share cooperation in areas that pose challenges to them in their states and regions, such as sharing experiences on efforts in nation-building, increasing investment trade agreements, and creating more jobs and opportunities in their countries (Ramaphosa 2018). In order to stand out from the crowd and mark its unique identity among the multiple interregional, regional, and multilateral groupings, the BRICS interregional grouping will have to focus on its member-countries' common objectives at the global, regional, and bilateral levels. Along with demanding a greater power role in international institutions, the BRICS countries should also aim to win the confidence of the developing world and be recognized as the representatives of their respective regions. The grouping has to extend a bottom-up approach and accommodate civil society groups (Bond 2016). It should focus on the concerns of the people of not just the member-countries, but of the regions to which they belong, which means it should represent the Global South in its entirety.

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considered to be one of the worst crises between the two countries in three decades (Joseph 2018).

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## Chapter 3

# BRICS and the emergent countries in the twenty-first century: Discussing contemporary perspectives

**Gabriel Rached**

*Faculty of Law, Fluminense Federal University, Niterói - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

*PostDoc Fellow at Università degli Studi di Milano, Milano, Italy*

### Abstract

The dynamic of the interstate system and the competition towards accumulation of wealth and power has influenced the guidelines of nation states over the last centuries. This movement has been permeated and influenced by different systemic accumulation cycles (Arrighi 1996), the US being the most recent one to achieve leadership position in the international arena. Although the discourse and strategy of the American leadership was based on multilateral principles as a way to offer stability to the international system, at the practical level, many critics (such as Foot, Macfarlane, and Mastanduno 2003) would call it an “instrumental multilateralism,” in the sense that the US had the possibility to use it in a selective way. On the other hand, after the unipolarization resulting from the end of the Cold War, and mainly in the 2000s in the context of the 2008 economic crisis, the debate of the so-called emergent countries resurfaced, bringing to the scene the rise of China, together with the willingness of these intermediate countries to review their role in global governance and in the international order, leading to the formation of the bloc called BRICS (comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Since 2009, BRICS countries have been seeking to develop coordinated strategies for a new platform for economic cooperation between them, with the aim of reaching a higher level of development accompanied by a repositioning in the international arena. Despite their differences, these countries have some elements and aspirations that unite them, in order to gain space and greater global insertion from the international perspective. At this moment, the

questions posed are as follows: how the perceived loss of economic and political influence from traditional powers (especially the US and Europe) impact the scenario for the so-called “emerging countries”? How can this process be made dynamic with the set of international institutions in force? Will the New Development Bank (the BRICS Bank) play a relevant role in this context? From this perspective, this chapter intends to discuss how to rethink the insertion of the BRICS countries in the international scenario, taking into consideration the current dynamics and the aspirations of these countries from the point of view of the international institutions. After ten years of the BRICS bloc, the idea is to reflect upon these points, using a broad and critical approach to the thematic and looking towards its impacts on the new global governance order.

**Keywords:** BRICS, global governance, international insertion of emerging countries, NDB

### 3.1. Introduction

The emergent countries’ agenda in the beginning of the twenty-first century brings to the fore a number of elements concerning the international and geopolitical debate. It is not clear, after the globalization process of the 1990s purposing a “global village”<sup>1</sup>, how to understand the dynamics of an international economy permeated by regional agreements understood as regionalisms.

Reviewing the last few decades, a series of transformations, increasingly fast and far-reaching, have been observed in the international conjuncture that is reflected in economic, political, social, and institutional aspects. Even in the 1980s and 1990s, with the exception of the Asian countries, almost all peripheral countries, including Latin America and Africa, presented not only low growth rates, but also a broad external constraint imposed by debt crises and by financial liberalization in the 1990s, making these economies largely dependent on core economies. In contrast to this period, since the 2000s, both the growth rates of some peripheral countries (a group also called the “semi-periphery” by Arrighi in 1996) and their greater contribution to global gross domestic product (GDP) growth and world trade have been observed when compared to the performance of the United States and Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the use of the term “diffused” by Marshall McLuhan to connote the world being more and more interconnected in terms of commerce, migration, and culture as a result of the propagation of media technologies throughout the world.

With obvious and contrasting singularities, the BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – have expanded their foreign trade and growth rates by expanding their domestic markets and increasing trade amongst them. While there are possible peculiarities throughout the period, it is possible to observe, as a more general tendency, that the scenario concerning the semi-peripheral countries is transforming, which suggests a panorama with greater international insertion of the economies that until then were considered non-central. Thus, within this new configuration of the international economy, it is possible to observe the presence of autonomous poles of growth that appear parallel to the “main cyclical center” (Arrighi and Silver 2001: 161).

These transformations reach dimensions that extrapolate the economic sphere, inserting perspectives and possibilities that could also involve the correlations of force within the interstate system. In this perspective, it is possible to affirm that the new conjuncture expresses a phase of changes in the interstate system, still centered in the expansion of American power, but now presenting elements that would point to a possible scenario in which international decisions would be permeated by a platform of countries that have reached a different status, the so-called emerging economies. In such an environment, the competitive pressure between states is strengthened and even points to a process of expansion or a new imperialist race.

This process represents a long-term structural transformation of the interstate system that began in the 1970s, when the US accentuated its expansion process explicitly. Even today, the US continues to play a decisive role, given the position of the dollar as the reference currency of trade and financial relations - despite the current financial turbulences - and the US's position as leader in the ranking of the world's largest war and atomic arsenals, as well as in the centralization of information and in the technological race.

Despite this leadership position, the dispute between the great powers did not end; in fact, it intensified. In this sense, the process of American expansion ultimately reinforced nationalism and competition among the major world nations (Foot, MacFarlane, and Mastanduno 2003: 49-53). Some signs of this competitive pressure among states can already be observed in the increasingly active presence of countries such as China, India, and Russia, with regional, territorial, and energy field interests that point to the intensification of interstate competition.

These economic and political transformations also manifest themselves in other spheres, pointing to (new) institutional articulations, other forms of social organization, as well as international policy proposals that have been formulated to face the dilemmas of the contemporary international system. From this perspective, it is pertinent through this study to discuss broadly and profoundly the economic, social, and political changes underway in the international

system (Ikenberry 2014), as well as to reflect, through the research work, on the insertion of the BRICS countries and the New Development Bank (NDB, or the BRICS Bank) into the global order in this new context. This will allow a reflection on the present conditions, the constraints of the past, and the possibilities of the future, seeking to understand the impacts of this range of transformations in the current context.

In this direction, seeking to understand contemporary movements in the international scene is of considerable relevance, and is the subject of the next section. Section 3 will present the resurgence of the rising powers and examine the role played by the BRICS group in this scene. An evaluation of the achievements of the BRICS platform after ten years of agreements will be discussed in Section 4, along with a comparison with the Latin American picture. Lastly, some considerations and the next steps related to the debate are summarized in Section 5.

## **3.2. Transformations in the contemporary international order**

In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, the so-called “bipolar” order came to an end and was replaced by what has been denominated a “unipolarization” in the international arena, headed by the US. These changes created the conditions that made it possible to introduce a liberal agenda known as the Washington Consensus, which involved a huge opening up of commerce and finance in the international market, the ripples of which could be felt all over the globe. The diffusion of globalization and its announced benefits via global markets and free trade, seeing the world as a “global village,” was spread throughout the 1990s, including and above all via multilateral organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Although a number of academics were researching this phenomenon in the 1990s, many of them – among them Joseph Stiglitz (who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001), in his book, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (2002) – began to address the issue of the benefits of globalization more critically, since the effects on (but not confined to) the peripheral world were being questioned in the face of evidence of income concentration at the national and international levels. After the near unanimous approval of the Washington Consensus in the 1990s, critics began clamoring louder in the 2000s, especially when, after the 2008 financial crisis, the international system came to

experience the kind of change that could be considered a turning point towards an end of the unipolar era.

At this stage, the rise of China and its insertion into the world economy followed an ascending trajectory. The effects of the economic crisis and the imminent possibility of the weakening of the dollar were some of the factors that pushed the emergent countries onto a common platform and towards a new agenda: rethinking what lay next and what could be done to avoid general losses. The points under debate at this moment were related to the turning from a unipolar order to a multipolar order, raising questions such as whether a unipolar order still existed (Sanahuja 2007), whether the US hegemony was in decline, and whether China would be really interested in assuming a leading position in the prevailing US-style global hegemony.

Authors such as Rachel Salzman would argue that China, at least for now, is not willing to assume a US-style global hegemony; nevertheless, it does aspire to play a leading role in the international system (Salzman 2019: 131). In the same vein, some authors would say that the costs of maintaining international supremacy are high and China is not willing to invest itself in such a venture at this time because it is focused on external and domestic market development and on regional leadership. On the other hand, US President Donald Trump's administration is dealing with the dilemma of reducing the costs of leading the international system versus aligning itself instead with the prioritization of domestic issues touted during his presidential campaign; as a consequence, at the international level, would it be opening up more space for China and other emerging countries, or adopting what is called a "deep engagement" strategy, which prioritizes three overlapping objectives: reducing threats to US national security, promoting a liberal economic order, and fostering international institutions? (Brooks and Wohlforth 2016: 73-87).

These three objectives related to the deep engagement strategy have been the goal of all US presidential administrations since World War II. Anyway, in the contemporary debate, domestic demands and American debt growth, including towards China, come as a relevant counterpoint. Considering the debate over US-China rivalry and looking at the emerging countries discussion from a broader point of view, the question that could be posed is: are the emergent countries able to build a common platform to protect, mutually, their economies from the consequences of the crises and possible decline of US leadership? This is a relevant aspect to be discussed in the context of the contemporary changes in the current world order, and is the subject that will be debated in the next section.



### 3.3. From emergent countries to rising powers: What is new?

Are the emergent countries building a path that could lead to them being considered as rising powers in the international scene? Although, in the short term, things are still not clear, is there evidence to suggest that there is a new ongoing movement that could turn into a shift at the international level?

In the field of International Political Economy, discussions concerning the interstate system consider a dynamic, evolving rivalry between states in the process of accumulating wealth and power (Gonçalves 2005: 10-21). The formation of the interstate system is permeated by this rivalry, where states compete on this accumulation process related to wealth and power, and the one that stands out among all the rest in this dynamic acquires the possibility of having a different insertion, leading what Arrighi calls “systemic cycles of accumulation” (Arrighi 1996: 87).

In this framework, four big cycles can be considered: the north Italy-Genovese cycle (fifteenth century until the beginning of the seventeenth), the Dutch cycle (end of the sixteenth century until the eighteenth), the British cycle (from the mid-eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth), and the North American cycle (from the end of the nineteenth century to the present). This prominent hegemonic position brings benefits, but, on the other hand, as there is a competitive component to it, it also brings the consequences related to the dispute for conquering, occupying, and maintaining this position for as long as possible.

So how does this issue refer to the discussion of the emerging countries? It does so in the sense that to occupy a prominent position, a new power should offer more (in terms of prosperity) than the previous power. One of the American strategies for extending its hegemonic position is linked to the multilateral organisms and their respective agendas that provide and increase the level of predictability and control for the hegemon.

When emergent country groupings such as BRICS and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey) (Armijo and Katada 2014: 162-163) purpose to revisit the current international order, and considering the case and performance of China as a “revisited” rising power in contemporary times, there are elements that could be debated concerning the possible exhaustion of the international order led by the current American hegemony. If, on the one hand, International Relations scholars avoid using the term “hegemonic transition,”<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, China too has not projected its ambitions for such a

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2 Kiely (2015, pp. 24-32) shares a different perspective, considering the rise of the developing world as a triumph for the West.

transition clearly until now, having an ambiguous relation with the US that oscillates between rivalry and partnership.

According to Salzman, China faces what is called “the dilemma of rising powers”, in the sense that China must simultaneously lobby for more status and representation in the international system while managing fears about its rise from both its neighbors and other global powers. She analyzes:

In its early days BRICS helped China alleviate some of the dilemma by both increasing China’s leverage in larger multilateral forums (especially the G20) while also allowing China to hide behind louder members within the group to manage fears of Chinese power. The inclusion of India, Brazil and South Africa in the group also strengthened BRICS’s image as a force for lobbying on behalf of developing countries. This allowed China to prove its own bona fides as a developing country even as its GDP outstripped most of the other countries in that category. (Salzman 2019: 131)

A new international framework would need to be set up by the new power and this brings China back to the international scene. When the BRICS countries, in their last summit in 2018 at Johannesburg, took a position against unilateral measures in the international arena, aiming at “strengthening multilateralism, reforming global governance and addressing common challenges,” looking towards providing a platform more inclusive to developing countries (as presented in the Johannesburg Declaration), it introduced to the debate an element that was visibly different from what had been seen since the beginning of the 1990s during the days of the Washington Consensus.

What will come next is still to be seen. However, it is important to highlight the changes taking place in the international arena: how the players are moving towards a different insertion, looking for more voice at the multilateral level, and how a parallel framework to face the twenty-first century in a more inclusive way is being built by countries that, although historically relevant, until some decades back did not occupy relevant positions on the international agenda (see also Lesage and Graaf 2015: 19-41). This is a shift that should be taken into consideration for a broader analysis and should be inserted as a relevant element in the “scenario buildings” for the next decades.

In the context of international transformations, like other peripheral regions, emerging countries too are facing many challenges in the early twenty-first century. New strategies of economic development, insertion in a new dimension of the international division of labor, adherence to new institutional arrangements (as debated by Griesgraber and Gunter 1995: 29-30), and decisions related to the allocation of strategic resources have become issues of their agenda whose debate is fundamental. It is within this context that the

international insertion of the emerging BRICS countries, as well as the role of its main institution, the New Development Bank (NDB), will be analyzed.

For this exercise, it is relevant to return to the early 2000s in order to situate the events and decision-making processes that led to the formation of the BRICS grouping (Scaffardi 2015) and the foundation of the NDB (BRICS Policy Center 2015: 12). The BRIC acronym was created in 2001 (Casella 2011: 17) based on the term used by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill to refer to Brazil, Russia, India, and China. O'Neill believed that by 2041 (a horizon later anticipated for 2039 and then 2032), the GDP of the BRIC countries would be higher than that of the major industrialized countries of the Group of 7 (G7) (see O'Neill 2011; and also Goldstein 2011: 7-11).

The group had their first official Summit in 2009 and in April 2011, the letter 'S' was added to BRIC with the entry of South Africa in the grouping. In this way, the term became BRICS. These emerging countries, at that time, presented common characteristics such as, for example, positive prospects for economic growth in the medium and long term (Lo and Hiscock 2014: 2-11). Contrary to common belief, these countries do not specifically make up an economic bloc; they only share an economic situation with similar development indices and economic panoramas that indicate that they are alike but not identical. The BRICS countries form a kind of alliance that seeks to gain strength in the international political and economic scenario, in defense of common interests. Each year they hold a summit,<sup>3</sup> with the aim of formalizing agreements and measures with the clear objectives of forming an economic bloc. A step in this direction was the recent creation of the New Development Bank, also known as the BRICS Bank, in order to represent an alternative source to pre-existing possibilities of development financing.

Created on 15 July 2014, at the 6th BRICS Summit, the NDB was founded as the result of an agreement between the BRICS member-countries with an initial capital of US\$ 100 billion and a fund, called the Contingent Reserves Arrangement (CRA), contemplating another US\$ 100 billion. The CRA has a two-level governance system: the most important decisions will be made by the Governing Council, and executive and operational matters will be dealt with by a Standing Committee. Consensus will be the rule for almost every decision.

The initial capital of the NDB was shared equally among the five member-countries (US\$ 20 billion each), which guaranteed equal voting power. The CRA, which represents a stabilization fund among the five member-countries,

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<sup>3</sup> In order to examine the role of BRICS in global governance issues, the documents of the annual summits from 2009 to 2018 were consulted, as were the documents of the constitution of the New Development Bank (NDB) and of the Contingent Reserves Arrangement (CRA).

is composed as follows: China participates with US\$ 41 billion, Brazil, Russia, and India with US\$ 18 billion each, and South Africa with US\$ 5 billion. According to Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr, former vice-president of the CRA as a representative of Brazil, the CRA is a virtual “pool” of reserves, where the five participants commit to providing mutual support in cases of balance-of-payments pressures.

Concerning the CRA, the term "contingent" reflects the fact that in the adopted model, the resources committed by the five countries will continue in their international reserves, being tapped only if any of them need balance-of-payments support. Each country's access limits to the CRA resources are determined by their individual contributions. China has a multiplier of 0.5; Brazil, India, and Russia of 1; and South Africa of 2. Support to countries may be provided through an immediate liquidity instrument or a precautionary instrument, the latter in the case of potential balance-of-payments pressures (Batista Jr 2015: 265).

One of the issues at this stage is the difference between the countries in relation to the amount that makes up the CRA. Would this distinction indicate a difference of power within the organization? In this direction, would it be evidence of China's leading role in the BRICS group materialized in the foundation of the NDB?

The aim of the NDB is to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects not only in BRICS member-countries, but also, in a second moment, in other developing countries which lack resources to finance and improve their infrastructure sector. The NDB's own founding initiative is formalized to offer one more possibility of funding, with the difference that this time it is not a traditional organization stemming from the Bretton Woods format, with conditionalities for accessing the resources.

The NDB will be open to the participation of the member-countries of the United Nations, and developed countries may be partners, but in a first stage not as borrowers. On the other hand, developing countries can become partners and raise funds. The BRICS countries will always preserve at least 55 per cent of the total voting power, while developed countries will have a maximum of 20 per cent of the voting power. Except for the member-countries, no other country will hold more than 7 per cent of the vote.

The basic initial definitions and distribution of key positions of the NDB are as follows: China keeps the head office, based in Shanghai; India has the first presidency of the bank; Brazil has the first presidency of the board of directors; Russia has the first presidency of the board of governors; and South Africa hosts the NDB's African Regional Centre. In this sense, as Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr suggests, “there is a risk that the NDB will become an

essentially Asian bank, dominated by China and India, with the other BRICS playing a ‘flunky’ role” (Batista Jr 2015: 267).

Generally speaking, the NDB represents a very recent institution, having only started its project financing activities in December 2016, and its board has been discussing the process and possibilities of opening up to new members in 2019. The novelty is that, despite the economic, political, and historical differences, there is agreement on a long-term perspective between a set of heterogeneous countries, but that keep some features in common: emerging economies, large territory, and large populations, which in some ways have and continue to seek conditions to act with more autonomy in the international arena.

Could this new process of cooperation among emerging countries signal that the traditional format of multilateral agencies will be outdated when facing the demands of the twenty-first century? Or does it just represent one more way of financing development projects that becomes available to the periphery of the system?

At the 10th BRICS Summit, which took place between 25 and 27 July 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the group reinforced their partnership, positioning themselves against any “unilateral” procedures and measures. This meeting represented a crucial moment to balance and reaffirm the commitments made both within the group’s long-term strategy and in terms of short- and medium-term policies, taking into consideration the agenda to be adopted and implemented thereafter.

The 2018 summit saw the announcement of an office in São Paulo, the New Development Bank Americas Regional Office. Within the complex scenario and the heterogeneity and different interests involved within the bloc, if the project of the Regional Office goes ahead at this stage, it would be seen as an indicator of bloc continuity.

### **3.4. 10 years of BRICS agreements in light of the Latin American context**

Since the first summit in Yekaterinburg (Russia) in 2009, the BRICS countries have been aiming to sustain a common long-term platform (BRICS Think Tanks Council 2015) and circumvent the turbulences which can be considered as natural characteristics of the heterogeneity of the group. While the world is being rapidly transformed and new dynamics are emerging, including those from the point of view of multilateral organizations, important issues that need to be discussed are: what kind of global governance is being built at the

beginning of the twenty-first century? And what kind of role is being sought by the emerging countries in general?

Broadly speaking, what has unified the BRICS countries as a group is their common aim to obtain a new international insertion. To different degrees, the BRICS members have both bottlenecks and lags in relation to the central countries, but they have been looking for a different trajectory to revisit this insertion, which is why the expression “emerging” is being used to characterize them. And these demands seek, as far as possible, to revisit the relations of asymmetry between the countries and within the multilateral Bretton Woods institutions.

Alongside this, under President Donald Trump, US strategy is also under debate in terms of its foreign policy agenda (“deep engagement strategy”) and its internal policies for solving domestic issues (one of the pillars of Trump’s campaign). There is a trade-off between these platforms, and it is still not clear which combination will be adopted in the coming years. Meanwhile, it becomes clear that China is increasingly becoming a protagonist in the international arena (Hurrell *et al.* 2009: 37): it is expanding its trade routes and its investments abroad and even spreading its currency,<sup>4</sup> which has entered since October 2016 the select group of reserve currencies of the IMF.

At the same time, according to Salzman (2019), there is an instrumental relation between China and the other countries of BRICS, which refers back to Joseph Nye’s concept of soft power (Nye 2004). Salzman argues that the BRICS grouping was useful for China for the purpose of “hiding [its] brightness,” but it does not exactly provide a platform through which to advance an overtly Chinese vision or agenda. By contrast, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are explicitly Chinese projects that can be shaped to fit China’s international agenda (Salzman 2019: 132).

Extending the analysis to other regions, faced with these transformations, where would Latin America fit in? Traditionally, Latin American countries have, to varying degrees, proximity and significant trade flows with the United States (Chossudovsky 2018). Not coincidentally, countries like Panama, Ecuador, and El Salvador use the dollar as their official currency. But with the Trump administration’s plans to construct a wall on the border with Mexico, there has been increasing tension at the borders, and the relationship between the Latin American community and the United States is clearly going through turbulent times. And this is happening while there is a full expansion of

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4 For more information on this topic: Retrieved 17 July 2018 (<https://www.cartamaior.com.br/?/Editoria/Economia/O-desafio-da-China-diante-do-FMI-incorporar-o-yuan-ao-sistema-SDR/7/33172>).

Chinese businesses that are seeking to diversify their scope of action at a global level.

When we consider the agreements between the Latin American countries that have been losing relevance over time (in the case of South America, we could mention the weakening and demobilization of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and initiatives such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)), what would be the desirable course for these countries that, although heterogeneous, also have points of common interest?

This issue could be posed in this way: in a competitive interstate system, what space exists in the scope of international cooperation? What are the advantages, what are the incentives, what are the costs? Being a part of cooperative alliances (Roberts, Armijo, and Katada 2018: 109-112) (associated with internal development paths) would be a possible way forward. Cooperation is about overcoming the blocking of costs in the short term and tracing medium- and long-term incentive trajectories. The question of how to organize resources becomes fundamental, whether at the national level or in terms of international cooperation. In order to pursue efficient economies from a development perspective, structuring is the fundamental basis of this process, and its absence often makes peripheral countries suffer.

In this case, it is not just about financial resources. In these times of urban mobility, information access, and international mobility, there is much scope in terms of cooperation between countries, even those that are not exactly geographically close. The specific ways in which these agreements can be made possible will depend on the interests of the parties, political will, and the creation of mechanisms capable of incorporating all these trends beyond the “short-term” perspective of costs, that is, by creating incentives and consolidating the benefits and impacts that agreements can provide. At the current juncture, closing the possibilities for cooperation means giving up a path that, if well-structured and agreed upon in an organized way, could bring, in the peripheral regions, opportunities that permeate the spheres of the commercial, cultural, educational, socioeconomic, public health, and territorial mobility and flows, to name just a few.

The challenge for the discontents at the beginning of the twenty-first century is related to bringing about concrete international transformations. The way in which emerging countries decide whether to reposition themselves in relation to these dynamics, individually or collectively, is taken through political decisions that could become gradually less centralized, with the incorporation of traditionally important actors as is the case with civil society and popular movements.

The idea is that the moments of instability can create gaps, generating the opportunity to review the periphery situation, which has been going through

so much precarity and dismantling of the social apparatus. In this sense, the kind of approach adopted in meeting the upcoming challenges would say a lot about the direction to be taken and the stage to be reached. Applying these reflections towards the emergent context, committed cooperation between the BRICS countries, although relevant and seeking to act on consensual platforms, is also affected by the level of heterogeneity among the countries that compose the bloc. In this case, with the opening of a new regional office of the NDB in São Paulo in 2019-2020, it will be interesting to observe how the main international players will position themselves: would it be interesting to integrate and participate in this project from the point of view of the central economies – mainly the US and Europe (European Union 2012)? More specifically, what would the foundation of this new long-term institutional agreement signal to the international community?

The relevance of BRICS is possibly derived from the *modus operandi* that created it. It is not just a forum that proposes to revolutionize global governance, but, rather, a legal path signaling the need for reform that can contemplate, gradually, a format that encompasses multilateral decisions promoting greater benefits in the domestic as well as international sphere. This project has apparently already been launched, although how the members work towards achieving these progressive goals and actions in the short, medium and long term, should be closely monitored over the coming decades. According to Article 3 of the Delhi Declaration of the 4th BRICS Summit:

BRICS is a platform for dialogue and cooperation among countries that represent 43% of the world population, for the promotion of peace, security and development in a globalized multi-polar, interdependent and increasingly complex world. Coming from Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, the transcontinental dimension of this interaction gains value and meaning.<sup>5</sup>

What seems to permeate the BRICS initiatives is an atypical constructive proposal in which the flow of political measures and legal norms are forming a new and diverse model of regional institutionalization (Kingah and Quiliconi 2016: 13-24). The dynamism triggered by this process of interstate cooperation ends up representing a process different from that verified in the European or North American case. From an institutional and juridical point of view, for example, the weightage that these five countries give to the role of the state, in a certain way, is an element that contributes to reinforcing their common platform.

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5 Article 3 of the Delhi Declaration, at the New Delhi Summit (29 March 2012). Retrieved 17 July 2018 ([http://brics.itamaraty.gov.br/pt\\_br/categoria-portugues/20-documentos/76-quarta-declaracao-conjunta](http://brics.itamaraty.gov.br/pt_br/categoria-portugues/20-documentos/76-quarta-declaracao-conjunta)).



According to Lucia Scaffardi (2012: 63), BRICS as an inter-institutional activity, is inserted in an international comparison perspective (including from the IMF and World Bank points of view) through central and essential elements for understanding internal and external policymaking in other states, a comparison that requires complex cognitive and evaluative effort both from the institutional legal point of view and taking into account the informal structures that allow for the “dialogue” and the “flow” that sustain the ongoing dynamics.

The open question refers to which position would be most appropriate for economic growth and development, considering the reality and conjuncture of the different states. This issue is not only about peripheral or emerging countries, but about all countries globally which have their distinct features and demands at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We return to the recurrent debate of the desirable ratio between interventionism and liberalism in the quest for the dynamics of more prosperous and abundant societies, as well as the potential of international cooperation policies.

The fact that these five non-central countries – which together possess a large part of the territory, population, consumer market and world GDP – meet and seek to organize themselves institutionally in parallel with the traditional Bretton Woods institutions is significant in terms of global and political international governance. In this context, the role of the New Development Bank also becomes relevant as an object of analysis, in order to investigate the changes involving economic, social, political, and institutional issues related to the fields of international geopolitics, repositioning in the relations of forces, and new insertions of emerging countries in the interstate system. From this perspective, the regional impact on the recent Latin American reality of the announced opening of a new office in São Paulo of the NDB Americas Regional Office<sup>6</sup> in 2019-2020 also needs to be analyzed. All these debates are issues of interest and must be studied in order to understand the contemporary scenario.

As these are questions that arise at the beginning of this century, in a world in which transformations are taking place more and more rapidly, it is pertinent to examine and reflect on these points so that, learning from the lessons of the past, we can better understand the trends which are underway in the transformation of the international scenario, and which are desirable in the construction of a global society that contemplates economic development and better quality of life with a wider reach and diffusion at the international level.

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6 More details concerning the NDB Americas Regional Office can be found in the “10th BRICS Summit: Johannesburg Declaration,” 27 July 2018. Retrieved 17 November 2018 (<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/notas-a-imprensa/19236-x-cupula-dos-brics-declaracao-de-joanesburgo-27-de-julho-de-2018-ingles>).

Observing the tendencies towards global change and the ongoing processes represents a complex exercise that combines analytical tools and monitoring over time. The overall impression is that observing the developments in emergent countries using short-term lenses is not as interesting as considering them from the medium- and long-term perspectives. Anyway, as the dynamics are influenced by interests that are constantly changing, maintaining a common platform under this “mobile basis” already represents a considerable challenge today for the bloc.

### **3.5. Final remarks**

In a system permeated by interstate rivalry, international cooperation represents an interesting tool with which to achieve coordinated results towards a developmental trajectory. This holds true also for emergent countries, more specifically the BRICS platform, because, acting as a group, these countries have the requisite conditions to build a stronger agenda with shared interests rather than performing individually.

Although acting more bilaterally among them, and having to face the controversial dilemma of joining the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the BRICS countries still benefit from the optics of the group on their efforts to gain more representation in global economic governance. In general terms, the objective of this article (as BRICS could be considered a representative group among emergent countries) is to recover some elements that precede the constitution of the bloc in order to contextualize the analysis of the agreements of this set of countries that was established internationally in the twenty-first century. It also examines the founding of the New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS Bank.

Turning to the past makes analytical work more pertinent since it allows us to analyze the emergence of the NDB as the product of a series of historical events, not as a starting point for analysis. From this perspective, it is assumed in this work that interstate relations, especially their rivalries and hierarchies, correspond to a fundamental element in order to understand the birth, dynamics, and potential evolution of the NDB over time. In the same way, changes in the international scenario can be understood as fundamental elements for the foundation and perpetuation of the NDB.

In a system consisting of nation states, the NDB represents, for the first time, an initiative with the aspiration of becoming an institution of global scope that has been formed exclusively by emerging countries, without the direct

participation of any “developed” country. Thus, in an innovative way, a new connotation of cooperation and international scope is assumed. New players in a changing international scenario set the scene where the specific demands of member-countries can open new spaces, thus creating the possibility of revising their respective individual insertions in the global structure of the organization. In this context, realizing what changes would be behind streamlining the creation of the NDB becomes pertinent within the contemporary international geopolitical scenario.

Reflecting on the NDB at the beginning of the twenty-first century requires a critical historical analysis associated with the elaboration of a new agenda of commitments, which, taking into account the fact that the adoption of the traditional formula applied by the Bretton Woods institutions has not always favored the process of development of the peripheral countries, has links with the recovery of the autonomy and economic development of these nations. In this regard, semi-peripheral and peripheral countries still have a long way to go, especially if the changes to be pursued in terms of the governance of multilateral agencies are taken into consideration.

We are living in a time when the dynamics concerning international transformations are changing at a rapid speed. Some players are progressively gaining prominence, and this can be seen in the new elements in the debates in the international arena. In this direction, the NDB can be considered as evidence of this process of transformation. However, the process of change in terms of governance of multilateral agencies, although this issue is apparently more present in the debate, needs to gain more impetus to become effective.

In this sense, within the framework of global governance, what can be observed is the weight of the interstate system on a multilateral basis, and how the system is still tied to the Bretton Woods order. The speed of change depends exclusively on the political mobilization of the stakeholders in discussing the model in a new way, otherwise we will continue to reproduce “more of the same”. The effective role and instruments of persuasion to be adopted by the countries involved in this process remain an open question (and deserve debate) in the current international context.

If the NDB would play a prominent role, signaling a process of change in the international context, it is still something that needs to be verified and that becomes an interesting subject in the current conjuncture from the point of view of a possible new configuration in the medium term, but especially in the long run, within the interstate system. From the perspective of promoting development, impacts from the emerging and peripheral point of view would be represented by the gradual possibility of accessing a parallel/complementary path of financing, which has until now been intended to be less exclusive and

limiting than the traditional financing format associated with the Bretton Woods model, overall purposing no conditionalities for loans.

For emerging and peripheral countries, in terms of regional international cooperation in other areas (education, health, trade, flows of people, mobility, culture, etc.), channels could be put into action as a way to revisit the possibilities and common platforms to follow in the future in a collaborative way and build a structured development trajectory. Also, regional agreements could enhance advances and complementarities in order to project and consolidate the presence of these countries in the international sphere, by means of parallel movements directed at the revision of their insertion, repositioning themselves in the international forums, seeking more space in the decision-making processes, and contributing to reformulating and building innovative paths within the scope of new global governance.

As a representative bloc within the emergent countries, what can be said about BRICS after ten years is that it has brought back into the spotlight the (re)discussion on global governance that was practically abandoned some decades ago, as in the context of the 1990s, for example. Although critics would say that not much concrete work has been achieved, and that there are no guarantees that the bloc will last, one of the contributions of the bloc to the contemporary agenda is related to recovering the debate around the level of polarization in the dynamics of the international arena and the relevance of rebalancing by opening space to other voices, agreements, and possibilities of partnership between countries (also creating alternative ways of acting in parallel to the US's direct influence/control), all of which had been in a certain way swept under the carpet in the last decades.

On the other hand, heterogeneity and individual perspectives among the members represent issues that need to be followed, especially taking into consideration China, which could be considered the strongest member of the bloc, and focusing more energetically on its own parallel processes, such as the AIIB and the BRI, than on the BRICS platform.

Today BRICS seems to be forging ahead despite all the turbulence it has experienced, which has stemmed from the international dynamics around it, but its members are not acting in the direction of creating universal values to consolidate and expand their scope of action. In this direction, although representing a valid movement in the international arena by bringing back some aspects of their common agenda, it is possible to verify that there is still no strong evidence that the bloc is succeeding in bringing about substantial changes in terms of global governance.

In 2019, the 11th BRICS summit will be held in Brazil, which, together with South Africa, has been playing a minor role in the group dynamics till now. Both countries have experienced political and economic turbulence in the

last few years, and just being part of BRICS will not solve these recurring internal problems. At this point, trying to put together a positive and critical scenario, one can say that the group will continue to extend its platform, for as much as members keep on recognizing the benefits and advantages of joining it. As said earlier, a common effort is needed to bypass the discourse and win more space, in concrete terms, towards a better balance in the international system and changing the rules of global governance. If emergent countries are willing to revisit the present dynamic, a lot of negotiation is still needed. What is not clear, thinking in terms of effectiveness, is whether these negotiations would take place in a more combative or conciliatory way.

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# Chapter 4

## Regionalism as resistance?

### South Africa's utopia of Souths

**Bianca Naude**

*University of the Free State, Phuthaditjhaba, South Africa*

#### **Abstract**

South Africa assigns itself a vanguard role in the struggle for the transformation of what it sees as “unfair, oppressive and exploitative” global governance institutions, including the United Nations, the Bretton Woods trio, and the International Criminal Court. In its quest, the country is increasingly relying on regional partnerships with peers from the global South, under the auspices of the African Union's Agenda 2063, the G77 and the BRICS bloc, among others. Underlying South Africa's global transformation agenda is the state's historical experience of international politics as both violent and exploitative, as well as filled with goodwill and solidarity. Motivated by historical relationships with Positive and Negative Others, South Africa seeks to construct a parallel “world of Souths” – a utopia of friendly, like-minded states from the global South – free from what it feels are the rules and structures of a world “designed by the West, for the West.”

**Keywords:** Global governance, North-South relations, post-colonial resistance, regionalism

#### **4.1. Introduction**

As South Africa, we continue our struggle for freedom, equity and respect for human rights in the global arena and, therefore, call for a more equitable world order that is more democratic, representative and legitimate (DIRCO 2014: 9).

South Africa has been quite vocal about its desire to realign political and economic relations with the globe's emerging powers, and since joining the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) grouping in 2010, it has done exactly this. For many analysts, South Africa's motivation for joining BRIC was economic: at that stage, China was experiencing an economic growth rate of around 8 percent and it appeared that the age of the United States of America's (US's) hegemonic power in international politics was coming to an end (see, for example, Gu, Humphrey, and Messner 2008: 274-292; Ikenberry 2008: 23-37; Layne 2009: 147-172 and 2012: 203-213; Schweller and Pu 2011: 41-72).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by 2014, the BRICS (now including South Africa) bloc had signed into force a treaty establishing the BRICS Bank – today known as the New Development Bank (NDB). For many – including the South African elite – the BRICS Bank tipped the balance of international finance for development towards the developing world, which had long been lamenting the structural adjustment programs and conditions attached to development aid and sovereign loans (see Biswas 2015: 3-11; Bond 2016: 611-629; Khanna 2014: 46-48). Whereas BRICS was conceived as a regional economic grouping, the bloc has surpassed its initial economic mandate to become an important global political actor (see notably Laïdi 2012: 614-632; Mansfield 2014: 437-442; Mielniczuk 2013: 975-1090; Piper 2015: 1-28). Marketing itself as a counterweight to Western dominance in international affairs, the BRICS bloc has proven increasingly important in global governance structures and processes.

While, on the surface, the member-states of the BRICS appear to have little in common, they do share a desire for a world free from Western dominance (Gumede 2014: 2-21; Laïdi 2011: 2-12; Neethling 2017: 39-61). For South Africa in particular, BRICS has been an important platform from which to drive its “global transformation” agenda. Indeed, the introduction to the White Paper on South African foreign policy describes one of the state's major foreign policy objectives as “the transformation of the global system of governance from power-based to a rules-based system in a just and equitable global order” (DIRCO 2011: 7). Hidden in this stated objective are two intimations about South Africa's experience of international affairs and its vision of a future world: first, the pronouncement reveals to us that South Africa experiences the international political world as fundamentally unjust and violent in the sense that less powerful states are vulnerable to the whims and fancies of the Great Powers. Second, it reveals the existence in the South African imagination of an aspirational “ideal world” that is just and equitable and free from Western dominance – a political utopia that exists in parallel to the Western-dominated post-World War II political order. What is interesting to consider,

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<sup>1</sup> Others have contested the notion of the decline in the hegemonic power of the United States. See Beckley (2011:41-78) and Nye (2015:393-400).

of course, is why South Africa experiences its international relations as violent and oppressive, and how this utopian future would look once achieved.

Within this context, this contribution sets itself the task of exploring how South Africa, through its foreign policy, responds to its experiences of the international sphere, and how the state attempts to mold the international system according to its image of the ideal world. The research departs from the premise that South Africa's calls for the transformation of the international political landscape should not be seen simply as a superficial desire to occupy a position of greater status and influence within the international power hierarchy, but that these calls for the redistribution of power and resources among all the states of the world are founded in a desire to regain control over destinies denied by colonialism (Naude 2019: 100-110; Nel 2010: 951-974). It is further argued that although regionalism offers material incentives for countries excluded from the international free trade system by structural shortcomings that hamper their ability to compete with more advanced economies, it is also a tool of resistance against the status quo of international politics, where the countries of the global South are engaged in the construction of an alternative, utopian world without any need for the "domineering West."<sup>2</sup>

The paradigmatic inclination of this chapter is interpretive, and its aim is explanatory. The finality of the contribution is not to provide policy advice, but rather to elaborate on theories that explain South Africa's motivations and preferences for certain actions in international affairs. In this sense, the research differs significantly from most other contributions to scholarship of South African foreign relations that usually aim to proffer policy inputs to the South African government (on this point, see Smith 2013: 533-544). As my introductory remarks have suggested, this chapter deals with the South African state's subjective perceptions and interpretations of the world in which it functions. For this reason, the analysis is approached from a constructivist angle, but draws on social justice and postcolonial theories that have recently made their way into social science research. While it may appear counterintuitive to draw on postcolonial theories of International Relations (IR) in research that has announced itself as interpretive rather than critical, postcolonial insights on resistance in IR provide a useful angle for explaining the actions of a state like South Africa, without necessitating some kind of critical engagement with metatheoretical issues and debates in the broad field of IR.

Mindful of the shortage of literature on the subject matter under investigation in this contribution, the research employs an exploratory methodology that is supported by a hermeneutic analysis of South African foreign policy discourses. Empirical sources include the only two official foreign policy

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2 On the phenomenon of parallel polities in the global states system, see notably Acharya 2014, 2017a, and 2017b.

documents issued by the South African government (the Foreign Policy Green Paper issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in 1996 and the Draft White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy, issued by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in 2011), the National Development Plan (NDP), issued by the National Planning Commission (NPC) in 2012, annual strategic plans and annual reports, and declarations and speeches by key actors in South Africa's international affairs. Data are limited to foreign policy discourses of post-1994 South Africa, particularly to discourses issued under the Zuma administration that governed the country from 2009 to 2017, though I do punctually reference discourses dating back to the Mandela and Mbeki administrations of 1994-1998 and 1998-2008, as well as the incumbent Ramaphosa administration, to demonstrate continuities and divergences in the state's thinking on its foreign relations. An important point to raise here is that this contribution does not situate itself within the domain of foreign policy analysis (FPA) in the strict sense of the word. Rather, it is a theoretical reading of South Africa's international relations, approached from a decidedly IR theory orientation. Whereas foreign policy analysts routinely reduce the agency of the state to the actions performed by individual role players, this paper conceives of the state as a unitary agent that cannot be reduced to the individual agencies of the constituent members of the collective; the state is a sum that is greater than its parts.

The remainder of this chapter is structured to first interrogate the foreign relations of a state like South Africa – a former British colony that continues to experience its relationships with former colonial powers as exploitative, unjust, and humiliating. I draw on theories of identity and insights from postcolonialism to explain how state-actors establish solidarities across borders through their mutual experiences of an unjust states system, and how these states aim to transform the international political reality through non-discursive acts of resistance. The chapter further explores the claim that South Africa experiences its relations with its peers from the global South as beneficial, supportive, and just, and that these relationships offer an alternative to the exploitative relationships that South Africa maintains with the global North. I then go on to contemplate what this “transformed global order” looks like in the South African imagination, before finally attempting to explain how this new global order would help soothe the feelings of shame and humiliation that South Africa has historically experienced in its relations with significant Others.

## 4.2. Approaching South Africa's foreign relations within the global states system

In an important contribution to what has been coined as “Global IR,” Amitav Acharya (2014: 647-659) argues in favor of approaches to the study of IR that are “sensitive to non-Western contexts and experiences” (Acharya 2014: 650), and that factor into their theoretical pursuits the unique histories of the non-Western world. In this endeavor, Acharya asks us to not simply construct alternative or complementary theories of IR, but to question the assumptions of existing theories of IR and to broaden their analytical scope. Global IR “challenges [us] to look beyond conflicts induced by national interest and the distribution of power and acknowledge other sources of agency, including culture, ideas, and norms that make states not clash, but embrace and learn from each other” (Acharya 2014: 650). It also asks us to challenge thinking that places the Western world in the center of international politics, and to recognize that there exist forms of interstate dynamics that play themselves out within spaces that may or may not feature the Western world (Acharya 2014: 650-651).

Much as there exists room for interpretation of the subjective experiences of history by the states affected by it, a fact that cannot be ignored is that the US has been the single dominant power in global politics since the end of the Cold War in 1990. For the purposes of this analysis, more importantly, the US was instrumental in the construction of a post-World War II liberal global order that has been setting certain prescriptions for states of the world on how to conduct their affairs in the contemporary era. Perhaps most important of the influences the US has had on the construction of the present structure of the international political landscape is the success of its democratization project and its exportation of the capitalist system across the continents of the earth. Of course, the US's liberal worldview, in which the liberal democratic and capitalist systems are grounded, has its roots in the philosophical traditions of Classical Liberalism that originated in Great Britain and France during the late seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> As much as the spread of liberal democracy and the free market system to the four corners of the earth after the end of the Cold War prompted the institutionalization of a specific political and economic order, it also signaled the triumph of a certain worldview – a certain way of thinking about the organization of social life that continues to dominate global politics. It is in this context of Western intellectual or ideological hegemony that South Africa's struggle for liberation should be understood.

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3 For an exhaustive overview of the history of liberal thought and liberalism, see Gaus, Courtland, and Schmidtz (2018) and Bell (2014).

Western dominance in global affairs is a topic that features prominently in many of the meetings of African diplomats and scholars of African diplomacy,<sup>4</sup> and in discourses on African relations with their former colonial administrations more broadly. In an address on the role of South Africa's foreign relations in achieving the national development targets set out in the NDP, the former minister of international relations and cooperation, Maite Nkoane-Mashabane (2014b), underscored that "the quest for a better world is a struggle that must continue." This struggle is one of resisting the marginalization of the global South in world politics. The marginalization of the South is necessarily a product of Western hegemony that was, in the South African mind, achieved through the (violent) subjugation of colonies and their peoples to Western rule, and the West's success in crafting a global order that continues to tip the balance of the scale in favor of the West. While this necessarily speaks to issues of political and economic dominance, we are also confronted by implicit questions surrounding status, recognition, and respect.

In an important contribution to scholarship on South African foreign relations, Nel (2010: 965-973) argues that rising powers like India, Brazil, and South Africa are, in their efforts to achieve redistributive change in international politics, driven by a deep need for recognition and respect from the traditional powers. The recognition and esteem of significant Others in international politics contribute to some extent to the construction of a state's identity. It is, in essence, the acknowledgment that an Other possesses the same human attributes, rights, and privileges as the Self, and that they are, by that token, worthy of occupying a place of similar ontological status within the states system. Throughout the era of colonialism, Nel (2010: 963) argues, states of the global South were denied any claims to "humanness" or the associated rights and privileges afforded to "human" powers, and that their international relations today, are driven by the final objective of gaining some kind of acknowledgment from states of the global North that they are, at an ontological level, *equal* entities with equal rights within the international system. These rights and privileges, I have argued elsewhere (Naude 2019: 100-110), include the

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4 Discussion surrounding the relationship between Africa and the former Western colonies, particularly in multilateral fora, as well as the US-designed neoliberal international political architecture, dominated the first two Conferences of African Diplomatic Academies, Universities, and Research Institutes, hosted by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation in Pretoria on 28 February and 1 March 2018, as well as 19 and 20 March 2019. The final aim of these conferences was the establishment of a Forum for African Diplomacy following the signature of a Memorandum of Agreement among DIRCO and a number of foreign ministries, diplomatic academies, and universities in Pretoria on 19 March 2019.

trust of the international community in the capacity of the global South to decide their own destinies, and to take ownership of their agency in the international realm.

In an address on her vision for the future of South Africa's international relations, Nkoane-Mashabane (2012) speaks to an issue at the core of South Africa's "global transformation agenda" – the "undemocratic and unrepresentative" United Nations Security Council (UNSC):

[T]he current configuration of the UNSC does not reflect the geopolitical realities of the 21st century. It still reflects the geo-politics of 1945 after the end of Second World War, in which the Allied powers emerged a dominant force [...]. The UN is supposed to be a beacon of democracy and transparency where all its members are treated as equals. The current composition of the UNSC is undemocratic, unrepresentative and not transparent.

While Nkoane-Mashabane's remark is aimed at the UNSC, it alludes to broader structural inequalities in the global system, where the states of the world are not treated as equals, but are marginalized and subordinated to the former Allied powers. If colonization left colonies feeling marginalized and oppressed, and if colonization took from former colonies ownership of their agency which left them feeling disempowered or emasculated (Naude 2016: 487), then the current architecture of the global political landscape perpetuates these conditions and keeps these feelings alive in the states of the global South. Here, Chatterjee's redefinition of "empire" and, by extension, his redefinition of "imperialism" become particularly useful. For Chatterjee (2005: 495), a broadened definition of imperial annexation to include the "imperial prerogative" of deciding what types of exceptions to international norms and practices are granted to whom, helps us better understand the "forms of indirect and informal control that have become common in recent decades." If Nkoane-Mashabane has asserted that the post-World War II global political order was established by the Allied powers who emerged from the War as dominant powers in world affairs, these nations (France, Russia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and China) have, since 1945, under the auspices of the Bretton Woods institutions and the organs of the United Nations, been determining both the institutionalized norms and practices according to which international political and economic relations are conducted, and the conditions under which exceptions to these norms and practices are granted. Indeed, in 2015, Deputy Minister of International Relations Luwellyn Landers remarked that:

The UN, which was established almost 70 years ago, remains mired in and framed according to the historical colonial paradigm, material



conditions and maps. It has not changed its rules, structures and operations, whilst the rest of the world has undergone a damascian change (Landers 2015).

For South Africa, the structural legacies of colonialism and imperialism today manifest as “zero-sum relationships” (Nkoane-Mashabane 2013: 24) within a system of political and economic governance that favors traditional powers and marginalizes the rest. While it would be a fallacy to deny the economic and financial motivations behind South Africa’s regional agendas, these motives cannot be divorced from the underlying motivation of undoing the injustices that South Africa feels had been forced onto it during colonial rule – and that it continues to feel subjected to at the hand of the present global political and economic architecture. As long as poverty and underdevelopment – products, in the South African imagination, of colonialism and the discriminatory design of the present global political and financial architecture – continue to plague the states of the global South, the struggle for freedom from Western dominance continues. And, it is clear, South Africa’s struggle against Western dominance in global affairs will continue until its visionary “new world” – a world free from structural inequality, marginalization, and oppression of the South – is achieved. In fact, in her vision for the future of South Africa’s foreign relations, Nkoane-Mashabane (2012) remarked that once Western dominance in global politics is relegated to the pages of IR history books, “the South will no longer be an opposition force in the international system organized in the fold of the G77 [Group of 77] and the Non-Aligned Movement, for example.”

What is evident from the above is that South Africa’s opposition to the present international political order is fundamentally a form of resistance to what the state experiences as marginalization and oppression heralding from the age of imperialism, and that was never abolished during the decolonization project (see also Verhoeven, Murphy, and Soares de Oliveira 2014: 509-534). In this optic, a remark by Abrahamsen (2003: 195) that “the ‘post’ in postcolonialism signifies the end of colonialism and imperialism as *direct* domination [but] it does not imply [its end] *after* imperialism as a global system of hegemonic power” is particularly illuminating. Although colonialism and imperialism as direct dominance by one state over another *have* come to an end, according to Abrahamsen, the structural legacies of colonialism and imperialism continue to limit the agency of non-Western states in global politics. It is from within this context of the South African state-person as an actor engaged in efforts to establish “a social and political order different from the prevailing order” (Zehfuss 2013: 145) that we should approach the study of South African behavior in international affairs. To the extent that these types of actions are intentionally disruptive of institutionalized (and highly contested) norms and practices, efforts to overturn the “prevailing order” of things should be studied

as acts of resistance, which Richmond (2011: 419-440) describes as “a process in which hidden, small-scale and marginal agencies have an impact on power, on norms, civil society, the state and the ‘international’.”

### **4.3. Resistance as a theme of South Africa’s postcolonial international affairs**

In an excellent overview of postcolonialism in IR, Zehfuss (2013: 161) underscores that postcolonial scholarship “envisages a world in which [...] formerly colonized peoples would no longer suffer from injustices”, while Richmond (2011: 419) notes that postcolonial resistance “is often discursive and aimed at peaceful change and transformation.” To the extent that mine is not an intervention aimed at mobilizing support for the South African cause in international affairs, this chapter is less of a postcolonial reading of South Africa’s foreign relations than it is a reading of South Africa’s anticolonial position in global affairs. This position, as expounded above, is one of resistance to Western dominance and the marginalization of the global South in the institutions of global governance. In the previous section, I highlighted former minister Nkoane-Mashabane’s assertion that “the quest for a better world is a struggle that must continue.” At this juncture, I find it prudent to consider the relationship between the signifiers, “struggle” and “resistance.” Though related, these are not equivalent concepts, and it may be argued that I have asserted “resistance” where South Africa has narrated “struggle.”

It is difficult to define the differences between “struggle” and “resistance”, and scholarly studies on the difference between the two are few to none. Looking to the online history archive ostensibly managed by the South African government or contracted sources (SA History Online 2018), however, it would appear that struggle and resistance played distinct roles in the South African liberation movement of the early 1900s up to 1994. According to an entry labelled “Liberation Struggle in South Africa”, the term “struggle” under the umbrella of the African National Congress (ANC)-led liberation movement in South Africa was associated more with armed violence, while “resistance” was associated with passive, non-violent opposition to the discriminatory policies of the Apartheid South African government. Whereas the ANC appears to have retained the use of the word “struggle” to denote any and all continued opposition to discriminatory or racist politics, it would appear that what South Africa ultimately describes as a continued “struggle against colonialism” in

global politics is more accurately described as “resistance to Western dominance.”

Resistance to Western dominance in world politics today is inseparable from the collective identities of the actors resisting the global political system inherited from imperialism. As Mohanty (2010: 531) remarks, “politicized identity has served as the constitutive anchor for collective struggles against oppression and injustice” in the anti-colonial movements of the global South. These politicized identities, Mohanty explains, create solidarities against particular injustices that have transcended the spatio-temporal locations within which they were designed, to become lodged in the “uneven geographies and economies of the present” (Mohanty 2010: 532). We may, therefore, imagine that the states of the marginalized South are united in solidarity with each other in their struggles to transform this unjust global order. These transformation struggles, in turn, are identity-based reactions to subjective experiences of the relationships between the states of the global North and South. As Dube (2010: 125) observes:

Identities comprise a crucial means through which social processes are perceived, experienced and articulated [...] defined within historical relationships of production and reproduction, appropriation and approbation, and power and difference, cultural identities (and their mutations) are essential elements in the quotidian constitution (and pervasive transformations) of social worlds.

To the extent that identities “turn on [the] attitudes and imaginings, norms and practices, and rituals and dispositions” (Dube 2010: 129) from which, and according to which, agents act into co-constructed realities, relationally-conditioned identities should be the starting point of any inquiry into an actor’s behaviors. For Dube, importantly, identities are both produced by hegemonies within social relations and productive of contestations of power. Identities are “not mere objects of knowledge,” Dube (2010: 137) protests, but should be thought of as “*conditions of knowing*” (emphasis in original). “Knowing” South Africa’s motivations for engaging in acts of resistance to Western dominance in global politics, in Dube’s framework, requires *seeing through* the lenses of South Africa’s identity.

#### 4.4. South African identity politics as productive of power contestations

South Africa's identity is a much-debated topic – both within circles of domestic politics and in broader IR circles (see Cilliers 1999; Domson-Lindsay 2014: 391-411; Geldenhuys 2012: 29-38; Klotz 2000: 831-847; Klotz 2006: 67-80; Kotze 2015: 299-318; Olivier 2012: 173-197; van der Westhuizen 2008: 45-61; Van Wyk 2004: 102-136). Such is the extent of the debate around South Africa's identity that Ivor Chipkin (2007) dedicated an entire monograph to the question, “do South Africans exist?” For all the debate surrounding South Africa's identity in world politics, however, very few scholarly contributions have attempted to demonstrate what exactly this identity is, how it is produced, and what its functions in South Africa's international behaviors are. Among those contributions that do engage with South African identity in international relations, the general consensus appears to be that South Africa struggles with a kind of multiple identity disorder, torn between its commitments to neoliberal principles like democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and international norms on the one hand, and its commitments to the solidarity agendas of Africa and the global South on the other (on this point, see Habib and Selinyane 2006; Nathan 2005; Nathan 2008; Nathan 2013; Thakur 2018).

In an older but very relevant article, Serrao and Bischoff (2009: 363-380) argue that South Africa's identity is narratively constructed through a process of “othering,” where the Other is represented as “an existential threat to the Self; as inferior to the Self; as a violator of universal principles; or merely as different to the Self” (2009: 370). Interestingly, this “other,” for Serrao and Bischoff (2009: 370), is not an external party, “but rather its own apartheid past.” It is against this context, the authors argue, that we should understand South African foreign policy: South Africa's commitment to the human rights agenda in international affairs is an attempt to present itself as the opposite of Apartheid South Africa, while the state's “Africa Agenda” is an attempt at constructing the “new” South African self as a state that stands in solidarity with the African people and their struggles.<sup>5</sup> For the authors, South Africa's “foreign policy ambiguity” resides in the state's struggles to establish itself as a “good international citizen” while appeasing African peers who had grown

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5 We are forced to make this inferential leap from Serrao's and Bischoff's article only because they never really explain what this “positive approximation” to other African states contributes to the South African identity.

weary of the racist apartheid regime.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, for Serrao and Bischoff, South Africa's behavior in international affairs is reducible to attempts to project a certain image to the outside world, and to balance competing demands from peers with this subjective image of its place in international politics.<sup>7</sup>

If Serrao and Bischoff (2009: 378) conclude that South Africa's "claims" to push for the transformation of the international system are reduced to mere ideas by its material incapacity to effect any of these grand ideas – a foreign policy weakness, in the authors' argument – then, I am rather unconvinced that South Africa's foreign policy is "all talk and no action." The growing importance of regional arrangements and the rising powers have certainly tipped the balance in favor of South Africa's attempts at applying its limited resources to the purpose of bettering itself, and hopefully, the world. More importantly, Serrao's and Bischoff's argument discounts, almost in its entirety, the importance of exogenous factors in the construction of an identity: whereas South Africa's identity is to *some* extent based on attempts to distance its new self from the former, distancing the South African self from external Others fulfils an essential function in the construction of its identity.

Across its discourses on its relations with other state-persons, South Africa mentions a number of state-persons that would conform to Negative Others (NOs), these being the US, Canada, Western Europe, and Israel, as well as the institutions designed and dominated by these NOs, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions (DIRCO 2011: 24), and the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>8</sup> Whereas South Africa describes itself and its approach to international relations as "principled" (DIRCO 2011: 6, 20, 28), "moral" (DFA 1996), "respectful" (DIRCO 2011: 4), and "inclusive" (DIRCO 2011:36), it describes NOs and their approach as "discriminatory" (DIRCO 2011: 13), "irrelevant", "provocative", "aggressive" (DIRCO 2011: 14), and "confrontational" (DIRCO 2011: 10). What we are effectively faced with here is the narrative construction of the South African Self as the moral, social, and political opposite of the states of the global North: "South Africa" is a uniquely principled, pluralist, and transformative leader, liberator, revolutionary, and servant of the oppressed, marginalized, and exploited state-persons of the world. Unlike its Negative

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6 I am again left to infer an argument beyond that which is presented by the authors, though I am confident that my inferences are consistent with the general gist of the article, and that of other authors who have argued the same.

7 Alden and Schoeman (2013:111-129) make a similar argument.

8 An important observation here is that South Africa appears to be supportive of the United Nations system in its foreign policy discourses, on the surface contradicting my assertion that the state sees the UN as a product of Western dominance in global politics. I elaborate on the reasons for this contradiction in the coming sections.

Others, it is not exclusive, oppressive, arrogant, or destructive. It does not lie or manipulate.

In contrast to the antagonistic Negative Others from South Africa's international relations are its "Positive Others" (POs), which are explicitly mentioned in foreign policy discourses as being China, Russia, Cuba, Palestine, Libya, Saharawi, and Zimbabwe, and the collective states that make up the global South as well as the institutions that have been established under the initiative of these Others. These institutions include the African Union (AU), regional economic blocs like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Group of 77 (G77) and BRICS (including the New Development Bank), and other political fora like the India-Brazil-South Africa grouping (IBSA), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Unlike its belligerent Negative Others, Positive Others are considered "selfless" (DIRCO 2011:10), "ambitious" (DIRCO 2011: 7), "assertive" (DIRCO 2011: 13), and "influential" (DIRCO 2011: 29). These Positive Others have in common not only the fact that they can be considered less developed than many of the states of the "old industrialized North," but also a historic relationship of loyalty to South Africa dating back to the era of apartheid.<sup>9</sup> What is interesting here is that South Africa describes its Positive Others as "exemplary" (DIRCO 2011: 161, 171), "like-minded" (DIRCO 2011: 14, 25), "visionary" (ANC 2015: 189) and "heroic" (ANC 2015: 188), and uses many of the same terms that it employs to describe its Positive Others to describe itself.

What is particularly interesting about these assertions is that they establish binaries between South Africa and other state-persons, drawing the boundaries between South Africa's in and out groups. Basing its identity in its historic relationships with Africa and the global South, South Africa ties its positive self-image to Others from the global South. This is in effect the pledging of an allegiance to Africa and the global South, the positioning of South Africa in international affairs as an ally of the South and an opposing force to former colonial powers. What South Africa supports in international affairs is Africa and the global South, and what it opposes is colonialism. Whereas South Africa "sides" with Africa and the global South, it positions itself against the *perpetrators* of colonialism – which does not include Africa and the global South – thus, the global North. Moreover, as I have suggested, South Africa's relationships with former colonial powers have left it with deeply rooted feelings of

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9 Although it may be surprising to find among the Positive Others the European countries of Norway and Sweden, in its 2015 Policy Discussion Document, the ANC notes the support these states had offered South Africa in the struggle for political freedom from the Apartheid regime (ANC 2015:188).

emasculatation, humiliation, and shame,<sup>10</sup> which it is attempting to address through its aggressive “global transformation agenda,” and through the establishment of an alternative world of Souths. Here, of course, the question could be asked, “what does South Africa see as a transformed global order?” The answer comes partly in the form of the assertion that South Africa appears to be constructing a parallel global order, free from Western dominance – a “utopia” of like-minded states from the global South.

#### 4.5. South Africa’s utopia of Souths

From the foregoing analysis, we know that South Africa seeks to modify the international political environment dominated by the global North, which it experiences as unjust, exploitative, and humiliating, most notably by realigning loyalties to the emerging powers of the global South. Indeed, contextualizing South Africa’s foreign relations in the twenty-first century, the incumbent ANC, at its 2015 National General Council (NGC) meeting, exclaimed that “the rise of emerging economies led by China in the world economy, has heralded a new dawn of *hope* for further possibilities of a new world order” (ANC 2015: 161, emphasis added). This hopeful future is contrasted with the “gloomy picture” (ANC 2015: 161) painted by a world that is led by the USA (ANC 2015: 160-161). From the 2011 Draft Paper, it is clear that the relationship between the states of the global South is one of *friendship, solidarity, and complementarity* (DIRCO 2011: 1, 11, 31-32, 33). Generally, South Africa’s sentiment regarding relations with the states of the global South, including the emerging powers, is optimistic if not altogether “cheerful,” with the sentiment translating into South Africa’s experience of the rules and institutions created by the initiative of these states:

Our participation in formations such as G20, BRICS, IBSA, G-77 and others is guided by our desire for a World that is fair and equitable, despite the evident differences in stages of development among countries. With our BRICS partners we are forging ahead creating credible institutions, such as New Development Bank (NDB), that are aimed at achieving credible results through use of instruments that are understandable and acceptable to the developing countries (Landers 2015).

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<sup>10</sup> On this point, see also Naude (2019:76-77).

Within the context of South Africa's politics of identity as a blueprint for understanding South African foreign relationships, regional groupings like the BRICS – which share South Africa's values of solidarity, equality, mutual understanding, inclusiveness, and mutually beneficial cooperation – represent a long-awaited alternative world to the West's exploitative and oppressive system of global governance. Because the countries of the South have been dependent historically on the great powers for essential development aid, they have been forced to accept the dictates of their former colonial masters. However, the proliferation of regional agreements, and particularly the rise of the BRICS powers who are now able to offer development aid without (colonial) political conditions attached to it, represent an alternative world. This alternative world is free from imperial occupation, free from oppression and marginalization, and free from discrimination. As Landers (2015) explained:

Whilst we continue with our fight to transform the UN structures, we will also simultaneously support and partner with like-minded countries of the South to develop alternative organizations, structures and institutions that are more fair and sensitive to the needs of the developing world. This includes IBSA, the BRICS, FOCAC, NAM, IORA and the newly-established development banks.

In her address at the University of Pretoria on South Africa's foreign policy, Nkoane-Mashabane (2012) remarked that “[t]he G20 is [...] a reinforcement of our collective, multilateral effort to fast-track the reform of the global system, including the Bretton Woods institutions,” while former deputy minister Ebrahim Ebrahim, in his 2013 budget speech to the national assembly, similarly observed that IBSA and the BRICS “are both strategic platforms, which allow for South-South politico-economic cooperation to strengthen and counteract the global balance of forces” (Ebrahim 2013). For Deputy Minister Landers (2018), in fact, BRICS is the institutionalization of the principles set forth at the 1955 Bandung Conference:

In the same vein you will appreciate that Africans are part of the Global South comprising in the main by countries which were colonized and citizens who were subjugated for a long time. In this context I must indicate that the BRICS formation signifies a long standing tradition of solidarity that was firmly established 63 years ago, in April 1955.

Along these same lines, former president Jacob Zuma in his 2013 message on the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration of the establishment of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) remarked that the OAU represented a platform:



for [...] those at the forefront of the struggle against colonialism to coordinate and intensify their cooperation to emancipate the continent from colonial subjugation [providing] a sense of purpose for the African people to restore their freedom, dignity and to strive for a better life for all Africans, hence [carrying] the hopes and aspirations of all Africans (Zuma 2013).

In an address to the members of the South African Parliament on the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063, Nkoane-Mashabane (2014a) noted that the actors in global politics, in pursuit of this equal, fair, representative, and just world, need to overcome a number of challenges, among which are:

1. the untransformed and undemocratic nature of the global institutions that govern the world;
2. the unipolarity and unilateralism which undermine multilateral institutions, and achieving the multipolarity required for Africa to have a greater voice in the world; and
3. continuing threats to international peace whose objective, in many instances, is regime change and control over Africa's natural resources.

These challenges, Nkoane-Mashabane asserted, would be overcome by – among others:

1. achieving African ownership, including finding African solutions to African problems;
2. becoming self-reliant to reverse and eradicate African dependency on, for example, aid for fiscal support;
3. African unity; and
4. remaining assertive in world affairs, and continuing to demand a permanent presence in the United Nations Security Council. South Africa, of course, believes that these feats will be achieved through the integration of African economies and politics under Agenda 2063.

For South Africa, thus, regionalism (including the integration of the SADC region, and membership of the AU, BRICS, IBSA, IORA, and NAM) is *the* political tool through which to operationalize its resistance to Western dominance (see, on this point, Alexandroff 2015: 249-268).

It is important to note here that South Africa is not calling for the total dismantling of the existing global order. For all of its references to the Bandung Conference as a defining moment in the country's foreign policy orientation, an interesting observation is that South Africa does not appear to support the "dismantling of the old structure of national sovereignty that was [...] identified by the leaders at Bandung as the unfinished agenda of the world-wide anti-colonial struggle" (Chatterjee 2005: 490). Indeed, South Africa's global

transformation agenda does not have the ambition of completely destroying the existing international political and economic order, as Nkoane-Mashabane (2010) remarked during a speech on the relationship between South Africa and the emerging powers:

Difference does not have to lead to disintegration and conflict. Co-operation is possible among friends and antagonists alike [...]. Significantly, [states of the global South] share a common view that multilateralism and [a] rules-based global governance mechanism is the best guarantor of stability, and provides a better framework for asserting our values and interests.

Instead, former deputy minister Ebrahim Ebrahim explained that since 1994, one of South Africa's primary foreign policy priorities has been "to promote an international rules-based system through active and constructive participation in multilateral institutions and processes" (Ebrahim 2014). South Africa's "desire for a more just, humane and equitable world," Ebrahim continued, can only be achieved through "the collective efforts of all members of the international system acting together through multilateral institutions." It should be clear from this that South Africa takes issue with certain *aspects* of the present international system, which it endeavors to transform. In this regard, South Africa sees the AU's Agenda 2063 as:

a continuation of the Pan-African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity – in order to, amongst others; galvanize and unite in action all Africans and the Diaspora around the common vision of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa, driven by its citizens and taking its rightful place in the world (Nkoane-Mashabane 2014a).

Africa's rightful place in the world, it has been argued, is one in which African states are able to take ownership of their agency to determine their own destinies *free from* the impositions of the old colonial powers who have historically dictated the types of actions African countries are allowed to take, and the types of policies they should be pursuing. These include the policies prescribed by the Bretton Woods institutions and imposed through their structural adjustment programs, as well as the Resolutions of the UNSC, and the ICC's prosecution of Africans on referral of cases to them by the UNSC.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the

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11 It is important to observe that resistance to Western dominance in global politics is not an exclusively African pursuit. Whereas the Ezulwini Consensus unites the states of the African continent around this common vision for a transformed global order, South Africa feels that Africa shares both its history of colonial oppression and its vision for a new global order with all of the South.

West may still feature in this “utopia,” their politics of oppression do not. There is, in this utopia of Souths, an almost complete absence of social hierarchy or social stratification. Indeed, South Africa’s desire is to “transform the former model of cooperation based on a zero-sum relationship in favor of more equitable and sustainable global partnerships” (Nkoane-Mashabane 2013: 24). As Deputy Minister Landers (2015) explains:

[South Africa’s] participation in formations such as G20, BRICS, IBSA, G-77 and others is guided by our desire for a World that is fair and equitable [...] we believe that transforming these is not only good for the institutions themselves, but will also provide testimony to the stated principle of sovereign nations *participating in foreign relations as equal partners* (emphasis added).

Thus, it is clear that what South Africa seeks to achieve through its global transformation agenda is to (re)construct the realm of the international so as to be inclusive and representative of all nations of the world – a world that privileges all people, not just one demographic. This world is one that functions according to a horizontal power hierarchy, and one that is free from social stratification along economic lines – a veritably classless Marxist utopia. This utopian dream is perhaps best encapsulated in Nkoane-Mashabane’s (2010) concluding remarks concerning South Africa’s relationship with the states of the South: “We are about peace and friendship. We are about collaboration, cooperation and building partnerships; not confrontation, competition or rivalry.”

It is in this context of friendship, collaboration, and partnerships with the states of the South that South Africa’s transformation agenda becomes operant: regionalism provides the platform from which to build this utopian world of Souths – a “safe haven” of sorts that offers those who seek it protection from the hostile world that the North designed when it emerged from the World Wars as dominant global powers. While South Africa insists that multilateralism remains central to its foreign policy, the truly multilateral platforms of the United Nations – the Bretton Woods institutions and the ICC – were, to the South African mind, “designed by the West, for the West.” In its quest to transform these institutions into the equitable and inclusive organs of global governance that they should be, South Africa ostensibly resorts to a form of “regionalized multilateralism” that gives states with a worldview and political aims similar to South Africa’s the power of numbers to force a more favorable outcome to the demands of the South within the international. What is interesting to note here is that aside from the feeling that South Africa conveys regarding its perception of fairness, equality, and sustainability of relationships with the global South, the country is aware of – but unphased by – the asymmetrical nature of the relationships that the states of the South maintain with

each other. What would have been particularly irksome about a relationship with a Negative Other, here, seemingly does not matter to the state.

## 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has explored South Africa's transformation agenda in international politics, as well as the underlying motivations for the state's increasingly urgent interest in regional engagements. The discussion presented here supports the notion that identity-related notions of culture, race, and class (*id est*, worldviews) are major contributing factors to region-building. Indeed, the South African example illustrates how a state could realign political and economic interests with peers that it feels shares its own values, ideologies, and aspirations for the world's future – over and above the perceived economic benefits of shifting allegiances. Whereas regional agreements like the BRICS or the AU's Agenda 2063 appear on the surface to center on economic goals and objectives for development, poverty alleviation, and economic emancipation, they are also (and perhaps more significantly) important parallel worlds for states who have grown weary of an oppressive and exclusive system of global governance where the old colonial powers continue to dictate the futures of former colonies.

As I have argued that South Africa assigns itself a vanguard role in the struggle against the sustained colonial oppression of the non-Western world (see, for example, ANC 2017: 11), a question that necessarily arises, and that deserves attention beyond what I am able to give it here, is how this self-appointed role of protector and liberator of the non-Western world is perceived by its peers. Informed by its Kautilyan worldview, India, for instance, has historically assigned itself an activist role in that it has consistently supported an approach to foreign relations that protects less powerful states from the whims and fancies of the great powers (see also Alden & Vieira 2005: 1087; Solomon 2012: 66). It would not be inconceivable that South Africa's attempts to establish itself as the “Nelson Mandela of global politics” – fighting against the oppression of the world's less powerful states by the dominant powers – has the potential to prompt an ideological rivalry between these two states. It could similarly be asked whether the global South accepts South Africa as this leader and liberator that it makes itself out to be. If the South African National Planning Commission's findings in the 2012 National Development Plan are anything to go by, South Africa is seen more as a selfish bully than the selfless struggle icon it considers itself to be (NPC 2012: 238).

While South Africa occupies a privileged place in global politics as the only African presence around the BRICS table and the only African voice in the Group of Twenty (G20), among others, the country's status in world politics is due in large part to the perception of it being the "gateway to Africa." South Africa's performance in African institutions like the AU and SADC is therefore crucial for the consolidation of its global standing. A continued decline in the moral authority that the state has commanded since 1994 poses a real threat to South Africa's leadership in Africa and beyond. Whereas many agree that regional agreements facilitate the construction of parallel political spheres in reaction to what is perceived as an antagonistic reigning international order, these parallel worlds are vulnerable to the reproduction of existing hierarchies and tensions, albeit with new actors in the lead roles. In this sense, future studies of regionalism would benefit from interrogations surrounding the place and purpose of hegemonic powers in systems that aim to achieve a horizontal distribution of power among members. An important question to consider here is whether a global states-system with a horizontal hierarchy is at all possible.

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## **Part 2**

# **Contemporary Regionalism in Practice**



## Chapter 5

# Bilateralism and multilateralism: Obstacles to sub-regionalism in the Maghreb

**Karim Maiche**

*TAPRI, Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

### Abstract

The challenges of regionalism to multilateralism have increased. However, the processes of regionalization in areas such as the Maghreb remain unfinished business. Political disputes, socioeconomic development, military conflicts, as well as internal and external economic interests have rendered stagnant the cooperation necessary for regionalization to proceed. The Maghreb is understood as comprising the five states of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, as well as the occupied Western Sahara. Institutions and actors operate at the local, national, regional, and international levels within the social, economic and political fields. Factors that prevent the development of sub-regionalization in North Africa – for example, those that work against organizations such as the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) – are approached from the theoretical framework of comparative regionalism and wider global international relations. This allows more flexibility regarding the use of methodological tools from the critical non-Eurocentric aspects in order to contextualize the South Mediterranean region in a multiplex world order. A multiplex world order is one in which the world is organized around multiple and complex processes, where multipolar order is only one aspect in the processes of power distribution. A multiplex world order does not necessarily sustain deterministic assumption of an inherent conflict highlighting the importance of individual agencies in the wider networks of actors, whether national, non-governmental, or transnational. Multiple multilateral processes (e.g., African Union, Arab League, Union of the Mediterranean) are taking place in Maghreb, having an impact on regionalism in the area. Simultaneously, national socioeconomic policies and interstate disputes continue to play a major role alongside wider societal phenomena such as mobility, security, and culture. Therefore, this

chapter asks: (1) what role does culture play in the processes of regionalization and multilateralism? and (2) does failed regionalism in North Africa promote more efficient multilateralism?

**Keywords:** Maghreb, multilateralism, regionalism, sub-regionalism

## 5.1. Introduction

Regional challenges stemming from the various processes of regionalism are often argued to have a negative impact on multilateral processes (Baldwin and Low 2008: xii; Buckley, Lo, and Boule 2008). During the presidency of Donald Trump, this tendency seems to have strengthened in the form of protectionism and discriminatory interests. However, the institutional development of regionalization in areas such as North Africa are still in process. While regional studies often indicate that cultural cohesion is a major advantage in the process of regionalization, political disputes, socioeconomic development, military conflicts, as well as internal and external economic interests have subsumed any assumed cultural heterogeneity and rendered stagnant regional institutionalization in the Maghreb.

In this chapter, the factors that prevent the development of sub-regionalization in North Africa – for example, those that work against organizations such as the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) – are approached from the theoretical framework of comparative regionalism, challenging traditional theorization and methodological approaches within regional studies (Sbragia 2008; Söderbaum 2015; Fioramonti and Mattheis 2016; Börzel and Risse 2016). This theoretical and methodological choice enables the disengagement from the power related cultural and geopolitical Eurocentric narrations releasing space for more critical and flexible use of theories and methods developed within the framework of regional studies in order to contextualize the South Mediterranean region in a multiplex world order (Acharya 2014). The North African region is simultaneously approached within the wider global international framework of “connectography,” a concept introduced by Parag Khanna (2016).

According to Amitav Acharya (2018), a multiplex world order is one in which the world is organized around multiple and complex processes, where multipolar order is only one aspect in the processes of power distribution. The world order does not necessarily sustain deterministic assumption of conflict, assumed in the concept of the multipolar, and stresses the importance of

individual agencies in the wider networks of actors, whether national, non-governmental, or transnational. The historical aspects also take critical positions vis-à-vis the Eurocentric or orientalist connotations often connected to the Maghreb.

The Maghreb contains multiple multilateral processes (e.g., the African Union, Arab League, the Union for the Mediterranean) that impact on regionalism in the area. Simultaneously, national socioeconomic policies continue to play a major role alongside wider societal phenomena such as mobility, environment, security, and culture. How can we analyze the success of regionalism or sub-regionalism, and why is failed regionalism in the Maghreb in the form of the AMU relevant? These questions will be approached through four dimensions presented by Albareda and Barba (2011): institutions, leadership, agenda, and external factors.

While the idea of a united Maghreb dates back dozens of centuries, the recent project of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was initiated within a relatively short period of time at the end of the 1980s. It was already ineffective by the mid-1990s, but has still not been written off. This chapter asks: (1) what role does culture play in the processes of regionalization and multilateralism? and (2) does failed regionalism in North Africa promote more efficient multilateralism? These questions are examined through textual analysis using a critical approach related to regional studies at large.

## **5.2. Foundations for regionalism in the Maghreb**

North Africa is understood as a region that contains local, national, regional, and international levels. Various actors function at these levels in the social, economic, and political fields. North Africa can be understood as an area that ranges from Egypt in the east to Morocco and Western Sahara in the west. However, this study delimits North Africa to the Maghreb – Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, and the mostly occupied Western Sahara.<sup>1</sup> Together, these countries are home to more than 100 million inhabitants today, of whom the majority, around 40 million each, lives in Algeria and Morocco.

North Africa constitutes a strategically important geographical area on the borders of Africa and Europe. From a cultural and especially historical

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<sup>1</sup> No country has accepted the Moroccan unilateral annexation of Western Sahara in 1975. According to international law, Western Sahara is a *de facto* occupied territory.



perspective, the Maghreb can be integrated with the larger western Mediterranean region, rather than delimiting its identity to exclusively “African,” “Arab,” or “Islamic.” North Africa was an integral part of numerous ancient Mediterranean civilizations (the Numidian kingdoms, Carthage, the Roman and Byzantine empires, and the Vandal and Islamic caliphates) and incorporated economically significant trans-Saharan trade routes that connected sub-Saharan Africa to Europe and the Middle East. Later on, during the nineteenth century, European colonial powers (France, Italy, and Spain) occupied vast territories in the Maghreb until the decolonizing processes of the mid-twentieth century transformed the region into independent nation-states.

Since the Middle Ages, and especially after the decolonization process, states such as Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and occupied Western Sahara formed a geographical body called the Maghreb.<sup>2</sup> The decolonization process varied in each country and led to diverse forms of government, societal structure, and political orientation during the Cold War. Traditionally, Morocco and Tunisia have been more bound to France and the United States (US), while Algeria and Libya have had more independent policies, occasionally in alliance with the Soviet Union, especially during the Cold War. The intra-Maghrebin competition led to various rivalries and sporadic changes in alliances. The longest running conflict, however, is the conflict of Western Sahara, where Algeria opposes Moroccan occupation of the coastal territory and supports the Sahrawi independence movement Polisario<sup>3</sup>.

There have been various attempts to form the Maghreb as one singular political body. According to Yves and Camille Lacoste, the Moroccan Amazigh Muslim movement called the Almohad empire, founded by Ibn Tumart in the twelfth century, was the first “unification of the Maghreb” (Lacoste and Lacoste 1991: 44-45). However, Paul Balta (1990: 17) argues that unity of the Maghreb has been achieved only twice in the past: during the rule of the first king of Numidia, Massinissa, in 200 BCE and that of Almohads (1147-1269 CE). Therefore, the unity of the Maghreb is not a new idea but dates back hundreds of years. Many attempts that aspired to unify the Maghreb, such as by the Zirides (973-1171) and Almoravids (1050-1147), were doomed to fail (Balta 1990: 17). The road to the establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in Marrakech on 17 February 1989 was a complicated process and preceded various joint agreements before achieving fruition. Thirty years

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2 Etymologically, the meaning of Maghreb is *west* or *land of the sunset*, as distinct from Mashreq, *place of sunrise*, the Middle East. Maghreb is also the Arabic name for modern Morocco.

3 The Polisario Front (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro) was formally established in 1973. The Polisario is considered by the United Nations as the legal representative of the Sahrawi people.

later, there might not be too much reason for celebration, but it is a great occasion to examine sub-regionalism in the Maghreb.

Before the independence of the states in North Africa, the Congress of the Maghreb Arab was held on 15 February 1947 in Cairo. It followed the creation of the Maghreb Liberation Committee (Rulleau 1991: 547). After the launch of the liberation wars in 1955, the Tunisian Neo-Destourian leader and future president, Habib Bourguiba, wished to set up the Unity of Maghreb Arab (Rulleau 1991: 547). However, it was in 1958 that the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) met with the Tunisian Neo-Destour and Moroccan Istiqlal parties and launched the more consistent rhetoric of creating a North African Economic Community (Rulleau 1991: 547; Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 115). It is relevant to note that the meeting took place a year after the creation of European Economic Community (EEC). Nevertheless, the post-independence realities of divided ideological and political orientations brought the development of the idea to a halt (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 116). One year after the Algerian independence war in 1963, unity in the Maghreb achieved a promising start when the *Comptoir Maghrébin de l'Alfa* (COMALFA) was set up (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 115). It is also important to note that the ideal of achieving unity in the Maghreb was integrated into the constitutions in Tunisia (1959), Morocco (1962-1972), and Algeria (1962) regardless of challenges related to divergent national interests, border disputes, and strong personalities ruling the countries (Rulleau 1991: 547; Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 115).

In order to bypass these problems, the protocol of the *Comité Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb* (CPCM), which also included Libya, was signed in Tunis on 11 October 1964 (Rulleau 1991: 547; Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 115-116). The CPCM tried to meet three urgent economic challenges: (1) to develop horizontal exchanges with harmonization of customs policies; (2) to harmonize the policies of the member-countries in the fields of industry, mines, energy, transport, and telecommunications; and (3) to coordinate the positions of the different members with regard to the EEC (Rulleau 1991: 547). Around 20 different committees were created within various sectors such as transport, communications, employment, work, tourism, and education (Rulleau 1991: 547). Despite some positive developments, the achievements of the CPCM remained modest due to low economic inter-exchange and finally most of the agreements were signed separately from the bilateral premises. Instead of negotiating together with the EEC, each state did its own agreements with the EEC also from bilateral premises (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 118; Rulleau 1991: 547). In the mid-1970s, the relations between Algeria and Morocco suffered a heavy blow when Morocco occupied the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, which strained even further the modest sub-regionalism in the Maghreb.

The de-escalation of the rivalries enabled a rapprochement between the King of Morocco, Hassan II, and the President of Algeria, Chadli Bendjedid, and was followed by normalization of relations between the countries after the meeting in February 1983, though the war in Western Sahara still had a strong impact on their relations (Santucci 1985: 402). Algeria and Tunisia signed *Le Traité de Fraternité et de Concorde* in March 1983, and Mauritania was included in the agreement in December of the same year (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 120). This so-called Tunis Axis was thought to be a step closer towards the Great Arab Maghreb, though Libya's entry was prevented due to a border dispute with Algeria (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 120-122). Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi then turned to Morocco, giving its support to Western Sahara and stopping arms deliveries to the Sahrawi independence movement, Polisario. Morocco promised to support Libya in Chad, where Qaddafi was supporting numerous factions against the government, and they established the Arab African Union (AAU), which also aimed at the unification of the Maghreb (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 122; Balta 1990: 231).

In 1987, Algeria and Libya were able to resolve their disputes and Libya again pledged its full support for Algerian policies in Western Sahara (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 123). In addition, after the long-time president of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, was removed by Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the relations between the two countries moved towards rapprochement, paving the way for the creation of the AMU two years later (Albareda and Barba 2011: 13). The final push came from the meeting between Bendjedid and Hassan II in Morocco in February 1989, at which topics such as bilateral cooperation and the construction of an oil pipeline from Algeria via Morocco to Europe were discussed. Continuously weak intra-trade provided the impetus to push forward a joint economic union. In addition, the integration of the northern Mediterranean in the EEC strengthened the pursuits for more efficient economic cooperation.

According to Paul Balta, the strengthening of Islamist movements, the international economic crisis that made energy prices soar, the democratic challenges related to state governance, demographic challenges and the unemployment of the youth, and integration in Europe further speeded the Maghrebin integration during the end of the 1980s (Balta 1990, 237-243). Before taking a closer look at the functioning of the AMU and the factors behind the development of sub-regionalism in Maghreb, the field of regional studies will be examined, and some of its general arguments and assumptions will be challenged through the comparative regionalism-related body of literature.

### 5.3. Regionalism within a multiplex world order

Regional studies are often considered as a fragmented field of study consisting of various theoretical frameworks with context-based emphasis on various concepts and methodologies (Sbragia 2008: 39; Söderbaum 2015: 5). Perspectives and connotations fluctuate in relation to political, economic, and cultural factors overlapping within the discussions on globalization, assumptions on security, and on history at large. Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse (2016: 3-4) show in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism* that, based on searches within Google Books, more than half of the published works deal with European integration during 1950 and 2015. Therefore, European integration has formed the central body of literature and norms for regional studies in general. This is not, of course, surprising because European integration can be considered in many ways as a successful and multi-phenomenal process in the larger context of world history. However, within the developing multiplex world order, it is ever necessary to approach critically various dominant Eurocentric assumptions whether related to regional studies or social sciences in general (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Hobson 2012).

In the 1940s, David Mitrany (1943) promoted the importance of regionalization within the functionalist framework. He argued that fruitful cooperation could be achieved within the regional context if it was possible to bypass the direct interests of the nation-states. In the 1950s, Karl Deutsch and his co-researchers stated that those regional communities that shared similar beliefs and values were able to avoid military conflicts (Deutsch *et al.* 1957). The traditional conceptualization of regionalization springs from the definition of Joseph N. Nye: “a limited number of States linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence” (Nye 1965: vii). Meanwhile Ernst B. Haas (1958) mapped in his neo-functionalist view supranational governance through accommodation of political groups and institutions which could be achieved within the integration of different multiplex sectors (Söderbaum 2015: 11; Haas 1958: 301).

Since then, multiple definitions on regionalization have been conceptualized (e.g., Mattli 1999; Katzenstein 2005; Carpenter 2008; Acharya 2012; Söderbaum 2015). The nascent and still relatively undefined body of literature forming comparative regional studies challenges and aims to broaden interpretations related to processes of regionalization regarding the aforementioned regional studies (Sbragia 2008; De Lombaerde *et al.* 2010; Acharya 2012; Mattheis 2017). Amitav Acharya has argued that regionalism cannot be understood as an exclusively “European” or “Western” idea, whether from the historical or contemporary perspective (Acharya 2016: 109). Similarly, he highlights the need to increase knowledge about non-European experiences and processes of

regionalization. At best, this could mean a way out from the reductive universal understanding of EU-centered modelling and a critical approach to its normative and value-based worldviews, opening the path for more multiplex perspectives regarding the historical development of these processes from philosophical-constructivist accounts.

Therefore, Acharya proposes expansion of the concept of regionalization from questions that dominated the post-World War II regional theorizing in order to obtain more space to reflect on the “multiple and global heritage” of regional processes (Acharya 2016: 111-112). Acharya proposes eight expanding points:

1. The Great Powers’<sup>4</sup> spheres of influence, or hegemonic regionalism, such as Germany’s *Mitteleuropa*, Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, the Concert of Europe as a collective form of Great Power hegemony, America’s Cold War-era multilateral alliances in the Third World (the South Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)).
2. Approaches to conflict management, where regionalism is understood more broadly than as just an alternative to the universalism of the United Nations (UN).
3. Expressions of cultural identity and autonomy, such as pan-Americanism, pan-Arabism, pan-Africanism, pan-Asianism, and European identity.
4. A framework for the suppression of nationalism and war through economic and political integration (according to Acharya, only the EU fits in this category).
5. Platforms for advancing decolonization and national liberation, which were significant motivations behind regional processes in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.
6. Sites of resistance to intervention by the Great Powers, which can be adapted especially within the Latin American, Asian, African, and Middle Eastern contexts.
7. Efforts to promote economic development and political stability.
8. Signposts of fragmentation of the global liberal order into competing strategic or economic blocks (Acharya 2016, 111-112).

Before going further with the adoption of the above-mentioned configurations, I would like to add four key elements that are necessary, according to Adrià Albareda and Oriol Barba, to determine the development of sub-regional processes in general, and in the context of North Africa and the Middle East in

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4 Countries that are able to exercise their influence at a global scale.

particular (Albareda and Barba 2011: 7). The regional process in the Maghreb can be defined as a sub-regionalism that integrates institutions, leadership, agenda, and external factors. With regard to the regional processes in the Maghreb from the twentieth century onwards, these four aspects are contemplated within the following separate sections in the context of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Their impacts are reflected in the AMU's processes, emergence, and failure to function efficiently.

Following Acharya's proposals, seven elements were chosen which have been adapted within the textual analysis and combined with the four key elements set out by Albareda and Barba. These are: (1) the Great Powers' spheres of influence; (2) approaches to conflict management; (3) expressions of cultural identity and autonomy; (4) platforms for advancing decolonization and national liberation; (5) sites of resistance to Great Power intervention; (6) efforts to promote economic development and political stability; and (7) signposts of fragmentation of the global liberal order into competing strategic or economic blocks. These were chosen according to their relevance in the Maghreb context. A framework for the suppression of nationalism and war through economic and political integration was excluded because it is only relevant to the EU. Finally, these components were integrated in each section according to their contexts, where they are useful in the analysis. The analysis will start by reflecting on the institutional framework related to the AMU and its member-states in general.

#### **5.4. Institutions and the AMU**

According to Albareda and Barba (2011: 10), institutions that are central to regional cooperation are formal agreements, organizations, bodies, and rules that are composed to maintain the process of cooperation. It is also relevant whether institutionalization takes place from bottom up or top down. Albareda and Barba argue that a "low degree of institutionalization, especially at the first stages, is better in order to achieve tangible results" (Albareda and Barba 2011: 7). The creation of the AMU was in many ways a typical top-down regionalism process, where the major negotiations took place at high-level meetings.

Börzel and Risse (2016: 7) differentiate between regionalism and regionalization. Contrary to what Mitrany's functionalist and Haas's neo-functionalist approaches indicate, regionalism does not necessarily need to be a top-down process. Regionalism can take place from the bottom-up as well, generating a process that Börzel and Risse (2016: 8) call regionalization. The five Maghreb

countries that joined the AMU, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia, were far from being sustainable democracies at the end of the 1980s. They were ruled by more or less authoritarian regimes led by strong leaders, whether they were republics or a monarchy like in Morocco. These polities did not leave much space for the constructive development of civil society.

The AMU institution process started with the setting up of the Inter-Maghreb Commission (IMC) to gather proposals and identify tools that could help with the building of unity (Aghrout and Sutton 1990: 134). The first meeting that gathered the leaders from each member-country (President Chadli Bendjedid of Algeria, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, President Maaouya Ould Did'Ahmed Taya of Mauritania, King Hassan II of Morocco, and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia) took place in Zeralda, Algeria, in June 1988. Algeria made an important concession at the meeting by promising to exclude the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) from the process (Balta 1990: 244). A High Commission was created incorporating five specialized commissions aiming to organize meetings in the capitals of each country in September 1988.

Paul Balta (1990: 244-249) has written about the functioning of the commissions that led to the successful creation of the AMU. The Commission of Finance and Customs held a meeting in Rabat, Morocco, where the discussion concentrated on harmonizing and decreasing customs barriers, financial and customary integration, coordination of finance policies, and ways to fund common Maghrebin action processes (Balta 1990: 244-245). The Commission of Economy held a meeting in Algiers and reflected on ways to decrease the nutrition dependency. The program aimed to develop food security in four steps: free trade zones, harmonization of tariffs, creation of a common market, and harmonization of economic policies. The meeting of the commission related to organic and structural questions took place in Tripoli, Libya, targeting possibilities for coordinated foreign policy conduct and initiating plans to design a common flag, identity cards, and common organizations. The commission also looked at structures within the union through the creation of a council that would involve the heads of state meeting twice a year to take unanimous decisions; an executive body led by the general secretary; a Maghrebin parliament; and a tribunal. The Commission of Culture and Education met in Nouakchott, Mauritania, with the aim of unifying educational systems across the member-countries. The Commission of Social Affairs met in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia, to discuss the free circulation of people within the AMU.

The inaugural meeting of the AMU took place on 15 February 1989 in Marrakech, Morocco, though last-minute differences almost prevented it from happening (Balta 1990: 247-248). The heads of state of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia signed the treaty instituting the Arab Maghreb

Union. The treaty contained further decisions about institutional bodies and the future agenda. The agreed institutional bodies were:

1. the Presidential Council, composed of heads of state and based on unanimous decision-making with the chairmanship rotating every six months;
2. the Council of Foreign Ministers, which would prepare the sessions of the Presidential Council according to points submitted by follow-up committees and specialized ministerial committees;
3. specialized ministerial committees set up by the Presidential Council;
4. a General Secretariat, consisting of the representatives of each member-state functioning under the supervision of the chairman;
5. a Consultative Council, consisting of ten representatives from each member-state, which would hold sessions every year and comment on drafts prepared by the Presidential Council; and
6. a judicial organ, composed of two judges from each state, which would examine conflicts relating to the interpretation and implementation of the treaty.

The creation of the AMU was hailed in multiple research papers and in the media as a success; it was a long-awaited turn in the development of intra-Maghrebin relations. The conflict of Western Sahara was transferred to the aegis of the UN with the promise of the organization of a referendum for the destiny of the Sahrawi people. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) began its peace-keeping operations in 1991 to keep a watch on the ceasefire between the Moroccan forces and the Polisario.

## **5.5. Lack of regional leadership: Intra-political challenges**

Despite the promising start of the AMU, socio-political factors soon froze the project. Decreased energy prices and the liberalization of Algeria's economy under President Bendjedid led to the October Riots of 1988, and after failed democratic reforms, the situation in Algeria led to a political crisis and eventually the civil war of 1992-2000. In 1994, Algeria accused Morocco of hosting Islamic guerrilla groups, and it closed its borders. The conflict in Western Sahara remained at an impasse and the negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario did not go any further.

The treaty instituting the Arab Maghreb Union, signed on 17 February 1989 in Marrakech, Morocco, comprised many statements relating to



initiatives that were supposed to be promoted within the AMU. These elements can be approached through the propositions put forward by Acharya in the context of comparative regionalism. Unlike regional studies often suggests, based on regionalism in Europe which stresses the benefits of cultural and value-based homogeneity, political and socioeconomic factors seem to bypass the common culture and value framework in the Maghreb.

The treaty states, for example, “Having faith in the strong ties based on common history, religion and language that unite the peoples of the Arab Maghreb Union, [...]”

The political disagreements clearly took precedence over common culture and history and was followed by gradual paralysis within the AMU. However, it makes the case interesting because failed regionalism may provide new insights for regionalism studies and help find solutions for further initiatives like the AMU. Acharya (2016: 111-112) delineates approaches to conflict management, where regionalism is understood more broadly than as just an alternative to the universalism of the UN. It is an interesting element within the context of the AMU. The Marrakech treaty talks of peace and stability, saying the AMU aims:

[...] to acquire a specific weight allowing it to make an effective contribution to world balance, to the consolidation of peaceful relations within the international community and to the establishment of security and stability in the world [...].

While the AMU clearly sought to promote peaceful relations in connection with the international community, it also wanted to contribute to the balance of power in the world. While universalism regarding the UN is not mentioned, the conflict of Western Sahara was moved to the UN. What was then meant by “contribution to world balance”? In the context of the Cold War, it meant keeping away from the competition between the US and the Soviet Union, but can the statement be understood within the contemporary context as a desire for a multiplex world order as opposed to the US-led hegemonic liberal world order within Acharya’s “signposts of fragmentation of the global liberal order into competing strategic or economic blocks” (2016: 111-112)? Within comparative regionalism, it is possible to present such questions, not as alternatives to the assumed universalism of the UN, but as phenomena that can seal in multiplex layers at the same time. It is often forgotten that when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948, half the world’s population was living under the yoke of colonial structures. Nevertheless, the AMU treaty adds two interesting paragraphs relating to the self-identification of the Maghreb:

Being inspired by the glorious feats of our ancestors who contributed to the radiance of the Arabo-Islamic civilization and to the enrichment of cultural and intellectual Rebirth which gave the best support to a common struggle for liberty and dignity [...].

And as we stress our adherence to our spiritual values, our historical genuineness, our openness to others and our attachment for the principles of international ethics [...].

Therefore, the AMU treaty clearly emphasizes the genuineness of the member-states' socio-historical culture, and when referring to international ethics, it does not mention the UN or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These formulations fit well with Acharya's formulation (2016: 111-112), where he stresses "expressions of cultural identity and autonomy" related to various pan-movements (pan-Americanism, pan-Arabism, pan-Africanism, and so forth). In addition, the AMU clearly presents itself among "platforms for advancing decolonization and national liberation," when stating:

Being convinced that the advent of [a] unified Arab Maghreb will consolidate the struggle of the Palestinian Arab People for liberation and the recovery of their inalienable national rights [...].

The Maghrebin countries all experienced colonial rule, but bringing up the issue of Palestine was most probably directed at a Middle-Eastern audience and pan-Arabism. Simultaneously, the AMU treaty does not cease to repeat "efforts to promote economic development and political stability," as Acharya (2016: 111-112) puts it in the context of comparative regionalism. From the beginning, the AMU was planned to increase economic integration among the Maghrebin states and homogenize their economic performances:

[...] would reinforce the existing relations and provide them with the appropriate ways and means to gradually proceed toward achieving a more comprehensive integration among themselves [...].

[...] the setting up of common rules embodying the effective solidarity among its components and ensuring their economic and social development [...].

The competition of the two strong regional forces, Algeria and Morocco, nevertheless put an end to the possibility of advancing the objectives drawn up in the treaty. The AMU refused Egypt's membership request in 1994, which could have, according to some political analysts, brought about balance within the larger regionalism in North Africa (Albareda and Barba 2011: 14).

## 5.6. An agenda full of internal and intra-power struggles

Albareda and Barba stress that “economic oriented, technical, practical and progressive cooperation can boost sub-regionalism” (2011: 7). Various themes and issues ought to be discussed among governments and regional institutions (Albareda and Barba 2011: 11). Economic questions also relate to disciplinary perspectives and definitions of concepts and connotations, as Alberta Sbragia (2008: 37) points out, while arguing that economists consider preferential trade agreements (PTAs) to be synonymous with regionalism. The economy plays a significant role in the motivation for the creation of the AMU. However, here, regionalism is understood more widely than just PTAs.

The Maghrebin states struggle with multiple economic challenges. The AMU wanted to achieve a customs union by 1995 and a single market by 2000 (Albareda and Barba 2011: 14). The Maghrebin countries would have benefited from such economic integration, which would have meant the creation of a regional market of over 100 million inhabitants “with an average income [of] about 4000 dollars per capita in nominal terms and about 12000 in purchasing-power-parity terms” (Kireyev *et al.* 2019: vii). According to some sources, the Maghreb loses approximately US\$530 billion every year due to trade restrictions and other legislative barriers (Conan and Schiller 2013: 6). The intra-trade within the Maghreb is one of the weakest in the world (Ait Hamza 2017). According to the latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on the Maghreb: “The share of intra-regional trade is less than 5% of the Maghreb countries’ total trade, substantially lower than in all other regional trading blocs around the world” (Kireyev *et al.* 2019: vii). In the context of macroeconomics, the Maghreb states represent different economic structures. In general, it is possible to depict Algeria and Libya (in turmoil since 2011) as rentier states due to their significant oil and gas resources and the great percentage these reserves add to their total revenue. Morocco and Tunisia have been more dependent on agriculture and tourism. Nevertheless, in recent years, Morocco and Tunisia have been more successful in diversifying their export volumes.

The European Union (EU), the most important single trading partner in the area, has implemented European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) agreements with its southern neighbors in order to foster stability, security, and prosperity (European External Action Service 2016). Unfortunately, these normative actions invariably contain neoliberal economic structural build-up recommendations close to the ideals of the Bretton Woods system. Too often, various Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and liberalization and privatization measures have been destructive for the Third World economies (Harvey 2007). Another important trading partner for the Maghrebin countries is the United States,

which has, among others, free trade agreements with Morocco as well as multiple geopolitical interests in the region.

China has also recently increased its imports and other economic activities in the area (Djallel 2018). Trade relations have witnessed significant progression in recent years, and China's exports in particular have increased, while imports have stayed modest (Lafargue 2018). Since Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Maghreb states have joined the BRI one after another. An important harbor called El Hamdania, near the town of Cherchell, will be constructed in Algeria under the BRI, and it is targeted for completion by 2024 (PortSEurope 2017).

From an institutional point of view, the Maghreb is part of various multilateral institutions such as the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Arab League (AL), the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), the Union for the Mediterranean, and the AMU. Today, in addition to Algerian-Moroccan rivalry, the biggest obstacles for economic integration in the region are the civil war in Libya, civic unrest in Tunisia, and ethnic conflicts in the Sahel area, all of which have an impact on the security of the Maghreb as well. However, can strained regionalism and regionalization speed up more efficient multilateralism? Is it even possible to assume that there exists a correlation between the two in the first place?

Parag Khanna (2016: 5-6) depicts the contemporary world's infrastructure formation from dispersal into connectography. Therefore, processes of regionalization and multilateralism are only dimensions within the global field of action consisting of nodes, where the Great Powers, cities, stateless multinational enterprises, and virtual communities operate. While it seems that regionalism is failing in the Maghreb, the states in the region cannot avoid being integrated into larger connectographies, where borders instigate new meanings, and cooperation, trade, politics, and security are ever less defined by geographical limitations.

A major milestone in the contemporary Maghrebi security environment was the 2011 uprisings, often glossed in mainstream media as "the Arab Spring". These uprisings, spreading from Tunis, raised hopes of democratic change, better governance, and wider political participation, but ended in pseudo-reforms, the continuation of authoritarian governance, and civil wars (Zoubir 2017). In general, it is necessary to approach the Maghreb from a combination of social, economic, and political perspectives that offer possibilities to contemplate societal changes and security challenges more specifically.

While Algeria and Morocco stayed relatively calm during the 2011 uprisings, they both suffer from similar social challenges as the rest of the countries in North Africa: rapid population growth and a "youth bulge," youth unemployment, marginalization, and lack of prospects, oppression, corruption, and

rapid neoliberal economic programs. These factors have been considered as key elements in the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants of the region. In order to develop the Maghrebin societies, there should be redistribution of economic wealth from more equal premises in order to guarantee necessary basic services in health and education.

“The Youth bulge” is a major social challenge which requires urgent coordinated action. About two-thirds of the Maghreb population are under 30 years of. While a young population can be seen in a positive light as a major potential labor force (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007), it simultaneously forms a dangerous breeding ground for marginalization and possible radicalization of the youth (Zoubir 2017). In general, the youth in North Africa suffers from “waithood,” – the time spent waiting to achieve a full state of adulthood through work, securing housing, and establishing a family. Waithood results from demographic pressures, unequally distributed income, static institutions, as well as rigid social norms (Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon 2008).

When the youth is not allowed opportunities to develop themselves professionally and establish themselves socially, they may end up being socially marginalized. Radicalization, migration, terrorism, and criminal activities can be nurtured by this frustration. It is an urgent need for North African countries to engage their youth in decision-making processes through coherent policy-making (Maïche *et al.* 2017). This necessitates the integration of women and the tackling of corruption and nepotism, which are widespread in the area. These premises would enable the bottom-up regionalization that is necessary to achieve cohesive regionalism in the Maghreb. As Darrat and Pennathur (2002) have shown, empirical results further suggest that Maghrebin macroeconomics (especially in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) are integratable, and therefore the failure of the AMU can be traced back to political disputes.

## **5.7. External and foreign interests**

Finally, regionalism cannot be reflected properly without integrating external actors. Albareda and Barba (2011: 7) argue that common external threats can impact positively on sub-regionalism and foster cooperation among states. Therefore, external actors can exert their influence positively or negatively. The AMU treaty includes this clause: “Any aggression directed against one of the member States shall be considered as an aggression against the other member states.”

According to Acharya (2016: 111-112), sites of resistance to Great Power intervention should be stressed as a form of regionalism, and this is especially true of the Maghreb. During the past centuries, the region has witnessed the presence of several spheres of influence. Algeria was colonized by the French for 132 years from 1830 to 1962. Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia were subordinated as French protectorates, while Libya was colonized by Italy, and Western Sahara by Spain. Decolonizing attempts through independence movements to create unity integrated vigorous endeavors of freedom and self-determination within the economic, political, and social spheres (Said 1993: 275, 299). Meanwhile, the former colonial powers strove to limit political, economic, and social latitude and impact to further the continuation of dependency relations through renewed instruments of global governance (Hall 1999: 66; Manzo 2014: 332–333). As Acharya proposes, “platforms for advancing decolonization and national liberation” should also be understood in relation to regionalism (Acharya 2016: 111-112).

Martinez (2006: 6) quotes Roger le Tourneau as saying in the 1960s that:

The Idea of North African unity [...] was initially born as a reaction to French control over the three countries of the Maghreb: before becoming a constructive idea, it manifested itself mainly as a defense reflex, as the sum of a triple common feeling of French domination [...]. The advocates of Maghreb unity will have to be patient and tenacious in order to succeed [...]. Otherwise North Africa will risk going through the same old problems, namely, internal fights, economic and technical stagnation.

Conflicts can take place at four different levels: local, national, regional, and international. Typical societal upheavals are local and national conflicts related to terrorism and internal disputes, such as the recent terrorist attacks in Tunisia, uprisings in the mountainous Rif area in Morocco, continuous civil war in Libya as a result of the invasion by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and political discontent in Algeria. The recent popular uprisings in Algeria could lead to more complex regional settings, while successful peaceful transition of power would enable the strengthening of democracy building and the resultant positive developments. In addition, the ethnic conflict between the Tuareg and the government of Mali has led to a French intervention against extremist Islamist groups benefiting from the power vacuum. More recently, the US has sent military forces to Niger to combat violent Islamist and criminal groups. In 1986, the US bombed the Libyan capital, Tripoli, and the Bab al-Azizia barracks in its suburbs.

At a regional level, the Western Sahara dispute and competition in the Sahel have increased tensions between Algeria and Morocco. France is Morocco's biggest supporter at the international level and especially within the

EU. Terrorist organizations operate simultaneously on a regional and international level, leading to continuous French and US military operations in Libya, thereby engaging international powers in North Africa. At the moment, there does not seem to be much hope for an end to the civil war in Libya as the country hosts various Salafist jihadist groups, brotherhoods, clans, warlords, and other extreme Islamic terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda.

However, in addition to terrorism, migration and climate change should be taken into account as well when considering external actors. Climate change has had an immense impact on the social, economic, and political stability in North Africa because the Maghreb is highly vulnerable to its consequences, as various reports show (Ahmed 2017; Price 2017). Climate change could be a uniting element when its impacts reach the point where cooperation becomes imperative. Migration, on the other hand, has caused serious internal human despair and challenges to the Maghreb states as well as to the EU, and may continue to strengthen radicalization tendencies in the future. Social development in the Maghreb is directly connected to immigration-related issues.

## **5.8. Conclusion**

In this chapter, the factors that prevent the development of sub-regionalization in the Maghreb have been processed within the context of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). The attempt has been to extend the analysis beyond the traditional discipline of regional studies, and to stress the relatively new, but still undefined approach of comparative regional studies that adapts context-related elements more flexibly within the purview of analysis. Disconnecting from traditional regional studies, often developed within specific European contexts, can enable deeper theoretical analysis of socioeconomic processes in the non-European world.

Political problems seem able to easily override the cultural homogeneity that prevails in the Maghreb. In complete contrast to the Middle-Eastern states, which include various ethnic and religious communities, the Maghreb countries have a clear majority of Sunni Muslims and only a few competing identities, such as the cultural Amazighity and Islamism, that instigate identity political discrepancies within the states. Therefore, cultural cohesiveness, as a factor, does not seem strong enough to overcome the political disputes and lead to successful sub-regionalization.

Secondly, does the failed regionalism in North Africa promote more efficient multilateralism? To argue that regionalism and multilateralism have a systematic correlation with each other is beyond this study. It is under continuous debate whether, as Jagdish Bhagwati has reflected, the relationship between regionalism and multilateralism leads to “building blocs” or whether it serves as “stumbling blocs” (Bhagwati 1991). However, this case study strengthens the assumption that multilateralism seems to fulfill the empty space left by failed regionalism in the Maghreb. Failed processes of regionalism increase our knowledge regarding regionalization and produce new material for further investigations.

The Maghreb states are connected to various multilateral processes (e.g., the African Union, Arab League, Union for the Mediterranean), where their political disagreements are able to be overlooked in order to achieve other interests within a larger multilateral context. This does not mean that such dissensions completely disappear, as the struggle within the African Union has recently showed in the context of Western Sahara. Nevertheless, Morocco’s rejoining of the African Union after 33 years indicates that individual states require platforms to advance their interests, especially when regional settings are paralyzed. Algeria and Morocco have similarly been active in developing the Union of the Mediterranean, which opens possibilities for negotiating political, economic, and security related issues as well.

Meanwhile, the achievement of national socioeconomic self-determination dating back to decolonizing processes continues to solidify in the Maghreb, although national borders are helpless to prevent international phenomena such as mobility, climate change, and terrorism and criminal activities. It seems that weak sub-regionalism forces the Maghreb states to search for partners from the outside. Traditionally, EU states, and more recently the US, have been external superpowers that maintained leverage in the Maghreb, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. France and the US maintained close relations, especially with Morocco and Tunisia, while Algeria, though not excluded, sustained a more complex state of affairs with these external powers. Libya, on the other hand, was treated as an outcast.

Lately, Algeria has been eager to develop its relations with China and has made a move to be connected to the China-led BRI. This project reflects well the contemporary multiplex world order, which integrates elements of multi-layered connectivity and forms of processes of production that challenge the traditional role of states as well as the institutions established after World War II. Other Maghreb states also want to participate in the Chinese initiative, which emphasizes the importance of supply chains even further.

In November 2018, Morocco showed through political statements its will to improve relations with Algeria. Algeria’s response initiated the desire to



relaunch the AMU. In December 2018, Morocco proposed hosting the seventh meeting of the AMU in Morocco in 2019. The future will show where these latest proposals will lead.

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# Chapter 6

## Coping with the changing world order: The case of Russia<sup>1</sup>

**E. B. Mikhaylenko**

*Department of International Relations, Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia*

**I. M. Adami**

*Department of International Relations, Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia*

### **Abstract**

The growth and overlap of interregional projects around the world challenge the Russian political elite. In its turn, Russia does not cease to generate its own projects of regional and interregional importance. In the Russian political community, the ability to put forward and promote large geopolitical or geo-economic projects has always been considered one of the main features of a great power (Tsvetov 2017). Now the Great Eurasian Partnership (GEP) project has become a new construct to be explored by the Russian expert community. Putin first introduced that concept in the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on 3 December 2015. Almost three years after the first report on the project, the public space still has not seen a policy document or a public remark at any high level, which describes specifically the substance of or at least a clear format for this new idea. A special project, the Agenda for Eurasia was created with the aim of creating a pool of ideas within the framework of the Valdai Discussion Club. This project is interesting because it demonstrates the search for a new paradigm of region-building and interregion-building in Eurasia.

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Although such a paradigm has not yet been conceptualized, some of its outlines can be identified. Firstly, the project demonstrates a deep theoretical elaboration of modern approaches to region-building, including the European experience, with the aim of forming a concept that “will not be based on copying or striving to ‘cling’ to the East or the West, but on our own ideas and visions” (Bordachev 2017f). Secondly, it is an attempt to learn from the mistakes made in previous region-building exercises in Eurasia and in the post-Soviet space. Thirdly, there is an analysis of the opportunity to utilize “a unique emerging international environment in Eurasia that eliminates the possibility and necessity of an unquestionable hegemon’s arrival” (Bordachev 2017a). Nevertheless, the region’s uniqueness and long history are often obstacles to understanding commonality and shared values. The overarching purpose of the study presented in this chapter was to answer the question: what is the GEP? Having placed the GEP within different theoretical frameworks of region-building as a first-generation hybrid type, the study has identified the project’s main features and challenges according to the Valdai Club’s experts and suggested that Russia should disaggregate its interregional aspirations into steps and meanwhile prioritize the Eurasian Economic Union as a base for the creation of the GEP.

**Keywords:** Greater Eurasian Partnership, Interregionalism, Russia, China, Eurasia

## 6.1. Introduction

The multiplying and overlapping regional and interregional projects around the world are a challenge for the Russian political elite. In its turn, Russia does not cease to generate projects of regional and interregional importance. Now the Great Eurasian Partnership (GEP) project has become a new construct to be explored by the Russian expert community.

The idea of forming the Great Eurasian Partnership was first announced in the President’s Address to the Federal Assembly on 3 December 2015. During 2016-2018, at various venues and meetings, Russian Federation President Vladimir V. Putin has actively used the concept of the Great Eurasian Partnership, but there is still little clarity about how and with whom this partnership will be built.

We have identified three main strands of theorizing regarding the GEP, within both Russian and foreign discourse. Initially, the GEP was seen as a

project that would link the activities of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Then the GEP was associated with the turn of the Russian Federation to the East: a rapprochement of Russia with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes an explanation of the GEP initiative with the idea of the possibility of linking that partnership with the BRI for international cooperation (Tsvetov 2017; Li 2018; Timofeev, Lissovolik, and Filippova 2017; Lukin 2019).

The second interpretation includes the idea of the Eurasian Economic Partnership as a multilateral institution, starting with a non-preferential Russian-Chinese trade and economic agreement. Subsequently, other countries could participate in this project. It could start with the EAEU countries and then include all of Greater Eurasia. A group of scientists of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under Putin has prepared an analytical framing of the role of the EAEU in the regional architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region (APR). The GEP is considered to be a project aimed at developing trade and economic relations based on the EAEU in the Asia-Pacific Region (Aliiev et al. 2018). The number of papers on the GEP as a multilateral project including all institutes in Eurasia led by Russia is seeing a steady rise (Novikov 2018; Alimov 2018).

The third cluster of ideas includes papers on the role of the Russian Federation in constructing a new regional order in Eurasia, which would compete in some way with the European Union (EU). In the article, “Comprehensive Eurasian Partnership,” Entin and Entina try to prove the viability of the project, its relevance, and historical roots (Entin and Entina 2016). Petrovsky (2017) continues the analysis of the concept, determining the interests and possibilities of the Russian Federation in Eurasia. Some works demonstrate the competition between the EU and the EAEU in the shared neighborhood (Korosteleva 2016; Delcour 2015).

Examining the work of some foreign experts (Zhao 2017; Lewis 2018) who have attempted to identify the Russian aims and ability to build the GEP, we can summarize several challenges for researchers. The first challenge is the terms and abbreviations used to describe the GEP in the official discourse; Russian president Vladimir Putin, and Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov, as well as several researchers, all use distinctly different terms: the All-GEP (Comprehensive Greater Eurasian Partnership), GEP (Greater Eurasian Partnership), and the IEP (Eurasian Partnership Initiative). Secondly, from our point of view, there are at least three approaches which have different interpretations, but are in many cases used as synonymous: Greater Eurasia, Greater Eurasian Partnership, and the modern interpretation of Eurasianism. Third, there is no common shared understanding of the type of integration that is desired. Most politicians and experts do not specify the mechanisms and



tools for its construction. There is no understanding of what role the EAEU or the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) would be expected to play in this “multilevel” or “networking” type of integration. Finally, the number and list of participants of the GEP is constantly changing in both official documents and analytical papers.

Since there is no official program or strategy document describing this partnership, all analyses are aimed at guessing or predicting what Putin’s government plans to build in Eurasia. It is not clear from Putin’s speeches what regional project would form the basis for the development of interregional ties – the SCO, the EAEU, or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The areas of cooperation are not obvious. Which countries and regions will be part of this project? On what principles will it be built? Which tools for building interregional relations will be used? The ideological<sup>2</sup> component of the project is not clear either, and that lack of ideological clarity further obscures the previous questions. The answer to *why* Russia is interested in championing a project such as the GEP is what would guide any efforts to answer them.

Given the fact that the hard interests Russia may have while pushing for the GEP remain arcane, these questions, compounded, demand herculean efforts to answer. In this chapter, therefore, we start breaking ground towards organizing the valuable though scattered thoughts of experts directly involved with the GEP vis-à-vis the collected academic knowledge in terms of region-building. The research question we seek to answer is: what is the GEP? In order to do that, first, we must shed light on the main features and challenges to the GEP according to the expertise of the Valdai Discussion Club. To account for the obstacles posed by the abovementioned ideological void, we shall depart from the basic assumption that Russia is interested in a position of leadership within the emerging world order. This assumption was formulated borrowing from Amitav Acharya, who says, “[...] the growing incidence of inter-regionalism, may introduce a healthy diversity and leadership into the emerging world order instead of the singular dominance of American power or the EU’s legalistic and centralized model of cooperation” (2014: 105).

## 6.2. Research design

The term Greater Eurasian Partnership is a relatively new term, and expert discussions about how such a partnership should develop are still taking place.

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<sup>2</sup> Referring, herein, strictly to the presence of a guiding theory of regionalism.

With the aim of creating a pool of ideas within the framework of the Valdai Discussion Club (VDC),<sup>3</sup> a special project, Agenda for Eurasia,<sup>4</sup> was created. This project is interesting because it demonstrates the search for a new paradigm of region-building and interregion-building in Eurasia. There is no conceptualized paradigm yet, but some of its outlines can be identified.

The VDC is an expert center that conducts research for the government of the Russian Federation, and President Putin regularly participates in its meetings. The VDC was established in 2004. It is named after Lake Valdai, which is located close to Veliky Novgorod, where the club's first meeting took place. The VDC aims to promote dialogue between Russian and international intellectual elites, and to deliver independent objective scholarly analyses of political, economic, and social developments in Russia and the world. The VDC is a major expert site where Russian and foreign experts meet. It is important to note that representatives of the government of the Russian Federation, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, attend the events of the VDC. Every year special sessions are held in which the President participates. From our point of view, the publications of the VDC are important for understanding modern trends in the domestic and foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

We have therefore decided to analyze how the experts of this center assess the GEP. To consider the GEP as a project is interesting, as it demonstrates the search for a new paradigm of region-building and interregion-building in Eurasia. We have identified several important issues that are important for understanding the GEP. Firstly, we attempted to define the concepts that VDC representatives operate on, and we used quantitative analysis to find out the main approaches and concepts. Secondly, it is necessary to define what this partnership is per se, and to do so, we sought to develop criteria for analysis using theories of interregionalism.

This study has limitations. An important limitation is that the GEP is not built yet and is not defined in any way within the framework of official discourse, so our research is also an attempt to determine what the Greater Eurasian Partnership is. Secondly, the analytical and expert communities of the Russian Federation do not, for the most part, produce independent expert research; they practice self-censorship and thus produce materials that echo the official discourse. Thirdly, the international political and economic situations are such that Russia is a country that has been under political and economic sanctions since 2014, which objectively makes it difficult to build any global and interregional projects. Thus, this study is an attempt to analyze the GEP

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3 Valdai Club Foundation. Retrieved 10 October 2018 (<http://valdaiclub.com/about/valdai/>).

4 Agenda for Eurasia. Retrieved 10 October 2018 (<http://valdaiclub.com/special/agenda-eurasia/>).

via theoretical approaches of interregionalism and it aims to uncover the project's problems.

Throughout this work, the overarching research tasks were: (1) to place the GEP within the suggested framework of different theories of interregionalism; (2) to determine the challenges to the building of the GEP according to expert discourse and the aforementioned framework, and keeping in mind the results of previous tasks; and (3) to provide recommendations on how Russia can realize the GEP. In the framework of this research, the VDC's expert opinions, event protocols, and reports concerning the Agenda for Eurasia from 2016 to 2018 were analyzed qualitatively. Additionally, given the larger number of texts from Timofei Bordachev, a software-assisted quantitative analysis<sup>5</sup> was performed to provide a bird's-eye view of the material.

The structure goes as follows. In the first part of this article, we lay down the theoretical lens through which the material collected ought to be analyzed. The second part consists of a short description of the quantitative methods and their simplified results. In the third part, which presents the preliminary research outcomes, we synthesize the quantitative and qualitative results and discuss our findings. The conclusion summarizes the findings, the discussion, and points out the challenges to cohesion regarding the different interpretations of the GEP.

### 6.2.1. *Interregionalism from a theoretical perspective*

Interregionalism, from a theoretical point of view, is a complex and controversial approach. Hänggi, Roloff, and Ruland (2006: 4), analyzing the development of interregionalism, note that in the 1990s, an active study of various forms of interregional relations began: mega-regionalism, trans-regionalism, trans-continentalism, inter-continentalism, and pan-regionalism, among others. Nevertheless, there is still no unambiguous understanding of the role that interregionalism plays in the system of international relations.

In the mid-2000s, numerous papers were devoted to the new phenomenon of interregionalism; seminal works include *Interregionalism and the System of*

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5 The general corpus is composed of 15 texts. Each text was coded individually with the variables pertinent to the research, such as date and subject. The authors understand the limitations posed by the scarce data to the value of the statistics presented in the analysis. Our ultimate purpose of utilizing such means of data-processing was not to provide precise statistical figures, but to illustrate the different ideas exposed in the corpus and their relation to each other within the text itself.

*International Relations* (Hänggi et al. 2006) and *The European Union as a Global Player* (Söderbaum and Van Langenhove 2006). Influenced by these works, Robles (2008) wrote on *The Asia-Europe Meeting*, and Lombarde and Schultz's book (2009), *The EU and World Regionalism - The Makability of Regions in the 21st Century*, was devoted to the policy of the EU and global regionalism. Later, several works on the changes in the contemporary world system and the role of the EU in global governance were published. *Interregionalism and the European Union* by Telò, Fawcett, and Ponjaert (2015) and *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration and Conflict Resolution* by Diez and Tocci (2017) raised the issue of the role of the EU in the changing world, of the instruments of the EU's foreign policy, and the role of the EU in existing international conflicts. Interregionalism as a theoretical approach has entered the scientific discourse and now looks beyond the activities of the EU.

Interregionalism as a new phenomenon has its own history, dynamics, and peculiarities. Soderbaum and Van Langenhove (2006), in the introduction to their book, *The EU as a Global Player*, offer a theory of three generations of the development of interregionalism. They abandon the evolutionary theory of the development of interregionalism, as it was in the case of the theories of regionalism: old regionalism, new regionalism, etc. They introduce three generations of interregionalism, making it possible to showcase the coexistence of different types of interregional relationships. The first generation of interregionalism is defined as the building of interregional ties in a very limited range of tasks, primarily trade relations. The second generation of interregionalism is more complex, comprehensive, and has various forms of integration, which include political, social, and cultural aspects. A special feature of the third generation is the active outside-regional activity of the region. The region begins to strive for the formation of global international regimes, actively operates in relation to other regions, and cooperates with countries and other actors around the world. Another distinguishing feature of the third generation of interregionalism is its inclusion in solving problems outside its own region and concluding a growing number of agreements and treaties. The EU, according to Soderbaum and Van Langenhove, is an example of the second generation of interregionalism, but it can now be said that the EU is becoming an increasingly important actor in resolving issues outside its own region.

The ideological dispute over whether interregionalism is a derivative phenomenon from European regionalism as well as whether regionalism is a European phenomenon is still going on. In *The End of the American World Order* (2014), Acharya offers the concept of "regional worlds," which goes in parallel with theories of the "new regionalism." Since the theories of the new regionalism are part of the overall neoliberal approach, Acharya presupposes the emergence of regions outside the context of hegemonic stability, without

explicit hegemons, as an answer to local challenges. From Acharya's point of view, interregionalism is an important element of the balance between regionalism and universalism. Even though the EU is a brand of regionalism and many countries and regions emulate its experience and practice, it is impossible to apply this experience unequivocally in different regions. Emerging powers contribute to the formation of the world of regions.

The inefficiency of the "one-size-fits-all approach" becomes obvious. In *Interregionalism and the European Union* (2015), Telò, Fawcett, and Ponjaert raise the question of what is the current practice of regionalism and interregionalism. Fawcett derives three formulas for building regionalism and interregionalism. The first option, orthodox, involves the construction of regional and interregional relationships based on the flagship experience of the EU. The second is a revisionist option, which questions EU experience and emphasizes the role of other actors and models of region-building. The third model is post-revisionist, which is a synthesis of the previous two options, namely the recognition of the role of the EU as a model of integration, its influence and role in the formation of regions outside Europe, but also the recognition of the importance of other projects, the recognition that the EU is one of many variants of regionalism (Telò et al. 2015: 47-49).

In a broad sense, interregionalism can be understood as institutionalized multilateral relations between one regional group (region) and another group or a country belonging to another region. Since the relations between two regions are inherently bilateral, as a concept, interregionalism is close to bilateralism. Nevertheless, if we consider interregionalism as a derivative of regionalism, then interregionalism has several distinctive characteristics.

Firstly, even though interregionalism is a new and independent phenomenon, it cannot be thoroughly considered outside the context of regionalism. Each region, when building its interregional and trans-regional relations, comes to the necessity of choosing its own model for building these relations. In the case of the EU, one could refer to interregionalism driven by the strong economies of the world, and in the case of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and BRICS (the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping), interregionalism becomes the practice of growing economies and emerging powers.

Secondly, the region initiating interregional relations can have specific reasons for doing so. Aggarwal and Fogarty (2004) identify three factors that condition the building of interregional relations: (1) the continued globalization of the world economy; (2) further uncertainty surrounding the multilateral process of cooperation in the World Trade Organization (WTO); and (3) the need to build rules for conducting international commercial relations (economic logic). The authors take the first two assumptions as given factors and

elaborate on the third by examining cases of EU-region relations and panning them out with combined pre-set theoretical hypotheses, each focusing on their respective theory's strong points, in order to unveil the possible predominance of a certain logic to interregionalism.

A number of experts note that in the European case, interregional construction in itself is a variant of the EU's claim to a global status. A changing world with obscure contours pushes Europe to seek its own place in the world (Baert, Scaramagli, and Soderbaum 2014).

Thirdly, interregional relations have a combination of classical two-sided forms (bilateral) and multilateral asymmetric variants. For example, Hänggi (2000) points out that modern international relations have different variants of interregional ties, which can be empirically divided into three groups: relations between regional groups ("old" interregionalism); bilateral regional or transnational agreements (for example, agreements within the framework of the three world economic regions – Europe, America, Asia); and hybrid relations (between regional groups and individual countries or actors, like EU-China). From the theoretical point of view, Hänggi proposes to analyze interregional relations through a triad of theoretical approaches in international relations: realism, the liberal-institutional school, and social constructivism. In this study, we have followed the classification formulated by Baert, Scaramagli, and Söderbaum (2014), who sum up approaches to interregionalism and identify three types of interregionalism: pure interregionalism (institutionalized relationships between two regions), trans-interregionalism (narrow intergovernmental relationships, that may include the non-governmental organizations of two regions), and quasi-interregionalism (the region and country from another region).

Fourth, the shape of interregionalism depends on the shape of the competing interregional and regional systems and structures, which are perceived as external challenges or threats. Some forms of interregional relations can have a different internal structure.

Fifth, according to the principle of construction, interregional relations can be built on the EU model or, conversely, using the revisionist approach, according to the principle of searching for one's own model.

Finally, interregionalism requires large internal resources, not just ambitions and aspirations. Exiting the region beyond its region can trigger a counter-reaction from representatives of neighboring regions. For growing economies, it is difficult to reach an interregional level because they have limits within the framework of their regional strategies and economic contexts (Acharya 2014: 85-86). There is a gap between global status aspirations and regional legitimacy. Acharya (2014: 102) argues that for the emerging powers, there is always the temptation to "leapfrog" their unglamorous neighborhood

to pursue the global glitz and prestige that membership in BRICS and the Group of Twenty (G20) brings. And this is not a problem for only developing countries. It can be argued that the EU's global ambitions have also adversely affected the EU's domestic policy over the past five years.

Assuming that interregionalism is the product of regionalism, regions and/or builders of the region are compelled to simultaneously build up internal regional ties and go beyond their region, meeting on their way both internal challenges and the external ambitions of neighboring regions. The authors of most papers and books do not question the role of the EU in the formation of regional processes; nevertheless, the tools and forms of regional construction outside Europe are still raising questions. Russia, claiming global status, continues to search for models and instruments of regional construction in Eurasia and, at the same time, looks for variants of interregional relations. As a complex theoretical approach, interregionalism gives us the criteria for further analyses of the GEP, and in this next section, we will try to identify the boundaries of the GEP within the discourse produced by the VDC, and, furthermore, characterize the main discursive realms, individually examined keeping in mind the theoretical background discussed above.

### *6.2.2. A bird's-eye view of the VDC's GEP discourse*

This section of the article consists of a software analysis, which, despite its limited scope and data, was performed to provide a bird's-eye view of the VDC's expert discourse specifically about the GEP, a perspective we deemed necessary to understand the overarching ideas present in the formation of the Agenda for Eurasia. The first criterion for selection required that the text should treat the broader subject of regionalism, and the second criterion, that the text's focus be Eurasia. Both criteria narrowed down the prospective corpus's composition to 15 opinion columns by Timofei Bordachev, which spanned the period from 2016 to 2018. The results as presented in this article were manually simplified.

#### *Software analysis*

To process the data of the present study, the software IRaMuTeQ<sup>6</sup> was used to analyze expert opinions from the VDC. IRaMuTeQ is a free statistical software

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6 IRaMuTeQ stands for 'R Interface for Multidimensional analysis of Texts and Questionnaire' (<http://www.iramuteq.org/>) and is a "visual interface" based on the R statistical software and on Python language.

used to describe and analyze textual corpora. The software provides five types of data-processing: classic text statistics; analyses of similarities; analyses of specificities; word clouds; and descending hierarchical analysis (DHA).<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this research, only DHA was used,<sup>8</sup> as we seek to understand the different linguistic clusters composing the discourse produced by the VDC experts and their relation to the underlying conceptual discourses of Russia’s regional policy. The DHA is a method of analysis that identifies vocabularies or semantic clusters within different text segments not by measuring word frequency, but examining their relevance in relation to other words. The clusters are then organized hierarchically in terms of their overall predominance and proximity to one another. The names of the clusters and the following discussion of the results reflect the theoretical background and interpretation of the authors.

*Descending hierarchical analysis: Results and conclusions*

The software fragmented the bulk of the texts into 802 text segments (TSs), out of which 702 (87.53%) were divided into two main classifications. The first main classification was “Between Two Worlds”, composed of 525 TSs (74.78%). This was divided into two subgroups: “European Experience,” composed of 216 TSs (30.77%), and “Pivot to the East,” composed of 309 TSs (44%). “Pivot to the East” was further divided into “Eurasian Curse” and “China-Russia Discourse.” The second main classification, and the more distant semantic cluster, was “Trade as the Foundation”, composed of 177 TSs (25.21%).

TABLE 1. Descendent Hierarchical Classification of Bordachev’s Agenda for Eurasia texts.

"Between two Worlds"						"Trade as the Foundation"	
"European Experience"		"Pivot to the East"					
		"Eurasian Curse"		"China-Russia Discourse"			
word	chi-square*	word	chi-square*	word	chi-square*	word	chi-square*
nation	43.26*	asia	66.63*	alliance	52.68*	trade	124.09*
european	39.13*	russia	39.25*	war	34.06*	investment	77.12*
eu	33.70*	india	38.45*	hegemon	27.14*	eaeu	49.59*
experience	31.59*	china	29.26*	nature	27.13*	agreement	45.82*
benefit	31.28*	neighbor	26.32*	moscow	24.09*	market	44.77*
crisis	30.0*	presence	23.96*	beijing	24.09*	project	44.07*
study	18.97*	east	21.69*	rapprochement	21.60*	partnership	38.14*
problem	18.72*	eurasia	19.43*	nato	21.60*	non_tariff	33.15*
current	18.03*	conflict	17.01*	situation	19.25*	liberalization	30.09*

7 Max Reinert originally developed the method in the software ALCESTE, and he referred to the vocabularies or semantic clusters as “Lexical worlds”; for more detailed information on the intricacies of this method, see Reinert (1993) and Beaudouin (2016).

8 The software analysis is not considered as a “method” of the research, only as a means to process data.



As observed in Table 1,<sup>9</sup> the first cluster (“Between Two Worlds”) illustrates the duality within the philosophical discourse with regard to both the weight of the EU’s regionalism and interregionalism experience in Russian expert discourse, and to the structural implications Russia must deal with in Central Asia, all the while drawing elements from the “comprehensive partnership” with China. In the first subdivision of the first cluster (“European Experience”), Bordachev builds on the European experience in terms of both the crisis it has been enduring in the past years and their integration model. The second subdivision of the first cluster (“Pivot to the East”) is further fragmented, as it represents the broader structural discourse in Asia. The sub-cluster (“Eurasian Curse”) illustrates the discourse string in which the political game between major players such as China, Russia, India, Iran, and Pakistan brings both opportunities and challenges to Eurasian integration. The second sub-cluster (“China-Russia Discourse”) shows the relevance and delicacy of the thread linking Russia and China, a pragmatic relationship upon which the discursive perspective has seen shifts from unprecedented rapprochement to a sober, contextually “restrained” alliance. Overall, while this information is certainly limited, it suggests two seemingly antagonistic, though self-reinforcing discursive strings. The first indicates that the better part (roughly 75%) of the materials from the Agenda for Eurasia written by Bordachev is dedicated to a philosophical and structural perspective, rather than to an objective and functional approach. The latter is found in the second string portrayed by the adjacent main cluster (“Trade as the Foundation”), which depicts the practical/functional discourse. Here the emphasis lies in the strategic importance of different trade and investment initiatives in the Eurasian region, the intersecting regional platforms and the interregional potential brought by these projects, and the challenges posed by bilateral non-tariff barriers to regional trade liberalization.

### 6.3. Preliminary outcomes of the research

Interregionalism is a multidimensional, complex, evolving, and simultaneously changing phenomenon, and as a theoretical approach, it is a set of options and tools for building a regional and interregional relationship. Applying criteria from interregional approaches, the Greater Eurasian Partnership can be

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<sup>9</sup> The Chi-square value indicates the relevance of the association between a word and its respective cluster: all the words present in the table received a P value of < 0,0001, which represents the probability of random association.

identified as an interregional project with its own features. We suppose that the GEP is an interregional project, and so we must identify its main features.

The publications by the VDC experts were analyzed, and the quantitative analysis was run to provide a broader understanding of the expert discourse. It was then juxtaposed with a qualitative analysis of individual texts, with the aim of understanding what the GEP represents from the perspective of interregionalism. Several questions guided the former step, among them: what regional institution is to be the basis for building interregional relations? What are the motives for creating this interregional project? What type of interregionalism is expected? And what are the project's internal structure, ideology, and resources?

Because the creation of projects in Eurasia is not an entirely new phenomenon in Russian politics, there is confusion regarding concepts and terms. In the framework of this study, we need to determine whether the terms "Greater Eurasian Partnership" and "Greater Eurasia" are synonymous in the Russian discourse. Reading the perspectives of Diesen (2017) and Luzyanin (2018), one could suggest that these terms are not being used interchangeably. From our point of view, these are different terms: they have different etymologies and theoretical backgrounds.

The term "Greater Eurasia" is usually used in theoretical discourse as a geopolitical and spatial concept, which is an alternative to the concept of "Greater Europe". It is usually used in the context of building a macro-region in Eurasia, which includes regional institutions in the territory of Eurasia, in which Russia acts as one of the leaders. The term "Great Eurasian Partnership" was introduced in 2015, to be used in opposition to the concepts of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). In this research, we will consider the GEP as a specific regional/interregional project, and Greater Eurasia as the place for its implementation.

The theoretical basis for building the Greater Eurasian Partnership consists of both classical schools (realism, geopolitics) and relatively new approaches (geo-economics, macro-regionalism). It is interesting that representatives of the VDC do not use theories of interregionalism. Perhaps this is because interregionalism is associated with the European integration theories. A closer look at the contents of the cluster, "Between Two Worlds," has allowed us to see the difficulties present in the predominant Eurasia discourse of the VDC. On one hand, we've got the "European Experience" cluster indicating that in terms of the crisis it has been enduring in the past years, Europe's integration model is, in fact, a model to be followed, but not in a positive sense, as the VDC representatives propose to abandon the EU experience. In their perception, EU integration has had many problems and negative outcomes. As Bordachev

(2017f) summarizes: “Current EU developments are an incentive for studying EU experience and reflecting on how to avoid their mistakes.” On the other hand, the sub-cluster “China-Russia Discourse,” illustrates the pragmatic relationship between the two being instrumentalized. However, from 2016 to the beginning of 2018, skepticism has corrupted the original optimism of this discursive string, producing shifts from unprecedented rapprochement to a sober and contextually “restrained” alliance.

These pendular motions in discourse would indicate that the main take-away would be to search for our own concept of building the GEP. Nevertheless, there is a reluctance to use the traditional Eurasianism theories, which, according to experts, cause more problems for the construction of the GEP than help understand what Eurasian integration is. Bordachev (2017c) understands the “Eurasian Curse” as “its inability to identify itself as a single entity. [...] in the absence of a single basis of values, the ideologists of Eurasianism tend to focus on single institutions, therefore trying to repeat the path of the European unification.”

The “Eurasian Curse” cluster has illustrated the discourse string where the political game between major players such as China, Russia, India, Iran, and Pakistan brings both opportunities and challenges to Eurasian integration. New projects in Eurasia should not emulate Western (European) experience. A new project “will be based on our own ideas and views rather than on copying, or the wish to ‘cling’ to the East or the West” (Bordachev 2017d). It seems that the search for a theoretical approach is still going on. Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear what the authors understand by geo-economics or what theories will be applied in the construction of a macro-region in Eurasia.

Assuming that the motives for the creation of the GEP are the ambitions and claims of the Russian Federation for global status, the “development of a new Russian foreign policy narrative” (Bordachev 2017d) seems to be underway. Bordachev (2017b) also maintains that “the political events of the past few years give hope that Russia has shed its ambivalence and now sees itself as an independent development center rather than the periphery of Europe or Asia.” Russia needs to traverse the same road taken by European countries such as Germany or France did for the sake of joint development and peace in the late years of the twentieth century. Leadership ambitions lie at the core of all projects initiated by Russia, nevertheless it seems that there is a shift now from leadership to a balancing model.

Which regional institutes could become the basis for a new project? Experts of the VDC discussing Greater Eurasia and the GEP say two organizations could be in the running: the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). According to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov (2017), “Russia relies on the EAEU and on this

basis it is ready to establish integration economic ties with the SCO and ASEAN countries.” Morgulov’s words perfectly depict our cluster “Trade as the Foundation,” which in its turn represents the practical/functional discourse. When the discussions include the specific tools for building interregional ties, experts address the EAEU. In general, this suggests that for the GEP to materialize, as also any attempt at regionalism in Eurasia, it should be built simultaneously within and upon several projects – SCO, EAEU, or the EAEU’s confluence with the Chinese BRI, etc. Bordachev says Russia cannot rely on only one project. This is because of the strategic importance of the different trade and investment initiatives in the Eurasian region, the intersecting regional platforms, and the interregional potential brought by these projects.

The interregionalism of the GEP is considered to be of a hybrid type: the EAEU can have agreements with other institutions (ASEAN, EU) as well as with individual states (Iran, India, China, Egypt, etc.). It is the first generation of interregionalism. Morgulov (2017) says that it is not only about “economic cooperation, but also about non-tariff regulation, elimination of administrative barriers, simplification of trade terms [...]” Morgulov (2017) adds, “In all these issues there is progress with China, but the door to participation is open to all, including the EU countries.”

This means that the mega-regional international community created and operating in this framework can do a better job as far as democracy and sustainability are concerned (Bordachev 2017a). According to Bordachev, any projects in Eurasia should be built on a different model from the Western model of building regional ties based on the principles of democracy, on a non-hegemonic basis.

The non-hegemonic model for building the GEP is supported by the specific role of China in Eurasia and the GEP. According to the quantitative analysis of the present study, China is second only to Russia in terms of noun frequency, with 210 mentions. Since 2016, there has been a shift from the “rapprochement” idea (Bordachev 2016a), which includes economic integration and political or military alliance-building (Bordachev 2016b), and more pragmatic or even skeptical approaches to the Russia-China relationship, which suggests that there is no hurry to formalize their allied relations at this historical stage (Bordachev 2017e). A great part of the publications is devoted to the bilateral relationship between Russia and China, but although China has great significance within the framework of interregional cooperation, it is not the only one there. Nevertheless, Bystritskiy (2018) concludes that Russia and China still have several questions to resolve.

One of them, in keeping with the direction of our research, could be: how can the GEP be realized in an effective manner? Most of the works of the VCD do not provide an answer to this question, but they indicate the problems that

exist within the framework of the construction of a Greater Eurasia. First on the list of problems is the “European Curse,” which denotes the long history of relations between Russia and Europe, attempts to build common institutions, and reliance on the West-centric world order. The authors say quite definitely that there is a need to search for new models and partners. Secondly, the “Eurasian Curse,” which is defined as Russia’s lack of understanding of its regional identity. The history and philosophy of Eurasianism are ineffective at the present stage. There is a global problem of determining what Eurasia is, conceptually and territorially. Thirdly, the regional institutions, on the basis of which efforts are being made to build a mega-region, according to the authors, do not work effectively and have many internal problems. Finally, the issue of resources – human, financial, political, symbolic – remains relevant. From a financial and economic point of view, Russia loses both China and the EU. The trade turnover between Central Asia and China is higher than that between Central Asia and the Russian Federation. The sanctions policy of the West functionally restrains Russia’s capacity to build economic relations. The policy of a besieged fortress inside the Russian Federation is not an attractive symbolic model for partner countries in post-Soviet Eurasia. The Greater Eurasian Partnership is one of the concepts of region-building that Russia champions, but it is a concept that is still evolving; its mention in political utterances remains undefined; and even documents containing at least declarations in its favor are few and far between.

#### **6.4. Conclusion**

Over the course of the study, we have tried to identify what the GEP is. We have observed the VDC authors acknowledge the weakness of contemporary regional institutions in Eurasia (such as the SCO and EAEU) as well as Russia’s lack of adequate resources to fulfill its ambitious Eurasian agenda. But along with these acknowledgments, there have been constant affirmations about the need to build an effective space in which Russia will be able to realize its potential. Our quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate that the GEP is an interregional project aimed at building a mega-region in Greater Eurasia. It should, therefore, be built under the institutional auspices of the EAEU, and has to be an umbrella project which would include organizations in which Russia participates (such as the SCO or BRICS) and organizations outside of post-Soviet Eurasia (such as ASEAN and the EU). Within the proposed theoretical framework, the GEP project is identified as a hybrid type,

which means it could include both bilateral agreements between organizations, and agreements between organizations and countries from another region or organization. The analyzed materials also indicate that the GEP should have as a base financial/trade agreements between all sides, as per the first generation type of interregionalism. Our results also hint that ideologically and theoretically, the concept of the GEP is being driven away from the Western model, which is considered ineffective by Bordachev, and taking a form that precedes its theoretical foundations.

At the beginning of this study, we defined several limitations that our research had from the start, such as the lack of an official concept of the GEP, the self-censorship of research centers and their adherence to the official discourse in Russia, and the special situation the Russian Federation finds itself in with regard to Western sanctions. These abovementioned difficulties are external and mostly affect the object of study. We have, however, faced yet a few challenges that outsized those considered immediate to the GEP. The quantitative approach has demonstrated that Russia is still finding its own place in Eurasia, or, in other words, Russia is reformulating its regional identity in Eurasia. This poses a serious challenge to experts and politicians. Roughly 75% of the clustered text segments are related to its “balancing between two worlds.” There is no understanding of how to escape the European and Eurasian “curses” and how to include Asian integration and regionalism in the new mega-project. The second challenge is that the better part of the articles of the VDC are dedicated to philosophical matters and even express recognition of the inability to overcome the barriers that prevent the building of a Greater Eurasia or the GEP. Experts criticize European regionalism as a policy driven by an ineffective theory, but how effective is it to push forward a project absent of theory, and can one develop an effective theory using the experience of previous aimless actions? Finally, since its conception, the Agenda for Eurasia has collected a great number of valuable ideas, but when will this pool of ideas coalesce into clear policy analysis or action?

The time has come for policymakers to refrain from empty and dislocated words and quit their unnecessary philosophical inclinations towards the superlative. It is time to seek the formation and strengthening of pragmatic bilateral relations between the already existing institutional subjects. Considering the discussion delineated above, we have sought to provide recommendations on *how* Russia can push for the GEP.

Any attempt to realize the GEP should focus on including the EAEU, the SCO, and the CIS, but under the very distant condition of greater institutional maturity in the region. The EAEU should play the core role because it already has agreements with a few Asian countries, and several memoranda signaling prospective cooperation with other organizations. Presently, the EAEU, the

only prospective foundational organization over which the GEP can be built, finds its relevance diminished due to the multitude of channels member-countries use to conduct their commercial relations. Therefore, it is imperative that, first of all, the EAEU become a stable platform, and only then should it attempt to bridge other regional institutions.

Russia should gradually and selectively start operating its own bilateral relations through the framework of the EAEU in order to first increase the relevance of the institution. Moreover, in order to start bringing their capacities on par with the *great* political ambitions that the GEP represents, more of the available resources should be channeled, mainly to the EAEU, and then to other regional institutions.

The increased activity and relevance of the EAEU, over time, should facilitate bridging of the functions of other organizations, such as the SCO and the CIS. Provided these practices have already taken place and shown a certain degree of consistency, the next step could be to push for transregional approaches. Doing so would signal *concrete steps* towards substantiating the inspiring statements and declarations about a Great Eurasian Partnership, thereby bringing it to the notice of other participants.

We believe that the time has come for Russia to cope with this changing world and devise a clear and effective strategy for its regional and interregional policy.

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## Chapter 7

# From competitive to inclusive trade regionalism: How to consolidate economic cooperation through a revival of ‘ambitious RTAs’ between major trading nations

**Marko Juutinen**

*Faculty of Management and Business, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland*

### Abstract

This chapter examines the interplay of geo-economics and legitimacy in the dynamics between regionalism and multilateralism. Its objective is to provide perspectives on why and how to harness regional foreign trade policies as a means to build a more legitimate international trade system. Thus, the starting point of this chapter is a normative conceptualization of trade multilateralism, defined in terms of decision-making and output. The crisis of trade multilateralism does not stem from just the Trump presidency, but is of much deeper and older origin. It could be argued that it depends more on geo-economic policies, embedded in the guise of a multilateral, equitable, and non-discriminatory world trade system. So the recent re-emergence of regionalism and regional rivalries would not seem to present us with a new phenomenon, but would instead represent a qualitative transformation of the geo-economics of a US-led world order into the geo-economics of a pluralistic, post-hegemonic international system. Yet this chapter argues that this renewed prevalence of geo-economics has not made multilateralism obsolete (in the sense of a legitimate form of transnational governance). In fact, there are both normative *and* geo-economic reasons for consolidating legitimate multilateralism in the contemporary era. This solution would be centered on middle powers (like the EU, India, and Japan) and rely heavily on the emerging Indo-Pacific region.

**Keywords:** Geo-economics, legitimacy, middle powers, multilateralism, regionalism, WTO

## 7.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on economic cooperation, an arena in which the World Trade Organization (WTO) plays a central role, yet has been challenged from various directions. Key challenges faced by the WTO concern its decision-making, regulatory outputs, and its decreasing status in the foreign trade policy agendas of the great powers. The rise of trade regionalism is a symptom of these challenges. The danger is that trade regionalisms will develop into competitive economic blocs, strengthening the discriminatory dimensions of world trade and undermining multilateralism as the normative bedrock of international economic governance. Moreover, as suggested by, for example, the capitalist peace theory, the relation of trade regionalisms to multilateralism is important in terms of not only the political economy and global governance, but with regard to peace and conflict research as well as security studies.

This chapter examines challenges and solutions to trade multilateralism. Multilateralism is conceived of in two separate senses. On one hand, multilateralism can be seen as an ideal or a normative perspective on world economic governance, while, on the other, multilateralism refers to an actual institution of world economic governance, the WTO. While separate, these two perspectives are not entirely distinct. In fact, the normative dimension to multilateralism is at least to some extent encoded as part of the legal corpus of the WTO. Nonetheless, the political reality of the WTO is a different story. Yet, as a matter of governance, the rise and fall of multilateralism depends on its acceptability.

The normative dimension to trade multilateralism can be defined in terms of decision-making and output. According to John Ruggie, multilateral institutions are based on “*generalized principles of conduct*” and decision-making “*without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties*” (Ruggie 1992: 571). This implies that no country or interest group can dominate the agenda setting in a multilateral institution for their own gain without regard to the interests of other countries or interest groups. It also implies that when regional cooperation takes place among some members of a multilateral institution, it should not be used to gain leverage for them to push for their particularistic interests on the multilateral forum. As WTO’s main decision-making rule is consensus, and as one of its fundamental principles is non-discrimination, it is safe to argue that these normative notions about trade multilateralism do seem to resonate with the actual multilateral institutions of trade governance such as the WTO. With regard to output, the acceptability of trade multilateralism depends on its welfare implications. World trade should provide economic gains and welfare for all participants in a non-discriminatory manner (GATT

1947/1994: art. 1, 3; GATS 1994: art. 2, 17; Hoekman and Kostecki 2003: 29; TRIPS 1994: art. 3–4; WTO 1994: art. 3).

Let me synthesize these ideals as follows: in trade multilateralism, (1) decision-making should be based on equality and non-discrimination among all members; (2) outputs should benefit all; and (3) decision-making and outputs should not reproduce or strengthen former or existing power asymmetries, structures, and discourses.

These ideals are to some extent embodied in the WTO legal corpus. Yet there is a gap between ideals and practice. This applies to both decision-making and outputs. With regard to the latter, it has been argued that the least developed countries have actually lost as a result of economic liberalization (Stiglitz 2002: 66), and that poverty and hunger have actually increased rather than decreased. According to Jason Hickel (Hickel 2016), promoters of the business-as-usual economic order have actively engaged in a good-news narrative about reduction of poverty and hunger to legitimize the current economic system. Yet, Hickel argues, the narrative is founded on statistical maneuvers instead of actual reductions. Moreover, WTO agreements do not adequately take into account market failures such as environmental degradation, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and the various types of asymmetries between different market actors (Rivero 2010; Stiglitz 2002). Finally, with regard to decision-making, WTO has been run through negotiations between small groups of major powers, instead of all WTO members equally. In the 1990s they consisted of the major developed countries, while today, major rising powers are included (Hopewell 2016; Wilkinson 2015; Wilkinson, Hannah, and Scott 2014).

John Ikenberry's (2015) concept of "hegemonic multilateralism" provides an explanation for why the WTO has failed to live up to its legitimacy criteria. According to Ikenberry, this concept refers to past American dominance in the WTO which granted the developed countries both leadership in the institution as well as a means to build trade rules that were particularly favorable to them and their domestic investors (see Barton et al. 2008). Thus, "hegemonic multilateralism" could be defined more broadly as the false appearance of multilateralism which disguises the discriminatory nature of world trade in terms of both economic gains and trade governance. In the current post-hegemonic world order, "hegemonic multilateralism" no longer exists in the WTO. Yet the ideal of joint decision-making "without regard to the particularistic interests" of major powers has not been realized. Scholars like Kristen Hopewell (2015) and Rorden Wilkinson (2015) have argued that WTO governance is still about asymmetric power relations and defined in bargaining between powerful countries – now including not only the United States (US), Japan, the European Union (EU), and Canada, but also rising powers like India, China,

and Brazil. Instead of making legitimacy concerns less viable, these changes have obstructed WTO efficiency and undermined its role as a governance institution.

Increasing pluralism in world affairs has not been followed by strengthening of multilateralism. In trade, it has instead been followed by intensified regionalism and rising protectionism. Instead of providing stepping stones for trade multilateralism, twenty-first-century trade regionalism appears to be of the offensive kind or supportive of what Jagdish Bhagwati (2008) has called the “stumbling blocks” of global liberalization. Representative cases of this ensuing regionalism have been the Mega-Regional Trade Agreements (MRTAs) initiated by the Barack Obama administration in the US and the EU. Various scholars (Hamilton 2014; Juutinen and Käkönen 2016; Subramanian 2015) have argued that the most significant of the MRTAs – the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – were designed to contain China’s rising economic influence and to write the rules of the global economy without the support of the developing countries and the emerging powers. The Donald Trump presidency put an end to this policy.

Since President Trump reversed the aggressive Mega-Regional Trade Diplomacy (MRTD) of the Obama administration, multilateralism has not experienced a revival; instead, it appears that the aggressive MRTD has a new conductor. This refers to China’s economic initiatives, in particular the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), supported by the tremendous financial arm of the Bank of China, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and, to a lesser degree, the New Development Bank. China seems to be taking the leadership position left vacant by Trump. Following some realist theories, one might hypothesize that China has already taken the place of the US as leader state within the existing world economic system (e.g. Tammen et al. 2000). In this context, is there any hope left for multilateralism?

The objective of this chapter is to study the ways in which to consolidate economic multilateralism through a reformed regional trade policy agenda. This chapter hypothesizes that instead of the offensive approaches applied by the MRTAs, it is possible to search for inclusive trade policy agendas which speak more to the normative dimensions of trade multilateralism. This would involve two stages: first, to define some central challenges to multilateralism in terms of agenda formation, and second, to propose solutions to those problems. In an age of regionalism, this chapter seeks to revive multilateralism through inclusive regionalisms, as opposed to the offensive or hegemonic regional projects.

When defining the challenges faced by the WTO, the focus here is not on the aforementioned systemic issues or the discrepancy between ideal and practice; instead, the focus is on some key factors that drive agenda-setting, or more precisely, on the different understandings among WTO members about what the ideals and practices of the WTO actually are or should be. Indeed, while most people can agree that the world trade system should produce economic gains, this does not imply that negotiating about how to realize this goal is easy because it depends on expectations regarding what a world trade system should do. Each country, obviously, has a trade policy agenda of its own, depending on all those factors that define how a given political system produces decision-making agendas.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. The next section examines the different expectations of the WTO as well as the sources of contention at the WTO. The third section briefly examines some of the major Mega-Regional Geo-Economic Initiatives (MRGIs). Section four, which builds on the contestations at the WTO and the geo-economic regional challenges it faces, provides a perspective on reforming regionalism so as to minimize the geo-economic dimensions and maximize the normative trade concerns. Section five presents the conclusions arrived at by this study.

## **7.2. Different expectations for the evolution of trade multilateralism**

When the Doha Round was launched in 2001, developed and developing countries had generally different expectations of the outcome. The developing countries wanted to improve the Special and Differentiated Treatment provisions and retain restrictions on access to their domestic markets, while improving non-reciprocal access to developed country markets. In other words, developing countries sought to remedy the injustices of “hegemonic multilateralism”. For the developing countries, the 2001 negotiating round was about *development*. For example, the BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – continuously stated that they “concur in the need for a comprehensive and balanced outcome of the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks, in a manner that fulfills its mandate as a ‘development round’” (e.g. BRICS 2011: 26; BRICS 2016: 35; BRICS 2017: 33).

The developed countries, on the other hand, while affirming the special needs of particularly the least developed countries, still focused on improved access to the developing and emerging markets (Hoekman 2014: 5). Moreover,



they sought further liberalization of services commitments and tariff concessions, market access for agricultural products, stricter rules of subsidies and exceptions (trade distortions), and agreement on the so-called “Singapore issues” – investments, trade and competition, transparency in public procurement, and trade facilitation (e.g. Sharma 2004: 19).

The Singapore issues were particularly controversial. The controversy concerning investments was inherited from an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) proposal for a Multilateral Agreement on Investments. This agreement would have shifted settlement of investment disputes from the multilateral arena, subject to multilateral oversight of dispute resolutions, to an independent panel under the International Court for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Secondly, it would have transformed the nature of disputes. From being state-to-state disputes, and ultimately of a diplomatic nature, they would have become legal battles of a technical nature between investors and states (OECD 1998).

“Transparency in government procurement,” which refers to the opening of public procurement markets, was another controversial issue. According to its proponents, it would contribute to a more effective allocation of resources and provide more choices for procurement officials. Its critics, meanwhile, argued that it would lead to the misplacement of public funds, and there might be an adverse impact on work conditions and product quality resulting from competitive pressures as well as lack of sufficient procurement capacity by public officials (Mutiganda 2014; Sharma 2004; Woolcock 2003).

The second issue that created dissonance in the Doha Round was the changing nature of world trade through global and regional value chains (GVCs and RVCs), defined by fragmentation of production as well as the possible fragmentation of consumption markets. Value chain trade is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2011, Baldwin (2011:4) described it as a big unbundling and called it the defining feature of twenty-first-century trade. According to United Nations (UN) statistics, over 80 percent of world trade takes place through these value chains. During the last century, trade took place between different production facilities. Goods were produced at one place and shipped to another place for consumption. The major part of twenty-first-century trade is about trading the parts of a product.

The term value chain trade implies different kinds of governance for production and trade. If the production and selling of one commodity takes place in an internationally dispersed framework, each step must be coordinated with others to create synergy for the whole operation. This is where the concept of supply chain management comes in. Often being the responsibility of the so-called lead firm, usually a transnational company (TNC), supply chain

management involves branding, design, brand marketing, and coordination between different parts of the chain.

In the heydays of twentieth-century trade, negotiations on trade rules focused on tariffs. These were the major impediments to trade in ready products. In contrast, twenty-first-century trade takes place in an environment where tariffs are already low. Moreover, the management of complex production networks implies that all those rules that affect the product – technical standards, safety requirements, intellectual property rights, and so on – must be in perfect synergy. While the production of a single entity for shipping abroad in twentieth-century trade only needed to comply with the production requirements in one country and the requirements for consumption in another, global value chains necessitate harmonious regulatory systems across regions (Baldwin 2011: 9).

For efficient management of their value chains, lead firms require two things more than anything else: first, strong intellectual property rights to safeguard their patent portfolios, brands, and innovations, and second, investment protection to safeguard from state policies or discriminatory practices by states, state owner companies, or national regulators (Baldwin 2011; Hoekman 2014). Moreover, these rules and regulations should function in a harmonious manner all over the chain. That means that the regulations applied in one place should be compatible with those in another. This is one factor that links GVCs to the trade policies of the US and the EU: because these two are huge markets with highly regulated systems, many companies already comply with American and European rules and regulations. This provides the impetus for the many leading TNCs as well the US and the EU to aspire for globalization of these developed country rules.

Another factor that links GVCs to the developed country trade agenda is control of the TNCs running the value chains. At least till in 2010, British, American, and German financial institutions were the top holders of decision-making power on the governing boards of most TNCs. Since then, it is probable that Chinese influence has increased, but there are no recent studies on whether Chinese companies have also become part of the elite that controls TNCs. According to Jerry Harris (2012), in at least the energy, resource, and manufacturing sectors, Chinese companies have not gained controlling positions in TNCs.

As a result, the launch of the Doha Round did not result from an idea of some “generalized” interest or an idea of “common good,” but rather the particularistic interests of WTO members to improve the world economy in order to better gain from it. Yet, as this meant vastly different things to different countries, a broad dividing line between the global North and the global South arose during the very first years of the Doha Round. Resulting from leadership

by Brazil and India, this division was effective in the sense that it broke the developed country dominance in the WTO. Yet, an egalitarian, inclusive, and non-discriminatory decision-making system did not emerge from this power shift. The elitist club of the major developed countries of the 1990s and early 2000s was just replaced with a more inclusive club. While it included major developing countries like Brazil, India, and China, it still excluded most developing countries. As a result, a new South-South cleavage line has emerged in addition to the old North-South line (Hopewell 2016; Wilkinson et al. 2014).

In conclusion, key challenges for the WTO Doha Round was managing these different expectations as well as the inability of WTO member-states to accommodate each other's interests. At the same time, from the perspective of acceptability of trade multilateralism, both the concerns for development and the concerns for global value chain requirements would appear legitimate.

### **7.3. Mega-regional geo-economics**

The Doha Round was launched in the context of global power shifts. Because of the crumbling "hegemonic multilateralism," neither the developing nor the developed countries were able to dictate the outcomes. Apparently, the negotiators were equally unable to find a common-sense trajectory for economic development. This failure seems to be one of the major reasons for the emergence of MRTD. Unable to proceed in the multilateral arena, the developed countries sought to proceed through regional trade deals. Former US trade representatives Robert Zoellick and Susan Schwab have been quoted as saying: "Everyone knows that if there is no Doha Agreement, we are perfectly capable of moving ahead on the bilateral track" (Sharma 2004: 24). This is perhaps illustrative of the heights of confidence harbored by the developed countries and, at the same time, a dissatisfaction with the outcome of trade multilateralism. This frustration was one of the reasons why regional trade agreements began to gain in popularity (Antimiani and Salvatici 2015: 254; Muzaka and Bishop 2015: 391).

Because of the failure at the WTO, developed countries launched regional trade deals to advance their trade policy interests. The US and 11 Pacific states embarked on negotiations for a comprehensive and ambitious free trade agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), in 2010. Negotiations between the EU and the US on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) were launched in 2013. When the TPP negotiations were concluded on 4 October 2015, all the controversial issues at the WTO Doha Round were included

in the final agreement. It also included a broader scope of non-trade issues, including chapters on labor and the environment. The US and the EU are not the only ones to launch Mega-Regional Trade Initiatives (MRTIs). Negotiations for a China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) were launched in 2012 between the member-states of the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its free trade agreement (FTA) partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, and New Zealand. In addition to trade initiatives, China has also launched a major connectivity project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and has hugely increased in financial heft through the new financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) as well as the internationalization of the yuan (Huotari and Heep 2016).

Employing the concept of geo-economics, these projects could be called Mega-Regional Geo-Economic Initiatives (MRGIs). While they are economic in substance, they are political and strategic in nature, and so geo-economic. Indeed, the definition of economics as decisions about who gets what, when, and how corresponds to one of the classical definitions of politics. With regard to the specific concept of “geo-economics,” it has been defined, for example, as the geostrategic use of economic power (Wigell 2016: 137). Edward Luttwak (1990), on the other hand, derives geo-economics from the fundamental realist notion about states as territorially defined political entities that are primarily interested in the welfare and safety of their own citizens. Thus, economic relations for Luttwak reproduce this source of conflict on economic issues. For example, in regulating trade through trade deals or through transnational infrastructure projects, Luttwak argues that states are primarily aspiring “to maximize benefits within their own territory.” In this context, the economy is not merely a source of conflict, but also the battleground and instrument of war: battles are won by the structuring of economic relations through regulatory or financial means in a manner that yields the maximum gain for exclusive territorially bound groups or areas (Luttwak 1990: 18, 21).

The functional logic of the MRGIs varies. Western MRTAs would seem to use regulatory institutions or trade rules and institutional innovations as their primary modus operandi. With regard to trade rules, they manifest the regulatory turn in international trade, resulting from the shift of focus from tariffs to regulation as a means of trade liberalization. As mentioned earlier, twenty-first-century trade requires high protection for intellectual property rights, investments, uniform regulatory standards, and trade facilitation (Baldwin 2011: 9). Not surprisingly, developed economies have pursued a trade agenda that is informed by supply chain trade not only through MRTAs, but also bilaterally (Hofmann, Osnago, and Ruta 2017).

In addition, the Western MRTAs included a major innovation with regard to managing trade: regulatory cooperation. This innovation consisted of setting up regulatory bodies to review regulatory policies and implementation of trade deals by their signatories. These regulatory bodies were also allocated the duty of providing recommendations for another regulatory enhancement: the joint regulatory body between the participating countries. Unlike the WTO, this joint regulatory body enjoyed the political authority to issue binding interpretations of the trade rules and to allow direct connections with non-governmental stakeholders such as the TNCs and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Unlike the Ministerial Conference or the General Secretariat in the WTO, these bodies worked with the mandate that was granted them in the agreements, implying that deepening or changing the trade rules would not have required a new negotiating mandate. As a result, regulatory cooperation forced regulatory authorities into close cooperation with each other and provided regulatory flexibility to the agreements. In addition to regulatory harmonization, it would also have contributed to socialization among the regulators, giving the MRTAs some characteristics of a political integration process.

The economic implications of the two MRTAs were twofold: slight economic rebalancing and significant safeguards for the Western economic rules. The TPP countries constituted the largest export market for US goods and services, representing 44 percent of US goods exports, 85 percent of US agriculture exports, and 27 percent of US private services exports. The TPP countries' combined share of total world gross domestic product (GDP) was about 40 percent, and the combined EU and US (TTIP) share was nearly 50 percent. Moreover, transatlantic trade accounted for about 30 percent of world trade (Hamilton 2014). Together, the TPP and TTIP countries accounted for about 60 percent of the world GDP.

Moreover, almost 40 percent of Chinese exports go to the US, the EU, and Japan. Similarly, almost 30 percent of Indian exports go to either the US or the EU. Indeed, the TPP and TTIP countries account for over 40 percent of the world's imports in merchandise goods and commercial services. The China-led RCEP countries' share of world trade, on the other hand, was less than 30 percent in 2014, and about a third of the RCEP share was made up by countries who are also TPP members – thus adopting the Western standards.

Because of this size and the interconnectedness of world trade, the rules adopted in this area would have constituted the blueprint for global trade rules. It would have included the costs arising from the developing countries' need to raise their regulatory standards. But as various scholars have pointed out, market size and the ability and will to impose strict regulations are three key factors which explain the formation of international regulatory rules outside negotiation tables. The key reason, in other words, is the costs for companies

to have multiple regulatory systems. If they adopt one system, they are likely to adopt the one with the largest market, and then apply that system all over (Vogel 1997). Accounting for over half of world trade, the mega-regional area could thus have been a means to impose the developed country agenda on the rest of the world even without support for it in the multilateral arena.

Second, Western MRTAs would also have implied some level of economic rebalancing. According to a study commissioned by the European Commission (EC) on the economic impacts of the TTIP, the EU's GDP gains would be 0.48 percent by 2027, with total US GDP growth being 0.39 percent against the same benchmark. The estimated spillover effect for the rest of the world would be 0.14 percent during the same period, with China and India, respectively, experiencing additional growth of 0.04 percent and 0.03 percent (Francois et al. 2013: 82). As used by the EU and the US to evaluate economic gains, this study suggested greater benefits for the contracting parties, although the significance of the economic gains and the potential rebalancing appears minor.

Other studies employing the same Computable General Equilibrium Analysis indicated negative effects from the TPP and TTIP on Chinese and Indian GDP, with estimated deterioration of 0.075 percent and 0.03 percent, respectively. Negative gains were also forecast for all non-member-states, leading to the conclusion that rebalancing is the first US aim for the two MRTAs, especially the TPP. China's losses would derive mainly from decreasing exports (Bi, Xiao, and Xiao 2013: 207-208; Petri and Plummer 2016: 20). These prognoses suggest a limited impact on the rebalancing of the power shift. According to Arvind Subramanian (2015: 54), lowering barriers between the American, Asian, and European markets will increase the comparative advantage for companies within the trading bloc, with a corresponding decline in China's competitive position globally. The effect would extend to a broad range of market access and non-tariff issues such as technical barriers to trade (TBT) (e.g. regulation of chemicals) or food and animal safety regulations.

Looking at the case of Western MRTAs, geo-economic regionalism can be defined as trade policies focusing on dismantling regulatory trade barriers and construction of regulatory cooperation in such a manner that it simultaneously enhances global value chain trade while maintaining, if not enhancing, existing power configurations within the global economy. In other words, it would be difficult to define Western MRTAs as a legitimate means to promote trade multilateralism or as a means to create a normatively acceptable gold standard for global trade.

The election of President Trump put an abrupt end to developed country mega-regional geo-economics. The US resigned from the TPP and began to resort to protectionism. Without the US, the other members of the group that

had dominated the WTO, the EU, Japan, and Canada, do not possess the economic power to continue the developed country offensive. Still, Japan seeks to reinvent the TPP without the US, while the EU and Canada have concluded a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with each other. The EU, moreover, seeks expansion of trade through bilateral and regional FTAs with minor economic powers. In their undertakings, the developed countries seek ambitious outcomes, that is, trade deals that take into account the requirements of value chain trade, and that have a strong focus on regulatory issues but also involve non-trade issues. Without US participation, however, the lure of the European, Canadian, and Japanese initiatives is not as irresistible. At least, it is not without a counterpart.

While the Trump presidency did away with the Western MRTD, China seems to have taken up that role. The China-centric MRTA, the RCEP, which accounts for about half the world's population and a good third of the world's GDP, is set to be ready by the end of 2020. Its membership is centered on the ASEAN countries, and in addition to China, it includes India and Indonesia as well as the TPP members, Australia, South Korea, and Japan. Like the TPP and TTIP, the RCEP is also WTO compatible. Yet trade scholars have argued that compared to the EU and US FTAs, the ASEAN-based FTAs and the trade deals between the Southern economies do not involve deep WTO-plus provisions. How the RCEP, and perhaps the CETA, differ is still impossible to demonstrate explicitly, because the RCEP text is not yet available. However, the differences between North-North and ASEAN-based FTAs have been noted in previous scholarship: they don't generally include deep intellectual property protections, regulatory convergence, or regulatory cooperation (Capling and Ravenhill 2011; Hofmann et al. 2017; Wilson 2015; Ye 2015: 211).

In addition to trade, China is also pushing strongly with its geo-economic integration project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which overshadows the US Marshall Plan. Launched in 2013, it consists of two parts: the Silk Road Economic Belt on land and the Maritime Silk Road in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. On land, the belt brings together China, Central Asia, Russia, and Baltic Europe. The two economic corridors connect the belt with the maritime road. These corridors are the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC). The Maritime Road consists of additional ports along the sea line, connecting China. Together, the belt and road connect not only landlocked South Asian states such as Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean, but also create a shortcut from Russia, Central Asia, and China to the Indian Ocean, and from there to the Middle East and Africa (Len 2015; Yu 2017: 358). China's financial power provides strong support for these initiatives. For example, the China

Development Bank has larger resources than the World Bank and Asian Development Bank together (Harris 2012: 22).

China's growing influence is a cause of worry for its neighbors. For example, in South Asia, Chinese investments, unmatched by India, threaten to draw India's neighbors to China's suzerainty. In 2012, for instance, China offered over \$400 billion worth of investments to Nepal's hydrological sector, granted the country an infrastructure loan, and launched a project to connect the country using a railway across the Himalayas that goes into China (Panda 2017: 128, 129). China's growing influence is a matter of concern in the South Asian and Indian Ocean region. Because China is the biggest player in the RCEP and the central node of connections in the new Silk Road, it is likely to influence the framing of trade rules in these markets. At the same time, because of the size of these efforts, China will likely bear a strong influence on the constitution of global rules as well. Like the Westerns MRTAs might have done, the influence of the RCEP and BRI on the global trade system is also likely to take shape in an exclusive manner – without the presence of either most of the least developed countries or many of the developed countries. Thus, this would do little to enhance the legitimacy of world trade. Instead, it would enhance the power and influence of one state and its elites, most notably the Chinese Communist Party.

Consequently, MRGIs can be defined as processes that have global implications, which are designed by an exclusive group of states, and which grant discriminatory gains for this group. What then, if anything, can be done to weaken the geo-economic trend in global economic policies and to consolidate multilateralism against the geo-economic regional challenges?

#### **7. 4. From geo-economic to inclusive regionalisms**

We have so far argued that MRGIs present us with a contemporary form of realist foreign policy that has global implications and that uses economic interdependences, financial measures, and trade rules to advance particularistic interests. The threat with MRGIs is their lack of multilateral approval and the possibility of them, due to their size, of either reforming or restructuring the international economic order or of dividing the existing multilateral level and thus degrading its relevance to the bare minimum. In the context of an increasingly pluralistic international order, with no single power able to decide for others, and with the ultimatum of climate change looming over us, cooperation has become not only ever more important, but is also perhaps the only way for



global solutions. In this context, it is of outmost importance to examine ways in which to dismantle geo-economics from regionalism. This is the task in this penultimate section.

As we saw earlier, the MRGIs have been pushed by the great powers and a group of their potential allies. In this sense, the TPP and TTIP could have been denominated US-led MRGIs, while the BRI, RCEP, and AIIB represent China-led MRGIs. Yet the international order is not bipolar but pluralistic because the influence of the two global powers in the world depend on their allies and neighbors (and cooperation among themselves). Middle powers like Japan, Australia, India, the EU, and others also have a role to play. At this moment, the middle powers have seemingly been content with a passive role in world affairs in the sense that the MRGIs have been directed most strongly by the US and China. Now, in search for global leadership that builds more on legitimate concerns of governance than on geo-economics, the natural choice are those powers who do not have the ability to maximize their national gains through geo-economic means. This group of states would seem to be a broad one encompassing both middle and minor powers who, maybe more than others, are dependent on a rules-based international order.

The most powerful group of middle powers comprises the EU, Canada, Japan, India, Australia, Indonesia, Brazil, Turkey, Russia, and Iran. Among them, the EU, Japan, and India are the most powerful. In terms of economic cooperation and mega-regional geo-economics, the EU, Canada, Japan, and Australia were the US's partners in the TPP. India is one of the states that are negotiating the RCEP, but so also are Japan and Australia. While Japan, Australia, and India have strong ties with China, they have demonstrated strong aversion to the potential geostrategic implications of Chinese initiatives, especially the BRI. Because of the increasing Chinese influence in the region, these four Asian middle powers have sought to deepen cooperation among themselves. In terms of trade, however, they cannot take the leadership in Asia because of their heterogeneity, which reflects the diverse interests and expectations along the North-South and South-South cleavages. The ASEAN-based RCEP, with China as the major power, would then seem to be the least common denominator agreement with increased access to China as the bonus in it. In other words, the Asian powers have demonstrated their willingness to cooperate, but they lack either the will or the economic muscle or both to take the initiative.

In the Western hemisphere, the EU and Canada are struggling with the US's "make America great again" policies, which have eliminated the potential for Western MRGIs. Brexit just makes things worse for the EU, which has for many years been negotiating an FTA with India, but which, without India's major European ally, the UK, becomes an ever-more distant option. The

implication is that the European and North American control over global value chains as well as the geography of the value chain trade is being shifted to Asia (Khanna 2019). If regulated by an RCEP framework, companies producing in and exporting to the EU, Canada, and the US may have to do so with higher costs than their counterparts in Asia. This is the flip side of highly specialized regulatory systems: if you can make others comply with your standards, you will enjoy competitive advantages, but if you cannot, you will be at a disadvantage. For this reason, the EU seeks to patch the gap left by the MRTAs with bilateral trade deals like the CETA with Canada or comparable agreements with South Korea and Japan. Yet, a patch is a poor substitute.

As a result, it would seem that these middle powers all have an interest in combating MRGIs. It would seem that because of the failures of the US MRTAs and the surge of Chinese MRGIs, they would have a geo-economic reason to respect, understand, and accommodate each other's economic interests and needs. In other words, the middle powers, including the EU, Canada, India, Japan, and Australia, would seem to have at least some rationale in undertaking mutual economic cooperation on a more legitimate and multilateral basis. If they were to achieve this, their combined influence and central positions in the old centers of the world economy, or the transatlantic area, and the new centers of the world economy, Asia and the Indo-Pacific, would seem sizeable enough to exert impressive global influence. Being sizeable enough to dismantle Chinese dominance, it might disrupt the geo-economic potential in Chinese economic initiatives and thus provide a benchmark for internationally acceptable multilateralism.

We have so far only discussed the geopolitical and economic rationales. Yet any mega-regional undertaking between the middle powers or led by the middle powers faces the same challenges of heterogeneous economic systems and the resulting conflicting interests that have proven to be so problematic in the WTO. In contrast to the WTO, the reasons to aspire for broader legitimacy might be stronger today. The major concerns to be tackled, then, would include at least:

1. incorporation of legally enforceable environmental provisions;
2. implementation of GVC-friendly reforms and regulatory cooperation;  
and
3. incorporation of non-discriminatory trade remedies.

Environmental provisions are one of the so-called non-trade issues that do not pertain to the WTO legal corpus. In the EU single market, however, environmental provisions have strong relevance. Western RTAs often include chapters on sustainability and trade, but they tend to be loosely formulated and lack legal enforceability. To remedy this, environmental sustainability could be

made an upper-level interpretative principle in all trade deals in the same way that constitutions direct politics in constitutional democracies.

Regulatory cooperation, particularly through new institutions of shared authority, is a means of overseeing implementation and evolution of trade deals and of efficiently targeting the potential regulatory issues that can either obstruct or smoothen the global value chain trade. Moreover, regulatory cooperation, following at least to some extent the model envisioned in the CETA and TTIP, would produce a political authority that could be given the mandate to follow, develop, and enforce environmental protectionism.

Incorporation of non-discriminatory trade remedies would tackle the developing country concerns. They would not consist of rejecting further liberalization (as has been the result in the WTO), but would offer deeper liberalization along with assistance for the developing countries to bear the higher costs of raised regulatory standards. Global value chain trade and higher regulatory standards in trade can be a costly business, particularly if combined with measures to ensure strong environmental protectionism. However, the costs of trading up are of a short-term nature. In the long term, they create a level playing field between the Northern and Southern economies. Thus, trade remedies might consist of provisions for special and differentiated treatment, allowances for market access derogations in some key sectors (like agriculture in countries with a large rural population), as well as direct financial support to cover the costs of raising regulatory standards. Regulatory cooperation would help in this, too.

These provisions resemble the Western trade agenda. The additional element here is the supremacy of environmental protectionisms as well as the means to tackle the discriminatory features of economic integration. The two additions imply, in other words, that trade would not be defined on the bases of economic competition and a search for the fulfilment of particularistic interests, but be governed instead by more generalized principles. A trade area that would include the EU, Canada, Japan, India, Australia, South Korea, as well as other TPP members and the EU's partners, would have the economic muscle to make a difference because size does matter in regulatory dynamics. If most companies do trade with a deep intra-regional trade area, they are likely to use the higher standards always even in countries where that is unnecessary in order to save the time and money that upholding duplicate regulatory systems would require. This is the logic of trading up (Vogel 1997).

Finally, the building of inclusive trade regionalism should not be seen as a containment strategy against China. Instead, it should be seen as a strategy to engage with China for the support of multilateralism that is based on joint decision-making as a common gain and not the discriminatory gains of the major powers or aspirant hegemons.

## 7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to study if and how benevolent major powers from the developing and developed world can consolidate economic cooperation through regional efforts. Reviewing the literature on the Doha Round of the WTO and the battles between developed and developing countries, this contribution has shown that one major cause of the challenges in this arena is the legitimacy crisis of the WTO. Developed countries seek and need improvement of trade rules and the regulatory system, while developing countries fear the disproportional gains from economic exchange and the high costs of the ongoing regulatory turn in trade. Arguing that the geopolitical factors make cooperation between EU, Japan, India, and Australia particularly viable, this paper proposes reforms for the EU-Japan regional trade deals to make them work also for developing countries. This chapter argues that, together, these four actors are big enough to provide a new gold standard for global trade and to counteract the destabilizing effects of the other great powers, particularly the US and China.

The rationale for a reformed, more legitimate trade agenda is basically geo-economic. It derives from the failure of the US's Mega-Regional Trade Diplomacy and the ongoing surge of Chinese mega-regional initiatives such as the RCEP and the BRI. Yet, while the reasons for cooperation among the middle powers are now stronger than ever, the construction of a legitimate trade agenda between them without bringing particularistic interests to the fore is obviously subject to realist calculations. To affect these calculations, and to take active stock of the opportunity, strong leadership is required. Perhaps the EU, whose foreign trade policy is becoming reactionary now, might embrace that role.

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## Chapter 8

# Foot in the Door: China's Investments in the Arctic Region

**Terry McDonald and Benjamin Klasche**

*School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia*

### **Abstract**

Arctic states and regions that are in need of development capital have been turning increasingly to China as their source for development funds. These include Greenland, which is trying to develop new resources as it concretizes its increased independence from Denmark; Iceland, which is trying to rebuild and diversify its economy after the financial sector crash of 2008–2009; and Russia, which is faced with sanctions and the limited markets and investment funds that come along with them. They are all clamoring for the capital needed for the projects and visions they have for their respective societies, especially as climate change opens new possibilities in the Arctic region. Using this opportunity, China is adopting a slow geo-economic strategy to gain a say in the establishing of Arctic norms. If able to buy a seat at the table, China could potentially use the influence it has bought from the smaller Arctic states and Russia to establish Arctic rules and policies that allow it maximum benefit. As explained in this chapter, recent developments at the 19th Party Congress – especially the appointment of Xi's new Standing Committee – indicate that China will not be changing course any time soon; it is more likely that it will redouble its efforts in pursuit of an interwoven foreign policy and economic goals. By combining an actor- and case policy-based analysis and geo-economic theoretical concepts, we add to the growing literature on this topic. We conclude that if the Nordic countries believe China to be a challenger in the region, then there is need for them to partner with the EU, Canada, USA, and other interested parties (like Japan) to pool the resources necessary to counter Chinese advances, especially if they want to be able to determine the future of Arctic development.

**Keywords:** Arctic, Arctic Council, China, geo-economics, geopolitics

## 8.1. Introduction

International relations (IR) in the past and in the present has been a discipline addressing the role regions and geographical locations play in the accumulation of wealth and power in the international sphere. This ranges from “The Great Game” over the domination of Central Asia in the nineteenth century to Spykman’s “Rimland” theory about the importance of dominating sea routes and all the advantages that come with it. At all times, the quest for resources and control of commercial infrastructure were the guiding principles. This has not changed in the twenty-first century when attention (or at least a part of it) has been shifted to the Arctic region and the potential future benefits it could bring. The increasing global temperatures are melting the glaciers of the Arctic and making both land and sea in the region more accessible. Proclaimed as the next “Great Game” (Borgerson 2009), the Arctic offers vast fields of untapped resources as well as emerging transport routes, which “have historically been associated with seismic shifts in the balance of economic and political power” (Blunden 2012: 116). Shipping via the Northern Sea route as compared to the Suez route, is estimated to be 40 per cent shorter and would decrease the time of the voyage from 32 to 18 days on average (Schøyen and Bråthen 2011: 979).

<sup>1</sup> As a rising power and part of the interstate rivalry system and strategies in the international arena, China is very much aware of the role the Arctic could play in international relations and has sought to expand its reach through a multipronged strategy. By meeting the economic needs of the smaller and cash-strapped Arctic states, gaining control of the rare-earth elements (REEs) market, gaining a seat at the table of the Arctic Council and influencing the member states, and using development funds upfront to ensure long-term access to resources and long-term influence, China has shown its determination to become a major player in the development of the Arctic, and a primary agent in shaping the rules and norms under which this new Great Game will be played. Moreover, as China turns its focus to the Arctic, this causes other states to do the same, as noted when China released its White Paper on Arctic Policy in 2018: “because of its national heft China brings an inevitably larger spotlight to the entire polar sphere” (Moscato 2018).

In this essay, we attempt to answer the following research question: How can the Nordic countries and the European Union (EU) remain relevant and

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<sup>1</sup> Naturally, concerns of competitiveness persist mostly due to operational challenges, political factors (Russian territorial waters), environmental concerns (oil spills, disturbance of eco-systems), operational conditions (harsh environment, long distances between the bases), ice navigation (drifting ice), and contractual issues (probability of delays) (Pierre and Olivier 2015: 337).

influential in a quickly changing Arctic environment that features a long list of previously inactive actors? More specifically, the study will, as a first step, analyze the strategy and goals China has set out for the Arctic region and follow this up with an analysis of its actions taken in the Arctic region itself and what implications this holds for the current members of the Arctic Council. As the struggle for influence in the Arctic revolves largely around natural resources and access to infrastructure, geopolitical and geo-economic theories will lay the theoretical foundation that will help us to understand China's goals. We are aware of the fact that both geopolitical and geo-economic theories and concepts stem from Western scholarship and could be loaded with corresponding biases. Furthermore, we agree with the call for non-Western theorizing in IR (e.g. Acharya and Buzan 2010) or the call for the creation of a "global IR" (Acharya and Buzan 2017), which should adequately frame the many heterogeneous actors involved in world politics. Nevertheless, even though China is historically and culturally clearly non-Western and does not subscribe to many Western values, it is a fully integrated and successful player in the capitalist world economy, which allows us to analyze its behavior via a geo-economic lens. Moreover, in official Chinese sources, namely the White Paper on China's Arctic Policy (2018), China bases its justification for its role in the Arctic around traditional IR structures such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Spitsbergen Treaty, and the Arctic Council, making the choice of a traditional IR approach appropriate to the cases and issues in question in this specific instance. Based on this, the gathered data, consisting mostly of secondary scholarly sources but also official documents of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the EU, have been analyzed with a clear focus on understanding the geo-economic implications that the advance of China in the Arctic Circle brings. Lastly, we present policy recommendations for the Arctic states to pursue in order to ensure that they are the ones who set the agenda for the development of the Arctic region.

The chapter fits into the relevant discourse on the topic of China's interest in the Arctic through its combination of analytical approaches. Moscato (2018) has approached the issue through analysis of the framing of China's White Paper on the Arctic in the global media. Gad *et. al.* (2018) have explored the issue from the perspective of Greenland's search for an independent foreign policy, balancing the desire for economic development with concerns about China as an imperialist power through the framework of "Orientalist tropes and anti-colonial alternatives." Sørensen (2018) reaches a similar conclusion as this article: that China's interest in Greenland is not solely economic, and that it fits within a larger game plan seeking to ensure its great power influence in the Arctic. Our chapter contributes in that it explores Chinese internal politics – regarding developments from the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress – and Chinese

policy with a geo-economic analysis of China's relationship with Arctic states that are in need of capital investment.

## **8.2. From geopolitics to geo-economics**

If we expect that successful economic involvement in the Arctic region will lead to an increase in power and influence, it is only natural to turn to theoretical concepts that stress the role that geographical advantages play in the struggle for power. Therefore, it is a natural next step to link opportunities in the Arctic with a geopolitical framework (see, for example, Blunden 2012). The fact that we are technically concerned with an open sea when it comes to the Arctic takes our geopolitical reflection to geostrategist Alfred Thayer Mahan (2004 [1890]), who pointed out the important role control of the sea has played in history. The discovery and control of new trade routes have always come with a dramatic increase in wealth and power, and this can be understood using the example of the European powers between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries (Rogers 2010). This would be the case in the opening of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as well.

Geostrategic thinking evolved further from there and Halford John Mackinder even featured the Arctic among other regions in his "Heartland" theory (1904), which, along with Mahan's ideas, focus on the importance of land domination. The Heartland, according to Mackinder (1942), stretches from the Himalayas to the Arctic and from the Volga to the Yangtze, and its domination would lead to the rule of the "World-Island" – Europe, Asia, and Africa – and subsequently to the rule of the globe. According to this postulate, the Heartland has been under the control of the Russian empire, and later the Soviet Union. Mackinder dismissed idea of the domination of another power, firstly because a land invasion from West to East is impossible due to lack of efficient means of transportation, and secondly, and more importantly for our cause, due to the geographical protection of the land created by mountains and deserts to the south and ice to the north (1942: 78). The potential melting of the ice in the Arctic would therefore add new life to Mackinder's thoughts. Our historical overview on geopolitical thinkers will be rounded up by one of Mackinder's contemporaries and biggest critics, Nicholas J. Spykman. Spykman turned the focus back on the importance of sea domination and highlighted the coastal regions of the World-Island, which he called the "Rimland" (1969) (Mackinder had called this the "marginal crescent"). The Rimland, which consists of the European coastal border, the Arabian-Middle Eastern desert land, and the

Asiatic monsoon land, is the focus of his theory. Spykman was firmly of the view that a naval power was more important than a land power, and he thus dismissed the importance of Mackinder's Heartland in the quest for global domination. While disagreeing with Mackinder's dictum,<sup>2</sup> Spykman concluded: "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (1969). The thawing of the Arctic ice would now enlarge Spykman's Rimland to stretch throughout the Siberian Tundra and offer a new strategic access point for world domination. Nevertheless, both Mackinder and Spykman point out the resourcefulness and strategic locations of the regions that contain, at least in their mind, the key to the world.

In the year 1944 Spykman's *The Geography of The Peace* was first published, which coincided with the creation of the Bretton Woods system, that has coined and accelerated economic cooperation and interdependence of national economies after the disruption of World War II.<sup>3</sup> In a global system that focuses on international trade and the growth of economies, the "methods of commerce" (Luttwak 1990) add another power dimension to international politics. These considerations have been shown to be even more accurate after the Cold War ended, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the perishing of the economic dualism of the globe. Luttwak, among others, argued that the importance of military power would vanish in international policy-making and the aforementioned "methods of commerce" would take over as the main power dimension.

This describes the shift from classical geopolitics towards so called geo-economics. Kundnani (2011) stated that the shift would not be universal and stressed that several states, especially in the West, would be better suited for this approach than others. This comes together with the intentional practices states must deploy in order to access their economic power (new markets, bloc access to domestic markets, economic expansion by diplomacy, investment, training and regulating, or even espionage (Sparke 1998: 68)). Luttwak (1990: 20) pointed out further that violent conflict would not be absent from this new regime but would be expressed with a different set of tools (e.g. taxes on foreign products, overseas market investments, etc.). However, his thesis seemed to be disproven in the following two decades when, especially during the ethnic

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2 Mackinder's famous dictum goes:

"Who controls eastern Europe rules the Heartland;  
Who controls the Heartland rules the World Island; and  
Who rules the World Island rules the World" (1942: 50).

3 As a member of the Allied Nations, China sent a delegation to take part in the Bretton Woods conference. Otherwise it was fully consumed by its war against Japan and therefore had no capabilities to forge an international economic system that would enable it to dominate during the rest of the century.

conflicts of the 1990s and the reactions to 9/11, Western states were forced to use military power to resolve conflicts (Kundnani 2011: 40). Yet, we were able to observe moves towards Luttwak's ideas. Even though Germany was involved in military action in Afghanistan, it can be understood as a perfect example of the use of a foreign policy that was based on geo-economic principles (Kundnani 2011: 40). Keeping in mind that great powers are usually defined by their military potential and/or their geopolitical superiority (resources or geography) and Germany has neither of these, it was still able to have a considerable effect on the countries with which it conducts relations. This is based on its superiority in the "methods of commerce," which stems from a large national economic output, a well-woven net of economic trade agreements (within the EU and outside of it), and its leading position in the economic body that is the EU.

Geopolitics focuses on the geographical advantages created by the amount of resources and potential for commercial infrastructure to assess the power of a political body. However, resources and potential for infrastructure are not all that is needed to lead a globalized world dominated by a global capitalist economy. These aspects are no doubt very important, but other players have gained great power positions simply by relying on the "methods of commerce". A foreign policy based on the concept of geo-economics seems especially well suited for a competitor of the US. Kundnani sums up:

[S]ubsequent developments – in particular the shift in the global distribution of power away from the United States toward rising powers such as China – seem to have vindicated Luttwak's argument. Two decades after he wrote the essay, his thesis seems to be a good way of explaining the actions of some states (2011: 40).

We noted above that there might be concerns whether the actions of a non-Western player can be adequately explained with a theory stemming from a clear Western tradition. Geopolitics and geo-economics clearly align with realist power politics that are best suited to describe an international system dominated by a Western power. We have already pointed out China's active participation in the world capitalist economy and its participation in the institutional architecture (Beeson 2018: 245). In fact, we can observe now that the same strategy that has helped foster US hegemony is being deployed by China's attempt to create an alternative system (the New Development Bank) or its various investment schemes (foreign direct investments (FDI) targeting mostly resource-rich countries and outward direct investments (ODIs) in capital-scarce countries) in the African economy (Chen, Dollar, and Tang 2016: 645). This upwards trending economic relationship has been described in various ways, ranging from a form of colonialism and exploitation that does not differ much from the way the West treated Africa, to a mutually beneficial

arrangement that helps the development of both parties (Mlambo, Kushamba, and Simawu 2016: 258). In either scenario, we can adhere to the fact that China seeks to fulfill four objectives: (1) resource seeking; (2) diplomatic support; (3) market seeking; and (4) investment opportunities (Mlambo, Kushamba, and Simawu 2016: 271). Even if these activities do indeed benefit both parties, we are looking at an imbalanced relationship in which economic means are used to gain influence and power in the international arena, a key aspect of geo-economics. We believe that a similar strategy with potentially different tactical foci could be also employed in the Arctic countries, which are rich in resources and in need of investment capital. To illustrate this, we will discuss China's goals, which it hopes to develop by gaining influence in the Arctic region, before we move on to concrete country cases and illustrate how these goals translate into actual activities.

### **8.3. China's goals**

China has set clear foreign policy goals when it comes to the Arctic region and the role it wants to play in the decades ahead. Many of these initiatives are aligned with China's general direction, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the redistribution of influence on the global commons – global resource domains, such as open waters, deep sea, the atmosphere, outer space, the polar regions, and the most recently added cyberspace, without clear territorial ownership (Buck 1998) – which, since the 1960s, have been almost exclusively dominated by the United States (Klasche 2018: 55). Considering the recent 19th Party Congress and recent events in China, it is not likely that these efforts will change direction.

#### *8.3.1. The 19th Party Congress*

The 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress has cemented Xi's hold on power, and his China is intent on using its influence in the world. No longer is China referring to itself as “developing”; Xi instead referred to China as a “great power” or “strong power” 26 times in his opening address to the Congress (Campbell 2017). Xi has been interpreted as an aggressive actor in foreign affairs from expanding military reach and claims in the South China Sea to forming partnerships and alternative institutions that reflect his perception of China's proper role in



international affairs (Perlez 2017). While he insists that China is a peaceful player seeking only to develop in an orderly, globalized world economy, China under Xi has shown willingness to use its leverage in classical geo-economic fashion, in cases such as depriving Japan of vital REEs in retaliation for the arrest of Chinese sailors (Bradsher 2010). This course should not be expected to change any time soon. Having used a publicized (and selective) anti-corruption campaign to remove rival actors in his first five-year term, Xi enters his second term in the strongest position a Chinese leader has held in decades (The Economist 2017). This power was shown symbolically when Xi's philosophy was the first of a living Chinese ruler to be added to the constitution since Mao, and also in the make-up of the new inner circle. Xi's new Standing Committee is remarkable in that he has sent out a clear signal that he has no intention of becoming a lame-duck premier (Phillips 2017). All six men appointed are over the age of 60, which means that with the Party's traditional retirement age of 68, none of these men are well positioned to succeed Xi after this term. Whether this means that he intends to stay on for another term is unknown, perhaps even to himself at this point, but it does show that he intends to have a firm hand on the rudder for this term. The selections on the Standing Committee also indicate the direction he intends to take (Phillips 2017). Wang Huning, the author of the concept of "neo-authoritarianism," has been called China's Kissinger (Ibid.). His appointment is a clear indicator that Xi intends to further centralize power. Xi loyalist Li Zhanshu has been instrumental in Xi's elevation to exceptional power. Indeed, it was Li who steered the effort to have the "Xi Jinping Thought" given its constitutional status. In addition, the committee features Li Keqiang, a much-diminished former rival who has been brought to heel by the stock market crash of 2015; Wang Yang, an experienced trade negotiator; Han Zheng, an economic technocrat; and Zhao Leji, Xi's new and powerful anti-corruption head and perhaps the only member with an alternative power base. This is not a committee of reformers and, with no heir apparent, there is little reason to suspect them of being able to challenge Xi's ascendancy.

### 8.3.2. *Arctic commons*

Initially, China was reluctant to cede control of the Arctic to the strictly Arctic states. China's vision of a global commons in the Arctic obviously served its interests, and one Chinese general even went so far as to call not just the famous "donut hole" of international water in the Arctic as a commons, but the region as a whole. As the National Bureau of Asian Research has noted:

In 2010, retired rear admiral Yin Zhuo notably declared that “the North Pole and the sea area around the North Pole belong to all the people of the world.” This statement has been frequently interpreted by analysts on both sides of the Pacific to mean that China believes that no country can have sovereignty over the Arctic. This interpretation has had a long shelf life, given that Beijing has not yet clarified the scope of its interests and ambitions in the region (Maxie 2017).

This led members of the Arctic Council to offer resistance towards granting observer status to China (and others) until “these non-Arctic states pledged to recognize the territorial sovereignty of the eight members as well as the application of the UNCLOS to the Arctic Ocean” (Maxie 2017). Despite this pledge, China’s apparent interest in as much of the Arctic as possible being declared “commons” remains strong, but it also uses partnerships with the Arctic states to gain access, as described above. China has since issued a White Paper on the Arctic. It simultaneously acknowledges that it is not an Arctic state in the sense of the eight members of the Arctic Council and that it sees itself as a stakeholder and that:

China is a special non-Arctic State closely related to the Arctic affairs. Despite not being an Arctic State, China has significant interests and bears great responsibilities in the Arctic, with shared interests and a shared future with States in the region. As the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister also stated, China will “not be absent”: China is committed, in accordance with international law, to safeguarding and maintaining its lawful rights, carrying out its corresponding obligations, and playing a constructive role in the cross regional and global issues relating to the Arctic (Ma 2019).

### 8.3.3. *The Belt and Road Initiative*

These Arctic overtures fit well with the signature initiative of the Xi administration – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). An important aspect of the BRI is the development of a *lanseyinqing* – a “blue engine” – to fuel Chinese trade (Lanteigne 2017). This consists of three maritime trade routes – the Indian Ocean-to-Mediterranean Sea route, the South Pacific route, and the Arctic Ocean route – called the *lansejingjitongdao*, or “blue economic passages”, which will ensure Chinese economic growth. China has already undertaken port projects on the other routes of the BRI, including Piraeus in Greece and several others in the Indian Ocean. Movements towards port investment in the Arctic are a logical continuance of this strategy, but some observers view this

as a stalking-horse for the entry of Chinese naval (People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN) activity in the region (Robinson 2013). Arctic Council members will have to decide if there is a blurred to non-existent line between Chinese commercial investment in the area and the more concrete security and foreign policy goals of the Chinese government.

#### 8.3.4. *Tactics*

As explained above, China is looking for ways to turn its stores of capital into strategic opportunities. Iceland, Greenland, and Russia could all potentially offer Arctic examples of China using its financial might, especially in the form of up-front financing, to gain favor and, consequently, footholds in Arctic states that China tends to see as vulnerable because of their need for capital investment. Similarly, China uses its hold on resources to further its international advantages, as in the 2010 rare-earth element (REE) dispute with Japan. In 2010, Japan seized a Chinese vessel and detained its captain after it collided with Japanese coast-guard ships in waters near the Diaoyu/Shenkaku Islands, which Japan controls, but which have long been claimed by China. In response, China halted shipments to Japan of REEs, which are vital for the electronics industry that is a major component of the Japanese economy. Japan protested, but China had not issued an official statement announcing the halting of shipments, and therefore an immediate Japanese case to the World Trade Organization (WTO) would have been difficult to prove. China had instead placed an administrative halt on loading shipments, a *de facto* but not *de jure* change in policy. The New York Times noted the gravity of this change of policy, and drew a geo-political parallel: "Deng Xiaoping, the late leader of China, is widely reported to have said that while the Middle East has oil, China dominates rare earths. But while Arab states used restrictions on oil exports as a political weapon in 1956, 1967 and 1973, China has refrained until now from using its near monopoly on rare earth elements as a form of leverage on other governments" (Bradsher 2010). Such a barefaced use of geo-economic power was unnerving to China's trade partners, and led in part to a massive WTO dispute regarding China's REE policies. This is a textbook application of geo-economic principles and could serve as a motivation for other states to be wary of Chinese investment in REE projects in the Arctic. The Arctic states should keep in mind these tactics as China begins to lay its claims in the North.

Observers like Robinson (2013) warn of the possibility of a "long con" in the building of infrastructure for investment leading to military access. Citing the example of Greenland's and Iceland's investment discussions, it is argued that China could use resource development to justify, for example, the building

and upgrading of a deep-water port, which would then host “visits” by PLAN vessels and submarines, which could then lead to “exercises” such as search and rescue drills, the hosting of dual-purpose commercial and military ice-breakers, and other functions that would make them de facto Chinese naval outposts in the Arctic. This threat is especially applicable if states become dependent upon Chinese investment for large sections of their economy such as in a hypothetical independent Greenland. It would be difficult for such a government to draw the line on such gradual encroachments. However, other observers, such as Alexeeva and Lasserre (2013) and Ma (2019), argue that such skepticism regarding China is potentially unwarranted. They argue that China has acted in accordance with international law and has shown no desire to seize assets in the region in any improper way.

#### **8.4. China’s actions in the Arctic states**

After understanding China’s goals and tactics, it is time to look at the region of interest, the Arctic, and how China is manifesting itself there. The first task here will be to identify the states of interest. When it comes to the Arctic “member-states”, several definitions have been applied. Since the greatest interest in the region is derived from access to untapped resources and usage of lines of communication, access to the Arctic waters appears to be of foremost importance. Thus, when considering states with immediate access to the Arctic Ocean and the accompanying availability to an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles off their shores, the list would consist of Russia, Canada, USA, Greenland (Denmark), Norway, and Iceland. This list expands when considering the Arctic Circle, the northernmost major circle of latitude, as the demarcation line. In this case, Russia, Canada, USA, Norway, Greenland (Denmark), Finland, Sweden, and, by virtue of the Island of Grimsey, Iceland should be considered Arctic states. This group also overlaps with the members of the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum that addresses issues faced by the governments of the Arctic states and their people. It is important to mention that China is, since its approval in 2013, one of 13 non-Arctic Observer States who are invited occasionally to participate in task forces and working groups. This points towards a successful approximation of China and the Arctic states. For the current analysis, the number of cases has been further limited due to the potential impact Chinese investments could have on the states. Based on geo-economic principles, only states with an unbalanced economic relationship with China have been considered. This excludes the United

States and Canada and additionally minimizes the assumed impact China could have on Norway, Sweden, and Finland. This leaves Greenland, Iceland, and Russia as the states that need investment capital and have already accepted some levels of Chinese investment or exploration on their territories, as will be shown below. Further, most of the analysis will focus on Greenland. Based on China's investment strategies in Africa, where it has made large capital investments in resource-rich, but capital-short and politically instable countries, Greenland appears to be an ideal candidate for Chinese geo-economic engagement.

#### 8.4.1. *Greenland (Denmark)*

Greenland offers perhaps the clearest example of the Chinese geo-economic strategy. It also presents the most urgent case for the active participation of the Nordic and North American states (along with their partners) if they wish to counteract Chinese influence in the region. Greenland's moves since its 2009 adoption of Self-Rule Authority (Greenland is an autonomous country of the Kingdom of Denmark but continues to strive for more independence) have opened one potential door for Chinese geo-economic actors to gain a foothold (*The Economist* 2015). With demographic problems and the collapse of its cod fishing, Greenland has been anxious to develop potential diversified economic capabilities, especially for those within who seek eventual full independence. In classic geo-economic fashion, Chinese funds have stepped in, especially from state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the mining and energy sectors. Sichuan Xinya Mining Investing Company has proposed moving in 3,000–5,000 Chinese workers for just one iron ore project, a total that would represent up to roughly 5 percent of Greenland's population (Stephens 2013). This number of workers would be in line with Chinese projects in Africa, where 16 states have at least this number of Chinese workers stationed within their borders as of 2017 (China Africa Research Initiative 2019).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, with Greenland's potential untapped supplies of REEs, China could make its real geo-economic power-play (Chovanec 2010). China has, by some estimates, managed to gain at least partial control of 95 percent of REEs in the global market, and a new

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4 These figures include Chinese workers sent to work on Chinese companies' construction contracts in Africa ("workers on contracted projects") and Chinese workers sent to work for non-Chinese companies in Africa ("workers doing labour services"); they are reported by Chinese contractors and do not include informal migrants such as migrants and shopkeepers" (China Africa Research Initiative 2019).

cache in Greenland will have great implications for the future leverage China has in this area (Ganguli 2018). This leverage, as was seen in its 2010 dispute with Japan, is not something China has been unwilling to use in getting its own way in global affairs in the past.

Perhaps the most overt of China's actions in Greenland is the attempt by the General Nice Group, a Hong Kong-based mining and other industry operation, to purchase the Gronnedal naval base in 2016 (Gratzen 2017). Danish intervention put a stop to the sale, but the case represents a clear example of Chinese interests moving quickly into any vacuum left open in the Arctic, and the opaque relationship between Chinese business interests and those of Chinese foreign and military policy.

#### *8.4.2. Iceland*

China took the opportunities afforded by the Icelandic economic crisis of 2008–2009 as another means of seeking a foothold in the Arctic. Iceland became the first West European state to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with China in 2013 (Škoba 2013). It is unlikely that access to tiny Iceland as a market for Chinese goods was a significant motivating factor. This action is more aligned with Chinese efforts to ingratiate themselves with smaller Arctic states with the objective of making themselves indispensable partners in their development and accumulating any additional benefits as a bonus. Thus far, according to a report by the Associated Press (2016), China has built a research center. Additionally:

Chinese automaker Geely – owner of Volvo – announced it was investing \$45.5 million in Carbon Recycling International, an Icelandic company that operates the world's first renewable methanol plant. Chinese telecoms giant Huawei is working with Icelandic mobile phone firms and a state-owned Chinese firm has signed a deal to fund a new aluminum smelter in northwest Iceland.

China has signed on with Iceland in the energy sector, with the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) applying for a license to explore and produce oil and gas in Arctic waters off Iceland in collaboration with Iceland's Eykon Energy; it is even reported that China is now the only player in the oil exploration industry in Iceland (Stronski 2018; Lulu 2017). It is also hoping for access to Iceland's fish resources. This can represent a substantial threat to Iceland, as the fishery accounts for 42 percent of its total exports. A University of British Columbia study has shown that China catches up to 12 times more

fish than it reports with its distant water fleet, while newer studies have shown that China's fishery techniques harm biodiversity (Gies 2017).

Other observers suggest, however, that China's real prize in Iceland is influence in and access to the Arctic. Indeed, on the day that the FTA was signed, Iceland also announced the formation of the Arctic Circle, an organization with a much more lenient membership policy than the Arctic Council (Koring 2013). There was also an unusual proposal for a 300 square kilometer golf resort on the windswept north coast of Iceland, funded with Chinese money of course. This was rejected as Iceland to this point does not allow for non-European Economic Area (EEA) ownership of property, but there has been some wavering on this issue already, with further investment proving an enticement.

### 8.4.3. *Russia*

Russia is, of course, no stranger to the use of geo-economic means; see, for example, its 2009 move to cut off natural gas flowing through the pipelines in the Ukraine amidst tensions with the West following its war with Georgia, and again in 2014 amidst the Crimean dispute. Nonetheless, resource-rich but facing sanctions and thus possessing limited investment options, Russia has been home to perhaps the largest of China's Arctic-state advances. Russia's economic dependence on resource exports, and subsequent economic problems in face of low prices (and the Western sanctions), makes it an obvious target for one of China's most compelling tactics: China is not just willing to invest in large-scale energy projects, it is willing to pay significant amounts upfront (Wan 2014). For a cash-strapped regime, and for the cash-strapped SOEs associated with it, this upfront investment is irresistible because it enables them to turn long-term assets into hard cash in hand.

Upfront payments to Russian state-controlled oil company Rosneft, for example, have been estimated to leave the energy giant indebted to China to the tune of US\$ 55 billion, with wide acknowledgement of a minimum US\$ 30 billion (Aizhu 2017). This has secured China not only access to current supplies, but the promise of future projects at favorable terms. It has already used this approach to secure years of discounted oil deliveries from Venezuela: the fact that Western sanctions eliminate most of the competition for Russia's projects only strengthen China's hand (Balding 2017). As Stronski and Ng describe it: "Thus far, Russia and China have successfully managed their differences in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic, but potentially divergent interests remain over the long term. Some Russians now quietly express concern about Beijing's growing geo-economics and geopolitical ambitions in the Asia Pacific region" (Stronski 2018).

## 8.5. Conclusion

With the ongoing and expected changes in the earth's climate, the Arctic is set up to become a region of great possibilities and the playing field for a great new game. It comes as no surprise that China, who aspires to a multipolar world order with several hegemony, has great interest in being a player in this game. The Arctic states listed above are all in need of investment capital to realize new opportunities, and this opens the door for Chinese money and influence to enter the region. It has been argued in this chapter that this is very much in line with China's overall strategic goals and no change of direction should be expected. In fact, we found that the principles of geo-economics – even with its Western origins – are well suited to explain parts of Chinese foreign policy. It says that states can gain influence by using their economic advantages, and this can be observed in China's relationship with several African nations as also its advances in the Arctic, in particular Iceland and Greenland. With its investments, China creates a better environment for diplomacy, opens up *new markets for its own products, and obtains a chance to take part in the training and regulation of sectors that are closely related to the new opportunities*. China hopes that this strategy will also have positive long-term effects such as an increased role in the Arctic Council and opportunities to be a partner in any future endeavor related to the Arctic economy. It will also add to China's already well-developed economic network that can substitute for (or enhance) military or geopolitical superiority (like in the case of Germany) and add to China's comprehensive global ascension strategy. Finally, an ice-free Arctic can rewrite our classic understanding of geopolitics. The Heartland could be exposed via the Northern Sea, and the "Rimland" will have to be extended by adding the Arctic Tundra. The consequences of this are still to be explored, but China will without a doubt try to remain as close as possible to the region.

For the Arctic states, on the other hand, China's involvement can be seen as an opportunity or vulnerability. As former prime minister of Greenland Kuupik Kiest said to the BBC:

What Greenland needs urgently is investments from the outside, and really you don't see investment from either the US or Europe, though at the same time if you want to prevent China from maturing their interest in Greenland – what you should do actually is to invest yourself rather than just speaking of the danger and on a political level trying to prevent China from putting flesh to their investments (BBC News 2018).

The same also applies for Iceland and Russia, and the countries in the region must consider both aspects while moving forward. With this in mind, the focus



shifts to the Arctic Council, an organization that has no decision-making power of any sort, but is the right forum for discussions of this kind. In the following section, recommendations to the Arctic Council are presented.

### *8.5.1. Recommendations*

How, then, should the other Arctic Council nations respond? There are several avenues of response that could be pursued in combination. First, however, the Arctic states must decide whether to court Chinese interest in the region or counteract it. If the Arctic states go with the observers who think that China does not need to be aggressively countered in the region, then they can largely continue with the status quo. Investment from China could be treated as an opportunity for economic growth, and in times of economic stagnation in the West, a welcome source of stimulus for the region. Reactions to Chinese advances in the region, however, even regarding the publishing of the White Paper, “toggles between enthusiasm and fear” (Moscato 2018). Thus, if the warnings of the “hawks” are given precedence, then there is a multipronged approach that the core members of the Arctic region could engage in to counteract China’s efforts.

#### *Draw the line at observer status in the Arctic Council*

China has been angling for more influence in the Arctic with consistent zeal. Whatever its capability to shape the rules and norms of the Arctic through investment and dependence, a seat at the central table would be a bridge too far. The democratic Arctic states must use “discreet counter diplomacy” to ensure China remains at an observer’s distance from the central decision-making processes.

#### *Act now to secure market access to REEs*

If China has shown itself to be willing to use its leverage in REEs, then the Arctic states must act in concert to ensure that non-exclusivity is the principal norm in the development of Arctic resources. Chinese investment can perhaps be tolerated, but Chinese (or “associate”) hoarding should not.

#### *Establish alternative investment vehicles*

If Chinese money is the only development money available, needy states are going to take it, as well as the Chinese influence that comes with it. There is

no reason why the wealthier Arctic states cannot pool resources – perhaps in something akin to a sovereign wealth fund or analogous to China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – to offer a competing (and possibly more normatively desirable to Western institutions) source of development funds. If development funding is key to securing influence in the smaller Arctic states, there is no reason to allow China to win the dominant role in this arena.

### *Be leery of Chinese domestic activity*

Without being alarmist, China’s actions in Australia show that attention must be paid to how the Chinese government seeks to influence its diaspora (Hamilton 2018). Chinese-language media was subject to state influence as were companies that advertised in them; “spontaneous” demonstrations advocating Chinese interests were arranged, and the families of Chinese students abroad were subject to pressure based upon the political activity of the students in Australia. If China is using willing to use its diaspora and the Chinese language media to influence the politics of other states, the democratic Arctic states must monitor the possibility of such influence shaping Arctic issues. Until now, this is less of an immediate concern. It would however become relevant if the above-mentioned numbers of Chinese workers were introduced into the small populations of Greenland and Iceland.

It is not necessary to view China’s actions in the Arctic as hostile to see that it would be wise nevertheless to react to the changing situation. China, even if it is true to its word that it is seeking to be a responsible player in the Arctic, is still engaging in competitive policies when it comes to scarce resources. The Arctic states need to act in concert to ensure that they provide an alternative for developing the resources and rules of the Arctic, new Great Game or not.

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## **Part 3**

# **Theoretical Perspectives on the Changing World Order**





## Chapter 9

# Beyond ideology: A reassessment of regionalism and globalism in IR theory, using China as a case study

**Giovanni Barbieri**

*D.E.M.S. Università di Palermo, Italy*

*C.R.A.N.E.C., Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano, Italy*

### Abstract

After almost two decades of rampant globalism in international affairs, a wind of change seems to be blowing in favor of regionalism. The emergence of new powers on the international stage and the substantial non-alignment of these actors in specific policy areas are all topics of great concern for the future of the international multilateral framework created by the current international institutional system. The common argument in support of these concerns is that the new wave of regionalism is a dangerous challenge to the management of international affairs, and thus a driver for the emergence of global disorder and new conflicts.

It is also possible to argue that the regionalism vs globalism discourse is in large part fueled by biased approaches grounded in different international relations (IR) paradigmatic traditions, thus stalling the debate in a purely ideological way. The observation of China's behavior on the international stage, within the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, may reveal that regionalism and globalism can assume different contents and scopes of application depending on the geographical area where the leading initiative is taken. More specifically, it is possible to interpret Chinese behaviors as the result of and as a response to dysfunctional institutional designs that are no longer able to support the existing Liberal International Order. Moreover, in the case of China, these behaviors can be understood as the product of an autonomous understanding of international relations, backed by the nascent Chinese school of international relations.

Drawing from existing IR theoretical approaches, from both the Western and Eastern traditions, as well as from the ongoing debate about the need for a global IR, it is possible to come to an understanding of the concepts of regionalism and globalism beyond their existing western-centered traditional interpretation. If framed through the lenses of a would be Chinese perspective, the experience of both the AIIB and the NDB can be considered two innovative ways of acting, respectively, regionally and globally within and not outside the existing framework laid out by the International Liberal Order. The final (unexpected) result could be one of enriched version of the debate around the continuance of the current international order with different characteristics, instead of its subversion. That would be a step beyond an ideologically stalled debate.

**Keywords:** AIIB, Chinese school of IR, global governance, Liberal International Order, IPE, liberalism, NDB

## 9.1. Introduction

Recent developments in international politics led international relations scholars to deepen their knowledge of how the international system works as well as of how all the processes, both social and political, related to globalization can be conducive to either continuity or change within the current international system.

The main “choke point” of the debate is about the apparent opposite nature of the dynamics of regionalism and globalization, which some consider to be mutually exclusive phenomena that are potentially able to bring chaos and disorder within the current Liberal International Order framework. This is the traditional endpoint of the realist and liberal schools of thought, which attach high value to the structuring of the international order through power concentration and hegemony. Another point of view sees regional and global dynamics as complementary processes building up the globalization dynamic. This is, typically, the assumption of international political economy (IPE) scholars, for whom the adoption of regional policies (and, specifically, third-wave regionalism) helps in structuring the globalization process and are not a signal of “global retrenchment”.

As it emerges from this initial differentiation, there is no accord on how to interpret renewed regional activism, in particular the adoption by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) of policies aimed at building a regional sphere of influence in East Asia, while keeping pace with ordinary global engagement.

The argument at stake, here, is all about the potential consequences of the adoption of discontinued practices in the global process of market integration, governance networks and policies. The most feared consequence of this approach is the potential return to a multipolar international system, accompanied by the dismissal of multilateral practices as we know them today.

Most of these concerns arise from the observation of emerging powers' behaviors, in particular that of the PRC. To date there is no actual evidence that China is aiming at directly de-structuring the Western Liberal International Order, nor does it want to dismiss globalization. The PRC has made gigantic leaps in order to join the Western international order, with specific regard to the sensitive sector of integration in the global market economy. On the other hand, while enjoying all the benefits deriving from the catch-up process with the West through inclusion within the global governance network, the PRC has gradually raised critiques of the "institutional cage" represented by the multilateral international institutions that structure the Liberal International Order and are alleged by emerging countries to restrict their economic development.

Some of these concerns translated into political practices with the birth of diplomatic alignments within the World Trade Organization (WTO) or, more recently, through the creation of "alternative" international multilateral institutions like the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), both set up by the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping called BRICS, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

What in traditional international relations (IR) thinking is framed in terms of destabilizing behaviors with respect to the international system can be reassessed as well in terms of a cultural asymmetry between the dominant Western scheme underlying the current order. The Eastern emerging idea of international order, which is based on a different political philosophy and cultural values, constitutes as well the foundation for a differentiated approach to regional and global policy implementation. In practice, the picture that emerges is one of the fragmentation of the global governance framework, as it has existed so far according to the Liberal International Order principles, into a more diversified, pluralistic and polycentric global network.

Therefore, the discussion will be structured as follows: in the second section, the discussion will go through an analysis of the state of the art in IR theory about paradigmatic rigidity and theoretical orthodoxy with respect to regionalism and globalism. In particular, it will highlight how Western paradigmatic sorting in IR theory embraced the whole spectrum of scholarly analysis worldwide, leaving little, if any, room for alternative theoretical developments drawing from different political cultures.

The third section will focus on the rising Chinese school of IR, showing how Chinese understanding of international affairs differs from the West at both the ontological and epistemological levels, thus highlighting a totally different understanding in terms of the ontology of the international system.

The fourth section aims to recast the multilateral framework, as it has been laid down with the NDB and the AIIB, in a regionalist perspective, with a focus on Chinese behavior according to the key points of its growing IR school.

## **9.2. De-biasing the bias: Beyond the ideology of theoretical universality**

Most of the problems arising from IR debates around China and the weakening of the Liberal International Order derive from the uncertain conclusions offered by the adoption of the existing IR theoretical frameworks.

Apart from the rising interest around China, the issue pertains to a much larger scale and concerns the capability of existing international relations theories (IRTs) and their paradigmatic sorting to explain the vast number of existing international processes from a non-Western perspective.

The recent rise of non-Western powers as new international actors is posing new challenges to IR as a discipline, chief among which is looking beyond Holsti's claim (1985: 127) that international relations theory barely existed outside the Anglo-Saxon countries. As Acharya points out, the challenge is to find some agreement on how to redress the problem of marginalization of the world beyond the West using the current IRTs (Acharya 2011: 622). Another interesting argument is the one put forth by Bilgin about the way in which traditional Western understanding of IR has 'constructed' the world beyond the West (Bilgin 2008).

The development and adoption of a theoretical framework is the first step towards the understanding of reality and of the social processes that build it. The real problem is how that theoretical framework is settled and developed, and what are its philosophical and (if any exist) political roots.

Realism and liberalism, in their vest of paradigmatic classification of different IRTs, present themselves as universal and worldwide applicable theoretical frameworks, even if they were born and developed within the Western world, and are rooted in the Western liberal political culture and philosophy. Even though both of them are able to frame a specific issue with relative persuasiveness, one should ask if they are effectively universal and shaped for the above-mentioned purpose. Taken from a realist or liberal perspective, Asian

interstate relations are understood mainly in terms of security and integration in the existing international system (Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Ikenberry and Lim 2017), and this understanding occurs from a purely Western point of view, with no regard for how Asian officials pursue their own policies in that field.

The problem with the paradigmatic rigidity of the existing IRTs is that they pretend to be universal, while they care little about if and how different strategic, political, and philosophical cultures are able to enrich them and advance the discipline.

Realist and liberal scholarly research often concedes that different strategic and political cultures may exist, but at the same time, they often deny that a distinct theory is needed in order to analyze them (Snyder, 2008). The point is even more evident when they come to analyze and understand the new wave of regionalism in Asia occurring under China's leadership.

As Peter Katzenstein has highlighted, regional dynamics in Asia are genuinely and substantially different with respect to the traditional European and Western regional integration processes. In his comparative research between Asian and European regionalism, Katzenstein found that while European regionalism distinguishes itself as being "exclusive and formal," Asian regionalism is characterized by a high degree of "informality and inclusiveness" (Katzenstein 1996: 125-127). Different degrees of institutionalization and different degrees of inclusiveness may produce nearly the same effects in terms of intra-bloc trade growth and economic development, but they can also give way to deep and distinct approaches and understandings, as is the case with Asian regionalism.

The fact that China is building its own regional bloc relying mainly on market dynamics and less on the creation of political institutions is perceived by Western powers as a subtle effort to counterbalance American influence within the Asian region and for China to become the hegemon in the area. Another possibility is that China is trying to build its own order, caring less about American wishes and concerns. Western responses to this dynamic are adopted according to an American-Eurocentric vision of the world, a vision that is shaped according to the classic assumptions of realist thinking about security and power. Liberal claims occur as well, with regard to the virtues of participation in the Liberal International Order and membership in the existing multilateral institutions (Ikenberry, 2011). What is interesting is that little attention is paid to the possibility that an Asian regional integration process may be fostered by a vibrant common cultural Asian identity (in both political and philosophical terms) and that this process, based on networks rather than on institutions, is not opposed in principle to the West-led globalization process which relies on multilateral practices.

Realist and liberal assumptions tend to demonize a broad set of practices that are believed to produce lack of international security, political instability, and the retrenchment of multilateral practices. Both paradigms have focused themselves on the study of the behavior of dominant powers and on how they fulfill their interests. This attitude presents two main problems.

The first problem is that the dominant powers have usually been Western powers. As follows logically from that, the only interests that have been fulfilled were Western interests, paying little or no consideration to the non-Western interests that were also in play. In the wake of system theorizing, Kenneth Waltz theorized the marginality of smaller states and the relevance of Great Power competition for the “stability” of the whole system (Waltz 1979). In a similar way, liberal theorizing magnified the virtues of interdependence, international trade and markets integration, and globalization, building upon Western interests. Non-Western and smaller actors were sorted into “partners” and “trouble-makers,” depending on their degree of adherence to Western policies and the Great Powers’ behavior.

This set of theories have *de facto* developed and imposed on the non-Western world a series of concepts like development, security, globalization, economic interdependence, and so on, without any thought on whether these concepts were actually compatible with the national interests and needs of the non-Western world.

To this extent, it is worth noting the contribution made by the English School (ES) in fostering the idea of an evolving international society spread worldwide. The main feature of the English School, as highlighted by Suganami (2011: 32), is its double-faceted globalization process: the worldwide expansion of its research agenda and the adoption, at the regional level, of its methodology. This feature perhaps contributes in making the English School the only real global IR paradigm, in that its analytical toolbox is open to the possibility of framing the study of the “International society of societies” through the post-Western way of thinking (Chakrabarty 2007) and well beyond the traditional IR bifurcation between positivist and post-positivist approaches (Linklater 2013: 25-28).

Another valuable IR paradigm to offer a different starting point, even if still Western in origin, has been the constructivist one (Barnett 2002: 52). Thanks to its openness to issues like culture and identity, it has fostered the growth of theoretical thinking on the Third World, as well as on Islam, considered by some scholars as the most promising autonomous source of IR theorizing (Tadjbakhsh 2009).

Constructivism has had the great merit of shedding light over the circumstance that much of the problems with IR theorizing, as well as with theorizing in general, is the cognitive style implied in the research process. A similar

conclusion is present in Olson and Onuf (1985: 18), who saw in IR globalization the risk of the universalization of the Anglo-American cognitive framework.

Current trends in international politics show that something like that has happened. The Liberal International Order is increasingly challenged by new emerging actors claiming their space and voicing their rights on the international stage. What many see as a challenge posed by the most direct competitor of the United States, China, could be interpreted as the emerging need for different worldviews and understandings of the international order, international development, and international politics in general. China's growing body of IR thinking, firmly rooted in the Tianxia system, justifies Chinese actions in re-defining the international political environment according to China's national interests. The real problem with such a dynamic is not China's desire to acquire political weight on the international stage, but Western lack of understanding of Chinese motives and strategies.

What Johnston (2008) defined as the mimicking behavior of China in adopting Western standards, and conforming to Western political practices, is turning into an autonomous set of practices deeply impregnated with Asian political and cultural identity. Much of the turmoil in contemporary international politics can be traced back to the poor intellectual permeability existing between different ways of thought, and the point is well made in the uncertainty surrounding China's recent regional policies and the harsh responses of the West to them.

The behavior that is perceived as a threat by the West would not be considered an offense by China. The two cases discussed in this paper, those of the NDB and AIIB, are relevant to the extent that regionalism, in the guise of political and economic practice, can be interpreted as peaceful or hostile behavior, depending on the adopted theoretical framework. The point is even more important given that theory is the tool through which one understands reality and, sometimes, it is the starting point from where reality is built. As Bjorn Hettne (2005) correctly pointed out, the problem of theory and theoretical approaches to the study of the regionalism-globalism dynamic is mostly about the ontology and the epistemology constituting the basis of the research approach. The adoption of a pretentiously "universal" theoretical framework could be the worst choice with respect to the results.

### *9.2.1. The "ideology" of regionalism and globalism*

When dealing with the study of regionalism and its relation to globalism, it is worth asking what regionalism is and what it is not. As a concept, regionalism



could assume various meanings depending on (1) the point of view of the researcher; (2) the discipline under which it is studied; and (3) the reasons why the investigation is being carried out. To date, research about regionalism has produced three consecutive “waves” of regional studies, the last of which is the one of interest for this chapter, the so-called third wave of regionalism. Due to the very nature of the concept of region, I will not discuss here the evolution of the research findings across all the “waves.”<sup>1</sup> This is due to the “changing” nature of the meaning of “region,” which moved progressively from a rather geographical connotation to a more nuanced, multilevel conceptualization in which geography, economics, actors’ agency, and community building played a substantial role in shaping the regional dimension. What is of great interest is the fact that international political economy has acknowledged current regionalization trends as qualitatively new, trying to frame them through multidimensional analysis. The concept of regionalism, thus, cannot be separated from the concept of region. Many efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive concept of region so far. According to Nye (1987), a region is made of a reasonable number of states that share geographical boundaries and an adequate level of interdependence. In the words of Cantori and Spiegel (1970), a region is made of states sharing cultural, historical, ethnical, linguistic, and social bonds. Hurrell (1995: 38) goes further and adds economic complementarity and organizational homogeneity to the equation. The main feature of the evolution of the concept of region is the progressive waning of the geographic element as an essential component for its formation, and the rising of more dynamic elements, like social cohesion, linguistic homogeneity, and cultural similarity, which are usually restrained by geographical boundaries. The concept of region as a community is perhaps the most adequate in current times, when geographical boundaries are not really an obstacle to the establishment of permanent relations between states, whether they are territorially contiguous or not.

Notwithstanding the remarkable contributions made by these theorizations, the issue of defining what a region is and what it is not remains of great interest, even if it proves to be useless when it comes to dealing with regionalism.

Regionalism, in turn, presents fewer definitional problems, considering that it refers to the political level and the tendency to organize the world in different regions. It has a political content to the extent that regional dynamics arise from the actions of state authorities according to their national needs and interests. However, it is actually difficult to frame regionalism as a concept

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1 For a deep and extended analysis of the state of the art in regional studies, refer to Hettne (2005).

because of its strict interdependence with globalism and its relatively recent nature.

The common view on this point is unequivocal. Regionalism and globalism could be both opposing and complementary phenomena, counterbalancing or completing each other (Hettne 2005). The real problem with the study of regionalism and globalism is one of an ontological and epistemological nature: it all depends on the content assigned to regionalism and globalism and on how they are posed in a relation of mutual dependence. To use an evocative image, the task of explicating this nexus is like a drunk man fumbling for his keys at night under a dim street light. When venturing into this rather unexplored field, the researcher should be aware that the theoretical framework they are about to exploit might not be the best with which to obtain a reliable understanding of the issue and that, perhaps, they are looking in the wrong place. The regionalism-globalism relation presents this particularity, considering that different theoretical frameworks may lead to different conclusions, different understandings, and, consequently, different policy formulations.

The recent debate has highlighted this last point with reference to the different evaluations made by neoliberals and IPE scholars about regionalism. Neoliberals consider regionalism as a kind of new protectionism, opposed to the broader integration dynamic fostered by globalization. According to neoliberal understanding, regionalism is a form of political intervention adopted by state regulators in order to counterbalance the loss of centrality by the state, thus opposed to globalization and growing market integration. The main neoliberal argument is that growing levels of market integration naturally lead to higher levels of political integration, guaranteeing higher political, juridical, and economic standards within states and across the “international society of States”. By interpreting regionalism in this way, neoliberals can be said to attach greater importance to globalism not only as a defined set of policies implemented through multilateral institutions, but as an interpretative framework which has great impact from the epistemological point of view. Notwithstanding this, neoliberal analysis has a precise ontological understanding of regionalism, which is considered only as a “second-best” option to be adopted just in those areas where globalization fails. On the other hand, the international political economy approach conceives of regionalism as being complementary to globalization, not in opposition to it.

International political economy defines the new regionalism as qualitatively new, to the extent that it involves a broad set of actors and it is conditioned by market dynamics, and societal, cultural, and organizational factors. What for neoliberals is the second-best feature of regionalism is the very crux of the regional dynamic for IPE scholars (Hettne 2005; Laursen 2003; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003). According to international political economy

studies, regionalism has a completely different ontological content: it is complementary to globalization and it works in the same direction as globalization by addressing those issues that globalization itself fails to address. Framed in that way, regionalism is not opposed to but complementary to free trade and global openness, and works to foster both of them. For this reason, new regionalism is also called “open regionalism” (Gamble and Payne 1996), and it is understood as a different way of implementing the globalization process.

If we consider contemporary trends, it is possible to think about regionalism as a process leading to the globalization of regions, or *globalization by other means*. The common trait of almost all ongoing regional projects is not a desire for regional retrenchment, but a common will to work towards increased regional integration, mainly under the organizational point of view, to enjoy the economic and market advantages offered by globalization. Undoubtedly, this is a new form as well as a new approach to globalization, which implies a troubled political coordination with the Western agenda-setters of the original globalization project. The problem, which is increasingly becoming the major challenge of this century, is to find a way to detach the investigation around regionalism and globalism from the Westphalian (and purely Eurocentric) logic in order to develop a more coherent and fitting analytical framework. A large part of the problem concerning China’s ascension in international politics is its growing dissatisfaction with the current world order, as well as the spillover effect of giving a voice to all those who are dissatisfied with that order (Kupchan 2000). The resistance and inability of traditional multilateral institutions to accommodate the requests of emerging countries regarding the reform of institutional decisional processes (notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) could be imputed to an inadequate understanding of contemporary processes. It is the result of the application of purely Western analytical and theoretical frameworks that do not properly take into account the rest of the world’s needs and interests.

In this context, China’s behavior is instructive to the extent that it offers some new elements to understand the content and scope of the new regionalism from a different point of view (Callahan 2008; Hopewell 2017; Subacchi 2017).

When dealing with regionalism and globalism, it is necessary to assess whether or not they are specific products of the *Liberal* International Order and whether they can exist within a different kind of international order. What China is seemingly challenging is the idea that regionalism and globalism can be qualitatively defined only according to Western liberal standards, showing that alternative ways of organization of the international system, like those devised by the NDB and AIIB, can just as well structure an alternative international order, without dismissing multilateral practices.

Looking at the NDB and the AIIB and how they set out new governance schemes, at the global and Asian level, they are substantially reducing Western influence in the decision-making processes concerning developmental and economic issues for non-Western countries, with no intrusions in the Western sphere of influence. The case of the AIIB in particular shows how the Asian regional integration process follows cultural, organizational, and economic criteria without opposing the broader globalization process, but, rather, complementing it under new conditions. It is a rather fluid process of regional integration, in a loose organizational framework, arising from a completely different interpretation of international relations and the world order.

China is not assuming a hostile stance against the current international order, nor is it acting in a way that would make a neutral observer think that its primary aim is to overthrow American political leadership worldwide. That would be a behavioral logic corresponding to the Western traditional approach to policy making in international affairs, which is international interstate competition arising from shifts in material power distribution. Western political international relations are deeply rooted in this logic, modeled on a win-lose schematic. The Chinese approach, instead, is modeled upon a win-win logic, as can be seen clearly in the way it conducts its economic and commercial relations worldwide. To this extent, it is possible to assume that a divide exists between the East and the West in both political philosophy and cultural background, which translates into a different understanding of international politics' dynamics (leading, thus, to the development of alternative theoretical frameworks to explain them).

There are two main distinctive elements of the Chinese approach to contemporary international politics. The first is the effort to build new models of loose inclusive networks of governance, as opposed to the current global Western rigid, rule-based model. The second one is the idea of a world order that the Chinese authorities are seemingly pushing – a horizontally and cooperative structured world order (as opposed to the vertical and hierarchical one in use currently) in which different self-organizing regional groupings can coexist upon a minimal common core of norms and values.<sup>2</sup>

These two elements can be assumed to flow directly from the two core elements of the nascent Chinese international relations school: Tianxia and

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2 To this extent, this approach is similar to Amitav Acharya's "multiplex world" concept. According to the multiplex world concept, global governance is undergoing a process of fragmentation. The result is a more pluralistic and diversified global governance structure, mirroring the current reality of the international system, and made of new transnational challenges and new political ideas (Acharya 2017).

relationality. Therefore, the following section will deal with the Chinese school of IR, examining these elements of differentiation.

### 9.3. The Chinese school of IR: The cultural cleavage

Notwithstanding the relatively recent development of a Chinese school of thought in IR, it is possible to see how that school departs from firmly rooted Western concepts like individualism and rule-based governance even if it draws from the Western theoretical tradition for the normative approach to social theorization.

At the very core of the issue is a deeply different understanding of the ontology of the original conditions of international actors. Within the “emerging Chinese school of International Relations,” there are scholars who stress the importance of two basic elements of the Confucian philosophical tradition animating East Asian politics: Tianxia and relationality.

The first element, Tianxia (lit. “all under heaven” or “sky beneath”), is in principle comparable to the Western concepts of Christendom, meaning a community of subjects whose existence is governed and ordered by an immanent and superior order of universal values.

Relationality refers to the epiphenomenal structuration of reality, under the influence of Tianxia’s inspiring values. In other words, in a Tianxia-inspired system, the social environment is structured around a relational framework in which intersubjective (as well as interstate) relations are animated by common and shared values. Relationality is then a concept drawing more from the moral dimension of values than from the legal one of rules and norms.

The Confucian concept of Tianxia considers reality as the product of the coexistence of the *Tian* (the sky) with all the things standing under it (*Di*) living in a relation of mutual dependency. The sky was considered as the ordering principle of existing reality as well as the place where resided the universal will of the universe, and it stood as the original source of the emperor’s power and dynastic legitimacy. The emperor, then, had a political legitimacy deriving from the “Sky’s mandate” to rule over existing lands. In the same vein, every detrimental event to the emperor was meant to signal his delegitimization by the universal will of the *Tian*. In this cultural reference system, the emperors received the power to rule over all existing lands, and people had the “right” to be included within the Chinese empire. Different from the European principle of the king’s divine appointment, the “Heaven mandate” was not an absolute concept, at least at the theoretical level: the power conferred through the

mandate was subject to respect of the principles of moderation, equity, and justice. Clearly, the mandate framework was not something that was arbitrary or left to chance. Scholars directly appointed by the emperor and acting under state sponsorship, a circumstance highlighting the lack of any religious dimension in the Tianxia system, developed the normative framework structuring the mandate system.

The Tianxia doctrine received further attention with the work of the Chinese philosopher Zhao Tingyang. The main point Zhao makes in deepening the understanding of Tianxia is the nature of the contemporary world. According to Zhao (2006), the modern world is a “non-world” where the traditional distinction among national communities does not help in framing a coherent global political vision. Zhao’s main argument in affirming the lack of a global political perspective is its criticism of the Westphalian state logic, which, by promoting interstate competition, has favored the emergence of political frictions and interstate conflict. Zhao’s approach then is similar to the one adopted by imperial Chinese dynasties in the past: the world naturally tends towards a global common governance framework, based on the principle of integration rather than on the principle of submission.

Thus, the most interesting feature of the Tianxia cultural system is that the existence of a central state is admitted, along with its right to rule over all the other political entities surrounding it.

This is the common standpoint of the triad (Shih and Chen 2014) of contemporary Chinese international relations thinkers, formed by Zhao together with Qin Yaking and Yan Xuetong. They all rely heavily on the Zhou dynasty’s history (1046-256 BC), drawing from that historical experience to test their hypothesis. They do not take that approach randomly: the Zhou period was a long period of Chinese centrality in the Asian neighborhood, as it was also during the following Qing dynasty (1636-1912), whose history is still under “official” scrutiny by Chinese cultural authorities.

The concept of state, thus, is deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and culture, although it is developed and understood on a different basis with respect to its Western counterparts. It is no coincidence that all the territories forming modern China across centuries have been named the “Middle Kingdom” (*Zhongguo*), as they are still. The idea of occupying a central position, both in geographical and political terms, greatly influenced the formation of the political thought of premodern Chinese culture. Unlike all other political schools of thought across the world, the only premodern political entity in which it is possible to trace the concept of the state’s political centrality is China, whereas even the most self-centric polity in the history of political thought, Europe, relied heavily on the concept of anarchy to legitimate state agency in interstate relations. Basically, it was lacking a clear and identifiable political core.

Another constitutive element of the growing Chinese school of IR is relationality. As mentioned earlier, relationality is the other cornerstone of the theoretical construction of the Chinese school, though it is developed in different ways depending on the individual preferences of the scholars.

Thus, Zhang, Qin, and Yang all attach different meanings to the concept of relationality. While Yang is relatively silent on the issue, conceding that the growing Chinese IR school would benefit from dealing with the Western theoretical framework, Zhang (2015: 26-30) identifies two main typologies of relationality: instrumental hierarchy and expressive hierarchy. The main difference between the two is that expressive hierarchy is impregnated with Confucian culture, while instrumental hierarchy lacks a moral dimension. Instrumental hierarchy (Zhang 2015: 7) is like an Asian application of the Machiavellian realist Western principle, “the end justifies the means,” and was used at times when the Ming dynasty had to exploit its relations with foreign colonizers in order to satisfy national interests. Expressive hierarchy, by contrast, is endowed with ethical content and structures relationships in accordance with Confucian principles, as it was understood at the time of the Qin dynasty.

Qin Yaking is, in turn, a strong supporter of a Chinese specificity with regard to relationality, in particular its plainly Confucian moral content. In Qin’s formulation, the Western principle of individual responsibility deriving from the constitutive human condition of free will does not take into account the moral dimension of the Asian relational schemes. According to Qin, Asian relationality is better identified by the Confucian principle of the self’s behavior towards others, which structures the moral dimension of social interactions (Qin 2011: 125-137) Qin’s statement is rather problematic in that it prevents its own framework from dealing with Western theoretical frameworks due to the fundamentally different ontological approach. Another problematic point is thrown up by Qin’s understanding of relationalism, which he puts in clear contrast with the atomist individual methodology (Qin 2011: 134-135), thus preventing the nascent Chinese school from undertaking any serious confrontation with its Western counterparts, as highlighted by Acharya and Buzan (2010: 226).

Notwithstanding Qin’s stress on morality when addressing the Chinese cultural features of relationality, it is worth noting that Yan Xuetong works on a similar, parallel research stream. He agrees with affirming the importance of going back to the roots of Chinese strategic thinking in IR (Yan 2011: 256) to further develop the Chinese school, but at the same time, he does not go back to a Sino-centric theoretical approach (like Qin and Zhang) when conducting empirical research. He acknowledges, in principle, the validity and usefulness of a specific Chinese approach based on the country’s heritage.

Thus, we can see that, for the Chinese school, the concept of relationality is difficult to frame. It could well be a theoretical cornerstone in defining to what extent Asian politics and politics own precisely distinctive characters from other forms of relationality and social interactions across the world, but when it comes to assessing whether or not it qualifies as a distinctive Asian moral content, contradictions start showing up. The main obstacle in determining whether a moral content exists, and how it emerges, lies pretty much in the applied methodology through which scholars build their research. Zhang makes a point on this when he notes that “Understanding ancient thought [...] must take into account both its meaning and context” (Zhang 2012: 85). Zhao’s and Qin’s approaches seem to tilt towards a “mystic fascination” for the ancient dynasties’ practices, through the application of Chinese derived scientific concepts, at times when China was an undisputed large and powerful country in its neighborhood. Yan’s approach, on the contrary, is seen to be much more prudent in that while affirming the importance of rescuing Chinese cultural specificities in the development of a Chinese IR body of thought, he keeps applying universal and shared scientific concepts in its empirical research.

The main problem that Chinese scholars face in developing a specific IR school of thought is twofold and stands in the realm of both political need for an autonomous stream of IR thought and scientific need to build a coherent theoretical framework.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution made by the nascent Chinese school is the recovery of the concept of Tianxia, more so than the concept of relationality. Far from being an abstract formulation, or a concept applicable only to Chinese politics and reality, Tianxia is a different understanding of the world system. As Wang (2013) pointed out, the concept of Tianxia could be applicable just as much to today’s world system, with reference to the American hegemonic system. This idea has been put forth as well by Babones (2017), who openly asserts the existence of an American Tianxia characterized by “a moral ideology of individualism that undergirds the basic world society principles of human rights, democracy, and rule of law.” The moral content of the American Tianxia, thus, could be opposed to the claimed moral relational content of a Chinese Tianxia with regard to the specific substance of that supposed morality which should drive the functioning of the world system. The Chinese school seems to address that diversity in the element of relationality, distinguishing between instrumental and expressive hierarchy. It advocates a supposed universal Chinese preference for expressive hierarchy, drawing from Confucian philosophy and dynastic history without explaining what are the conditions under which hierarchic relationality can be applied. Zhao’s (2012) claim for mutual tolerance in the conduct of international relations is the key to understanding the rationale for the Chinese school’s preference for



expressive hierarchy. Nonetheless, it is true that if a Tianxia central state system exists, the choice between expressive and instrumental hierarchy lies in the hands of the central state, a position that is currently occupied by the United States. The strong concern for a Chinese Tianxia world system, then, could be interpreted, as suggested by Callahan, as “a proposal for a new [Chinese] hegemony” (2008: 758), defined by Chinese characteristics, just like the current American centered world system is filled with American characteristics.

Notwithstanding the problems affecting the Tianxia theoretical development undertaken by the Chinese school, it is nonetheless true that it can add valuable insights to understanding how the contemporary world system works. In particular, it could help in understanding the rationales behind specific foreign policy options adopted by the Chinese government and the relation in which these options stand with respect to regional and global policies.

#### **9.4. The “regionalist” answer**

With the above framework laid down, it is possible to assume that the regionalist policies adopted by China are the “Eastern” answer to Western difficulties in preserving the continuity and effectiveness of the International Liberal (world) Order. The fact that some states and governments seem more keen to handle their international relations on a regional basis is not necessarily a case against global multilateralism. On the contrary, it can be understood as a flexible response to the growing international complexity, as it is the implementation of regional policies to better enjoy globalization processes outside the traditional Western legal framework.

To this extent, ideological approaches to the understanding of undergoing processes can be highly detrimental for the correct framing of the above-mentioned dynamics, which pivot around one core issue: the demand for reform by emerging countries, in particular by China.

It is evident that China is pursuing the most striking and active regionalist policy in the economic and developmental fields in East Asia through the AIIB, while playing at the global level as the leader of the emerging countries through the joint action within the NDB (and the CRA). To simplify this, we can consider the AIIB and NDB as the two pillars of a Chinese mixed strategy aimed at pursuing globalization by other means. The AIIB is the institutional tool that, in principle, should act like the existing Asian Development Bank, but following Chinese interests. The main feature of the AIIB is the voting rights distribution mechanism, through which China excluded Japan and the United

States from the “inner club,” a situation that is clearly in contrast with the ADB. Consequently, the financial streamlining role of the AIIB in funding infrastructural investments throughout Asia reflects Chinese interests in building an infrastructural network that is economically functional for its trade and developmental interests.

Some scholars consider both the new multilateral development banks (MDB) a Chinese effort to upset the power balance in global governance (Ikenberry and Lim 2017). Indeed, China enjoys the lion’s share in the NDB and AIIB, and it provides them financial backing through its public finance. Moreover, it retains the majority share of voting rights within the AIIB. There exists no consensus about whether China is pursuing a national interest-based strategy or merely a counterbalancing strategy against the United States and its allies.

Victor Cha (2016) coined the term “power play,” meaning a mixed strategy based upon bilateral diplomacy and multilateral bargaining, both realized at the same time. Though Cha’s theory was focused on explaining the successful post-World War II American policy of building alliances, the same theoretical scheme could be applied to China’s foreign policy in Asia and abroad.

What can be said with relative certainty is that China is pursuing a nuanced strategy that in many ways adheres to the central state role devised by Tianxia and the expressive hierarchy approach as it has been framed by the Chinese IR school. Within the NDB and AIIB, China is evidently trying to consolidate its position as hegemon. Notwithstanding this hegemonic effort, it is pursuing its goals through relational inclusion and identitarian solidarity with the Global South and Asian countries, which is actually a quite different strategy with respect to the rigid rule-based approach of the Western global governance framework.

#### *9.4.1. NDB and AIIB: The Chinese stakeholder*

China joined the Indian initiative to set up the New Development Bank and set the conditions to build the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank following the developing countries’ failure to achieve major governance reform with reference to voting rights both at the World Bank and at the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The New Development Bank was established on 27 March 2013 during the 5th BRICS Summit in Durban (South Africa) with a formal resolution approved by Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa and China. The legal basis of the bank was laid down with the signing of the Agreement on the New Development Bank, on 15 July 2014, during the 6th BRICS Summit in Fortaleza

(Brazil). Since its origin, the NDB has been committed to provide finance, loans, and every form of financial assistance for sustainable and inclusive growth in the developing world, mainly focusing on infrastructure investments and project pipeline financing.

The initial projected capital to be raised amounted to US\$100 billion, with an immediate subscribed capital of \$50 billion. The subscription quota is equitably divided among the members, US\$10 billion each and 20 percent of the subscribed capital, as is the voting rights distribution. By the end of 2017, the NDB had funded 11 projects, ten in the transport and renewable energy infrastructure sectors and one in the social infrastructure sector.

One of the most interesting elements of the NDB is its Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), a coverage instrument against potential global monetary pressure brought to bear by the IMF. It was established in 2014 during the BRICS meeting in Fortaleza and became operative in 2015. The CRA has a subscribed capital of US\$100 billion, with Brazil, Russia, and India providing US\$18 billion each, South Africa providing US\$5 billion and China providing US\$41 billion. Within the CRA, China shows its financial might in terms of foreign currency reserves.

Although the CRA is denominated in US dollars, as is the paid-in capital of the NDB, there is a shared belief that China is trying to make the right moves towards the internationalization of its domestic currency, the renminbi (RMB). Notwithstanding its status as an “immature creditor” (McKinnon and Schnabl 2014: 13), and thus the impossibility of lending in RMB, the creation of the CRA is to be considered, together with the inclusion of the RMB in the IMF’s Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket in 2015, as one of the steps taken by the Chinese authorities to make the RMB an international currency. The Chinese RMB is thus an international currency in progress (Subacchi 2017: 139), and China’s 12th and 13th Five Year Plans stress the importance of making the RMB a key currency internationally. In the wake of the Chinese economic pragmatism, the NDB can be said to be a tool through which China intends to expand its economic and financial sphere of influence abroad, to sustain the internationalization of its currency. This view is further supported by the 2016 NDB issuance of the first “Green Bond series” for a total amount of RMB 3 bn (USD 450mn). Chinese officials, whose advice is to denominate the Green Bonds<sup>3</sup> in member countries’ currencies to cover against exchange risks, have announced further bonds’ emissions. On January 2019, the NDB approved a RMB 10bn Bond Programme, of which a first emission of RMB 3bn has been

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3 Green Bonds are bonds designed to finance environmental projects. Typically, they are aimed at providing funding for energy efficiency projects, sustainable agriculture, pollution prevention, sustainable transportation and the implementation of new environmentally friendly technologies.

successfully placed on February 2019<sup>4</sup>. (Tham and Taplin 2016). In the specific case of the RMB internationalization, the question to be asked is not “when,” but “where” (Eichengreen and Lombardi 2017) it will outweigh other currencies. To date, the only region in which the RMB plays a dominant role is Asia, where it scores 6 as a dominant reference currency;<sup>5</sup> in Europe, it scores 2 above the US dollar which scores 0. Indeed, beyond the desire of creating a compact political group on the global stage, the NDB could be viewed also as the way in which China wants to expand the RMB’s area of influence outside Asia (Brazil and South Africa). One practical way to achieve this goal is to sustain the supply chain network.

The AIIB, which would well serve this goal, was officially established in October 2014, with 21 countries serving as its founding members. It has an authorized capital of US\$100 billion and a paid-in capital of US\$50 billion on a 20 percent ratio and the rest callable. Since its creation, the AIIB has experienced some forms of ostracism by the United States, which has prevented countries like South Korea, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy from signing up. However, these countries eventually subscribed AIIB quotas in April 2015, an event that marked the moment when “the United States lost its role as the underwriter of the global economic system” (Summers 2015). As of 13 October 2017, membership of the AIIB stands at 38 regional members, 20 non-regional members, and 23 prospective members, totaling 81 members.

The AIIB’s governance rules, as approved in 2015, gives China 26.01 percent of the voting rights, which is slightly beyond the 25 percent quota needed to block any decisions requiring a super-majority<sup>6</sup> and signaling the absence of a real inner club. China’s overwhelming voting power, which automatically translates into a “veto” power, clearly reflects the “Asian” vocation of the AIIB, in open opposition to the Western “openness” of the Asian Development Bank, where the United States and Japan own 15.6 percent voting shares each, while China holds 6.4 percent. The rules governing the executive structure of the AIIB, composed of a Board of Governors and a non-resident Board of Directors, reflect the strong desire to prevent non-regional members from exerting excessive influence. These rules are designed to grant the major shareholders an outsized governance role in the Board of Directors and to grant a seat on the board following the ratio of 6 percent of voting power among regional

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4 <https://www.ndb.int/investor-relations/borrowings/>

5 Based on data by Eichengreen and Lombardi (2017).

6 As specified in Chapter V, Article 28.2 (ii), of the AIIB’s Articles of Agreement, “a supermajority vote shall require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the total number of Governors, representing not less than three-fourths of the total voting power of the members.”

members and 15 percent among non-regional members. According to this scheme, India, Russia and China get one seat each, non-regional members must organize themselves into constituencies to occupy three seats (representing twenty-eight non-regional members), and the other forty-one regional members must organize themselves into six constituencies to occupy the remaining six regional members seats, on a total of twelve seats.

Most of the AIIB-funded projects are in the infrastructure and energy sectors. Moreover, of the 25 projects approved between June 2016 and February 2018, 21 are based in countries that will be helped by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As Bräutigam and Gallagher (2014) point out, the new MDBs enable all the participating countries to meet their own national interests. For Chinese, this means prioritizing investment streams relating to railways, highways, power plants, maritime ports, and digital infrastructure, in order to both sustain its network of supply chains and internationalize its economy.

As we see, China is driving the NDB and AIIB towards a two-fold mission. The first one is to gain, if not hegemony, at least a sufficient quota of international economic strength, serving the goals of both building a large sphere of financial influence for the RMB and consolidating its international trade position.

The second one concerns soft power issues. China is clearly on its way to exert substantial influence over the NDB and AIIB with the final aim of coalescing developing countries under the same economic and financial governance rules, different but not opposed to Western ones. This kind of Chinese multilateralism, while a win-win option in infrastructure investments and opportunities of economic development for the vast majority of Asian countries, could reveal its weaknesses in the long run because of the ambivalent nature of Chinese politics. At present, it signals Beijing's strong desire to implement both an Asian and a Global South regionalism, to play on an equitable basis at the global level with the traditional Western actors.

#### *9.4.2. What lies in the future?*

Besides the justifiable euphoria flourishing around these new institutions, one should be aware of all the problems related to economic and political processes and their evolutionary dynamics over time.

Notwithstanding their basically US-oriented nature, it is necessary to credit both the World Bank group and the IMF for their ability to address complex economic and financial problems in the recent past and limit (but not avoid) damages. This has been the result of years of evolution and adaptation, no matters what interests they served. As Western-centered multilateral

institutions, they worked to maintain the stability of a specific international economic and financial system, sustained by a liberal political orientation. After the dissolution of the USSR, they adapted to the conditions imposed by the new unipolar international system, whereby nearly all decisions (and, thus, responsibilities) pivoted around the USA.

The creation of the new MDBs is the result of the failure, on the part of the IMF and the World Bank group, to keep adapting to the changing international environment. This could not be bad news.

While I do not agree with those who say that the international system has turned multipolar (Wallerstein 2007; Pieterse 2017), it is nonetheless true that it is undergoing a phase of “softened” unipolarity. By saying this, I mean that the United States still occupies the top seat in the international hierarchy, but it is becoming less willing to engage directly with the discontents.

The major concerns with the new MDBs, as has been expressed by the United States and international development organizations, is that the new rules they want to set would undermine the existing framework of principles and standards promoted by the traditional multilateral organizations. Specifically, the major fear is the demise of a global and comprehensive multilateral framework organized by one actor and the birth of a global multilateral framework pivoting around different regional groupings.

The NDB and AIIB have made efforts not to replicate, but to conform and adapt to existing multilateral principles and standards. Both the NDB and AIIB have hired foreign professionals with previous working experience within traditional financial institutions to signal their good will in adhering to the existing international practices. What is probably raising concerns among those involved in the debate is the continuous rhetoric about “next practices” (Maasdorp 2015) and “good practices” (BOAO Forum for Asia 2014) put forth by the officials of the new MDBs. While “next practices” signals the intention of going beyond the best practices that are currently applied (and that still are to be created!), the expression “good practices” relates more to the political level than the technical one. The technical level could lead to a pessimistic overview for the future, considering that the policy-making process usually takes shape under the influence of the most powerful actor or, in this specific case, of the major shareholder. The Chinese approach to development policies and governance rule-setting is undoubtedly atypical compared to the Western tradition and, at least in the case of the AIIB, it takes place within a context of unprecedented developing and emerging countries’ protagonism within the framework of development finance and financial governance. This may imply a slight departure from the milestones regarding social and environmental safeguards, as well as transparency and respect for the rule of law.

The case of the AIIB Environmental and Social Framework is paradigmatic in that it enunciates a series of principles without any defining and enforcement mechanisms. The NDB, too, received harsh criticisms concerning its lack of awareness about environmental and social issues, as well as its substantial nonchalance concerning non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Santos 2016).

Both the NDB and AIIB show good intentions in the direction of inter-institutional cooperation, as stated in their Founding Agreements. In addition, the AIIB experiences joint funding on certain projects with the World Bank, the UK Department for International Cooperation, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Financial Corporation, and the Asian Development Bank.<sup>7</sup> To this extent, cooperation could provide the additional financial resources needed to cover developing countries' investment needs, leaving them enough political space to define their own standards in development finance. While, on the one hand, this could produce a positive input in reforming traditional MDBs, on the other hand, it could result in an understandable Chinese ploy to exploit the new MDBs to serve its own foreign policy goals. All these are signals of an evolving context, where the international order is undergoing a transformation from a liberal dimension towards a more pluralistic and diversified asset.

## 9.5. Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn following this discussion? The first part of the main title calls for a step “beyond ideology”. As I have indicated here, ideology in international relations is the degenerative path of a rigid, orthodox, and normative application of theoretical thinking in social sciences. The discussion presented in this chapter is aimed at showing how growing complexity cannot be managed successfully if theory does not adapt to the evolving reality. The Liberal International Order no longer seems adequate to satisfy current international systemic needs because its structural framework has not been adapted to the new international conditions. The fact that a growing body of new international actors seems dissatisfied with the current global multilateral

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<sup>7</sup> AIIB (2016), Articles of Agreement. Retrieved 22 July 2019 (<https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/basic-documents/articles-of-agreement/index.html>); World Bank (2016), Co-financing Framework Agreement. Retrieved 22 July 2019 (<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/522801471875210501/AIIB.pdf>).

framework reveals how Western political leadership has blundered in meeting these actors' needs and how much they undervalued the non-western actors' renewed role within the international system. On the other side, the flourishing of new schools of thought, like the Chinese IR school, signals that emerging actors are trying to frame reality through the lens of their own cultural and political backgrounds. This framing could, however, be exposed to ideological temptations, and become the starting point for a degenerative path similar to the American one in the contemporary world. The most useful approach would be one of intercultural dialogue and scientific debate among scholars coming from different theoretical and cultural traditions.

Chinese international engagement reveals that another way of conducting international relations is both thinkable and even possible. Besides the nascent Chinese school's main concern, which is to develop a distinctively Chinese approach to IR theory featuring specific cultural and philosophical elements, it can nonetheless contribute to the evolution of IR thinking in what concerns its essential understanding of interstate relations. The relational dimension captured by the Tianxia concept, coupled with the image of the central state dynamic, could provide Western-centered IR thinking with useful elements to expand its theoretical scope and to overcome its Anglo-Saxon and Eurocentric bias. While one can concede that any kind of theorization in IR starts from the observation of one kind of system, a step towards the development of global international relations should be to develop new theories by observing different kinds of systems. The Chinese school is developing its own approach, imagining a contemporary global system characterized by relationality instead of hierarchy, and a multicentered global governance framework instead of a single-centered, highly hierarchical system. The cases of the NDB and the AIIB may be revealing of the way China understands regionalism and globalism within a Tianxia framework. Globalism, in particular, seems to be framed in terms of coordination of different regional policies under the auspices of a central state – China in this case – in the area of its geographical competence. Notwithstanding the desirability of a world system without instrumental hierarchy, the Chinese school is exposed as well to ideological temptations to the extent that it risks developing a theoretical framework devoted to China's foreign policy needs. That would be in no aspect different from the American and, in broader terms, the Western approach, which are keen on taking a normative approach. The most valuable insight of the Tianxia concept is, in conclusion, the new perspective it offers to analyze the Liberal International Order dynamic. This dynamic is the American central state one that can govern the system through expressive or instrumental hierarchy, depending on the systemic conditions. That would be a great discovery for the supporters of a presumptive specificity and originality of the American world order, considering that the central state



argument, developed from the empirical case of ancient Chinese imperial tradition, can be applied as well to the contemporary international system. It could be as well a useful insight to the extent that, under the auspices of the central state argument, the absolute originality of the Liberal International Order could turn out to be not so original in a long-term perspective.

This can also be a powerful stimulus for IR theory, in developing new approaches to understand more aptly the dynamics of the contemporary American Tianxia-like system and its possible evolutions in the future.

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## Chapter 10

# Liberal international order without liberalism: Chinese visions of world order

**Matti Puranen**

*University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland*

### Abstract

The chapter discusses changes in the international order during the "rise of the rest", focusing on the relationship between international thought and the actual international order. The Western great powers have for long dominated both the international order and its institutional arrangements, but also the thought and theory defining the very nature of international politics. During the last decade, however, this dominance has met an increasing amount of challenges which is creating space for alternative ideas and interpretations.

Of all the rising great powers, China has been especially interested in filling the opening ideological vacuum as it has stated as one of its main objectives to break down the "discourse hegemony" of the West. On the side of its growing military, economic and political power, China also wants to strengthen its "discursive power" – to be able to define international politics from its own perspective and to bring "Chinese wisdom" for solving the problems of the international order.

The chapter first examines China's complicated historical relationship with the international order during the modern era, and shows how the Chinese leadership has been increasingly bold in offering its alternative worldviews, notably through its new framework for reforming the international order, the Community of common future for mankind (CCFM). The chapter analyzes the CCFM in detail and argues in the conclusions, that the framework – although perhaps possessing considerable rhetorical value – remains too vaguely and ambiguously described for providing a credible alternative for the liberal international order. The concept can still be seen as an important object of study for analysts of China and international politics, as its central tenets are likely to guide China's foreign relations to the foreseeable future.

**Keywords:** China, Chinese politics, Chinese foreign relations, International Relations, Community of shared future for mankind

## 10.1. Introduction

The “liberal international order” is encountering increasing challenges and its erosion is happening on many levels: the spread of democracy has halted and the growth of global trade is slowing down. Even the original main proponent of the liberal order, the United States, seems to be pulling away from its commitments, putting its own interests above global cooperation (Acharya 2017). Paradoxically, at the same time, the old institutional arrangements are not enough, as mankind, in the words of Yuval Harari, is facing “common problems that make a mockery of all national borders, and that can only be solved through global cooperation” (Harari 2018).

Now that the “unipolar moment” of Western dominance is passing, a concert of new visions for the future international order has emerged. Some offer nostalgic schemes of returning to certain foundational principles of the order, with sovereign nation states and strict national borders at its core (Harari 2018). Others, such as the rising great powers, China and Russia, are introducing bold visions of the order thoroughly reformed. The liberal international order proposed by the West is becoming only one vision among many, and its future seems increasingly uncertain.

According to Amitav Acharya, the power shift, in which economic and political power is migrating from the West to the East, has been followed by an “idea shift” in which the non-Western world is transforming from a passive receiver of ideas into their active creator (Acharya 2016). With this idea shift, the West is losing also its long-held power to define the norms and ideals of what international politics should be.

Among the contending visionaries for a new world order, China is arguably the most important. During the early decades of its economic growth, China engaged with the institutions and treaties of the liberal order at a fast pace, following a rather compliant, “low profile” foreign policy strategy. After 40 years of fast growth, China is more confident and ready to criticize the dominance of the West within the international order – both economic as well as ideological.

At the level of official rhetoric, the Chinese leadership has been offering its own concepts and ideas such as its grand vision of the international order reformed into a cosmopolitan “Community of Common Future for Mankind”,

in which “zero-sum power politics” would become a thing of the past. At the same time, Chinese scholars are criticizing the whole Western academic tradition of international politics, claiming that it only represents a particular European setting and is not applicable everywhere. With their arguments, the scholars are taking part in an overall discursive offensive, in which China attempts to debunk the legitimacy of Western dominance within the international order as well as the universality of Western ideas on world politics as a whole (see Kallio 2016: 17–46).

This chapter focuses on the challenges China’s rise is posing for the liberal international order, especially in the realm of ideas. It will first examine China’s complicated historical relationship with the international order during the modern era. The chapter will then move into more recent developments, during which the Chinese leadership has been increasingly bold in offering its alternative worldview, and finally, it will briefly analyze China’s new framework for reforming the international order, the Community of Common Future for Mankind.

## **10.2. From polycentric world order to liberal international order – and back?**

Ideas and their shifts matter. Through written history, societies have attempted to comprehend the political reality around them, making theoretical assumptions as well as normative guidelines for political action. Geographical surroundings and sociopolitical contexts have played key roles in these accounts: in different historical eras and in different regions, students and practitioners of international politics have arrived at completely different interpretations and institutional solutions.

Although it is easy to see the liberal international order based on democratic nation states and market economies as universally valid and perhaps even the best possible framework for organizing international politics, the order and the thought system around it are outcomes of long, complex, and contingent historical processes in which the ideas have emerged and developed in their historical contexts, always collaborating with actual day-to-day politics. This relationship has been famously articulated by Quentin Skinner as: “the political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorists, causing a certain range of issues to appear problematic and a corresponding range of questions to become the leading subjects of debate” (quoted in Tully 1988: 10–11). Bertrand Russell has an analogous depiction in relation to the evolution of



human thought in general: “there is here a reciprocal causation: the circumstances of men's lives do much to determine their philosophy, but, conversely, their philosophy does much to determine their circumstances” (Russell 1947: 11).

The liberal international order and its core institutions and values are based on particular European practices (sovereign nation states and their interactions according to certain diplomatic customs and understandings of international law) which expanded to become global during the nineteenth century. Similarly, the currently dominating theoretical and normative visions of international politics were developed around European debates and contexts. They still hold a globally “hegemonic” position in how international politics is being interpreted, and although different areas of the world might have differing models, the only theories and concepts that have become truly global, and that are followed and internalized by (almost) everyone in the field of international politics, are the Western theories (see Wæver 1999).

International thought holds an important connection with the order it is attempting to define, analyze, and explain. Instead of being an objective observer, the thought *supports* the order by explicating which principles the world should be organized along and what kind of foreign policies should be followed. It tends to support certain kinds of thinking and marginalize and delegitimize the alternatives (Ashworth 2014: 2–13). Robert Cox has stated the same in an overused, but still valid cliché, that international “theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specially social and political time and space. [...] There is, accordingly, no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from standpoint in time and space” (Cox 1986: 207).

During the early modern era, before the globalization of the Western international order, Europe was merely a peripheral corner in a polycentric world system, in which various different international orders coexisted in a larger network (see Pomeranz 2000; Little 2014: 159–180). The “Westphalian” international order of nation states taking shape in Europe was simply one among many, all of which, in the words of Henry Kissinger, defined themselves as “the legitimate organizations of all humanity, imagining that in governing what lay before them, they were ordering the world” (Kissinger 2014: 4).

Within the polycentric world system, Western power and the reach of Western ideas and institutions were restrained already in the Middle Eastern region by the international order built around the Ottoman empire. Further away, the Indian Mughal empire and China were both barely even conscious of the West. It is only after the revolutionary developments in economy and technology during the nineteenth century that the European international order could expand to become the universal world order of today, and wipe out all

the different forms of political organization – i.e. tribes, city states, or empires – with their interpretations and cosmologies for framing and understanding international politics and the world itself (Buzan and Lawson 2013).

Along with the spread of the Western order, the concept of international law and its standards were developed to define which political entity (or race) would be worthy of entering the order as its equal member (Little 2014: 170–171). The West saw itself as the standard-bearer of civilization, and the international thinkers of this era – even at the liberal end of the spectrum, such as John Stuart Mill or the vehemently anti-imperialist John A. Hobson – legitimized its mission of spreading influence, and bringing backward peoples into modernity, more or less benignly (Hobson 2012: 33–58).

Dealing with the catastrophic developments between the years 1914 and 1945 marked the birth of the “liberal international order.” Its first version was established after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, but the order was later updated to better reflect the dynamics of great power politics after World War II, and was in many senses designed to serve the foreign policy interests of the United States (see Mäkinen 2018). The same era also saw the establishment of international relations as a specific field of study. Like the order, the theory of international relations, particularly after World War II, became almost identical with studying the foreign policy of the United States (Wæver 1999). By defining the “science” of international politics, the Western academic community could “determine what can be said, how it can be said and whether or not what is said constitutes a pertinent or important contribution to knowledge” (Behera 2010).

During the Cold War, the liberal international order existed mainly within the United States and Western Europe as many other parts of the world, including India and most of the Third World, remained effectively outside of it. The order was also challenged, in both theory and in practice, by communism in its many different variations. The communist states, despite their differences, held a vision of a world communist order in which the states would eventually wither away and in which all humanity would work together in peace.

After the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, it seemed that the liberal order with its definition of politics had defeated its last ideological and institutional challengers. The order, also known as the Washington Consensus, could now spread freely almost everywhere, and some liberal thinkers such as John Ikenberry even proposed that the United States might have finally found the correct recipe for a universally valid, sustainable, and stable order (see Ikenberry 2001).

The triumph of the West was declared too early, however. Today, the West is increasingly unable to project its power beyond its core areas and is similarly

facing challenges in disseminating the Western understanding of international politics and its central values. The rising powers are, on the contrary, *de-Westernizing* their conceptions of politics by rediscovering their deep cultural and intellectual roots, from which they are drawing inspiration (Käkönen 2017: 24–25).

It seems that the world is returning to a state not unlike the polycentric system of the early modern era, when various international orders coexisted and interacted, yet, at the same time, upheld their particular (yet universal) visions and institutional frameworks. Amitav Acharya has described the emerging world order as a “multiplex world,” which is not dominated by any single hegemonic power or hegemonic thought system, but consists of various competing centers of power. It is not a “multipolar” order either, as, although the great powers remain influential, many new powerful actors, such as corporations and non-governmental organizations have emerged alongside, limiting their power. The multiplex world, like a multiplex cinema, does not have any dominating core, but offers a multitude of different views and regional arrangements – a broad variety from which to choose (Acharya 2017).

Within this polycentric multiplex world, this chapter argues, a Skinnerian debate of global proportions is taking place, and the Western model of international politics is being challenged from all directions. One of the loudest and most significant challengers is China, whose critical narratives describe the Western international order as unjust and undemocratic, and the ever more unstable West itself as no more capable to lead it – at least not alone. The time has come to reform the order according to “Chinese wisdom.”

### 10.3. China and the international order

China’s relationship with the Western-led international order has been complex throughout the encounters between the two civilizations. Before the Western great powers forced China to open up during the nineteenth century, the Chinese empire considered itself as *the* civilization, as the very center of “all under heaven” (天下, *tianxia*) and leading the whole world. Within this cosmology, any other states or kingdoms – including the Western powers – were seen as mere barbarians who would need to submit and acknowledge their inferiority before the Chinese emperor (Zheng 2011).

After China’s humiliating defeats in the Opium Wars of 1842 and 1860, the Chinese international order, together with its *tianxia*-cosmology, was gradually dismantled. China was forced to integrate itself into the Western

international order and to adapt its “Westphalian” principles on state sovereignty and equality. At the same time, China absorbed the Western thought system and conception of international politics, with such classics as Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law*, Marten’s *Guide Diplomatique*, and Tyler’s *Universal History* being translated into Chinese (Ch’en 1979: 62).

After reluctant attempts at reform, the Chinese empire collapsed in 1911. The Republic of China, which was established in 1912 on the ruins of the empire, attempted to transform China into a modern nation state according to Western models, and to join the Western-led international order as an equal member. The Republic, however, soon fell into domestic turbulence culminating in a brutal civil war, and despite its tremendous sacrifices in both World Wars, it was never granted equal status in the view of the other great powers (Zheng 2011).

The communist People’s Republic of China (PRC), building on these bitter experiences, was hostile towards the liberal order since its very establishment in 1949. It first joined the Soviet-led world communist alliance, and later, after the Soviet Union and China broke their diplomatic relations in the early 1960s, continued as an independent pariah state, spreading its revolutionary Maoist doctrine and supporting anti-Western and anti-Soviet movements throughout the developing world (see Hodzi 2019: 67–82; Zhao 2018: 645–646). During the tumultuous early decades of the PRC, China thus remained effectively isolated from the international order and its institutions.

A complete U-turn in this relationship happened after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, when Mao’s successor Deng Xiaoping launched the groundbreaking policy of “reform and opening up.” With the reforms, Maoist doctrine was played down in both domestic and foreign affairs, and market-oriented reforms were initiated. China’s foreign policy took a similar turn as China focused on its economic development and, instead of spreading its ideology, was now ready to cooperate with all interested parties, including, and perhaps especially, the developed capitalist countries.<sup>1</sup>

This change in line was demonstrated already in 1978 in a speech given by Deng Xiaoping, in which he declared that:

we [China] are still a relatively poor nation. It is impossible for us to undertake many international proletarian obligations, so our contributions remain small. However, once we have accomplished the four modernizations and the national economy has expanded, our contributions to mankind, and especially to the Third World, will be greater. (Deng 1978)

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<sup>1</sup> The only exception was Taiwan (Republic of China): the PRC requires that all parties cease all official relations with Taiwan.

The launch of the reform initiated another cycle of engagement with the Western international order. China opened up for diplomatic ties with all foreign countries, regardless of their ideological stances, and joined the institutions and treaties of the international order one by one, beginning with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1980 (Zhao 2018: 645–646). China also signed the most important security treaties, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1992 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, and it joined the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2004 (Sutter 2012: 122–124). During this period of engagement, China grew to become an important member, and even supporter, of the liberal order.

Following engagement with the institutions and norms of the liberal order, China's academic circles also embraced the Western discipline of international relations. With its diplomatic networks spreading out into the world in the 1980s, China faced a rapidly growing demand for knowledge and expertise on foreign relations and international politics in general. Instead of developing the field from scratch, China basically adopted the whole American discipline of international relations, with its theoretical mainstreams (realism, liberalism, and constructivism) and even its name (国际关系, *guoji guanxi*). First generations of Chinese international scholars studied mainly in the United States, and Western classics of international relations, which were mass translated into Chinese during the 1990s, became the core readings of the discipline (Qin 2010; Nielsen and Kristensen 2014). In all aspects, China seemed to swallow and embrace the Western vision of international politics as a whole, but this short honeymoon was about to end soon.

#### **10.4. A revisionist stakeholder**

According to recent research by Mazarr, Heath, and Cevallos (2018: 8), the liberal order consists of various suborders. It has, for example, economic orders (trade, financial, and monetary orders), security orders (the UN Charter-based non-aggression order and the US-led system of alliances), and a global liberal values order based on human rights conventions. Any member-state of the order could thus emphasize some of these suborders, but resist others.

Throughout the process of its integration, China has supported the economic order and the security order based on the Charter of the United Nations, but it has strictly opposed the US-led alliance system and the order based on liberal values; in other words, China has questioned the Western dominance

within the international order. This partial support has been clearly noticeable in Chinese foreign policy statements, in which China is generally always claiming to unswervingly support the order, but, at the same time, opposing any hegemonic acts or views imposed upon other states and promoting the democratization of the order (Mazarr, Heath, and Cevallos, 2018: 8) Zhao Suisheng has aptly described China as a “revisionist stakeholder, dissatisfied not with the principles but its status in the hierarchy of the order” (Zhao 2018: 644).

China’s confidence in offering its own concepts and ideas for reforming the order has increased steadily following its economic rise. During the administration of Jiang Zemin (1989–2002), for example, China launched the “new security concept” (新安全观, *xin anquanguan*), according to which old-fashioned military alliances should be disbanded and the concept of security as a whole should be reimagined following the principles of “win-win cooperation.” The Jiang administration also brought forth the concepts of “diversity of civilizations” (各国文明的多样性, *geguo wenming de duoyangxing*) and “democratization of international relations” (国际关系的民主化, *guoji guanxi de minzhuhua*), both of which propose an international order wherein Western dominance would be diminished and developing countries would have more say (see Keith 2012: 235–252).

The era of Hu Jintao (2002–2012) continued with these moves. Hu offered the first glimpses of a Chinese world order with his core concept of the “harmonious world” (和谐世界, *hexie shijie*), which combined Jiang’s ideas with new, culturally oriented overtones: within the harmonious world, different civilizations, political ideologies, and economic systems would thrive and coexist peacefully, complementing and learning from each other. No single state, no matter how great, would dominate the harmonious world, and as a result, there would be no hegemonic ideologies imposed on the weaker parties (Keith 2012: 235–252) Hu’s era saw also the introduction of “China’s peaceful development” (中国的和平发展, *Zhongguo de heping fazhan*), a rhetorical device which claimed that although China was indeed becoming a great power and although it had some reservations concerning the international order, its rise would be peaceful and China would never claim the status of a hegemon within the order (see Glaser and Medeiros 2007).

With these officially sanctioned concepts, China has attempted to transform the way international politics and its central values and objectives are being framed. According to Zhang Weiwei, a professor of international relations at Fudan University, the West still maintains a “discursive hegemony” (话语霸权, *huayu baquan*) on how world politics is being understood. Zhang has urged the Chinese leadership to reinforce its “discursive power” so that China would be able to define the dominating values, ideals, and master

narratives of the world (Zhang 2012: 125–129). Another scholar, Zeng Xianghong, has claimed similarly that besides its supreme military and economic power, the West has also projected a “hegemonic worldview” (霸权世界观, *baquan shijieguan*) over the world (Zeng 2015: 1–15). These hegemonic frames need to be destroyed and replaced by a Chinese narrative in which a reformed international order is not only possible, but part of an “irreducible historical trend.”

Besides official rhetoric, Chinese scholars of international politics have emerged as a major force in developing and projecting China’s discursive power. By searching indigenous “Chinese” ideas and by applying traditional philosophical concepts, such as the “kingly way” (王道, *wangdao*) or “tian-xia”, the scholars are attempting to question the universal validity and superiority of the Western model of international politics. They are disseminating a grand narrative of China as a historically peaceful and harmonious great power, which can, by applying its age-old “Chinese wisdom,” reform the Western international order, troubled by wars, military alliances, and hegemonic struggles (see Kallio 2015; see also Rached in this volume).

China’s top leadership welcomes the input of the academics, as the scholars are generating valuable intellectual ammunition using which the leadership can build its officially sanctioned vision. Chinese academics are allowed relative freedom in discussing their ideas: the government controls the general themes and the broad direction of the discussions with funding and (self)censorship, yet the dominating ideas flow back to influence the political leadership in a two-way relationship. China’s intellectuals are therefore, as articulated by Zhang Feng, “more influential than their counterparts in many Western countries paradoxically because China’s repressive political system makes intellectual debates a surrogate form of politics” (Zhang 2013: 46–47).

During the current era of President Xi Jinping, the foreign policy rhetoric of China, while in essence continuing with the careful formulations of the previous administrations, has gained more confident and assertive overtones. Soon after taking power in 2012, Xi Jinping declared that China was now pursuing the “Chinese dream” (中国梦, *Zhongguo meng*) of national rejuvenation. It was rising to regain the great power status which it held during the time of its greatest dynasties. Pompous as it sounds, the rejuvenation is presented in line with the peaceful development narrative, not as a threat to other countries or the international order as a whole, but as a great opportunity since the rising China will “increase its contributions to world peace and development” (Xi 2015).

In a speech given at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2017, Xi again highlighted China’s strong support for the international order. The speech was widely interpreted as China’s response to US President Donald

Trump's unilateral "America first" policy, implying that if the United States would abandon the order, China was ready to step in for more responsibility (Xi 2017). Indeed, the Trump administration, with its nationalistic rhetoric and by withdrawing from international projects such as the Paris (climate) Agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has in effect offered China excellent opportunities, one after the other, for increasing its status within the order (Zhao 2018).

At the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017, Xi declared that China was, after 40 years of successful economic reforms and growth, entering a "new era" (新时代, *xinshidai*). This meant that the age of maintaining a modest and careful low-profile strategy was over, and China was ready to move into the "center of the world stage." In his speech, Xi further forecast that in 2050, China would emerge as a "leading global great power" with a "world class military" supporting its endeavors (Xi 2017a).

These ambitious claims have been supported by assertive foreign policy on the ground.<sup>2</sup> In regional conflicts, such as the South China Sea territorial dispute, China has rapidly militarized the region by building artificial islands with military facilities. In 2013, shortly after Xi took the lead, China launched the massively ambitious geo-economic project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is projecting China's economic power all around the globe. The BRI is supported by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), another new institution which is widely seen as an alternative development fund for the World Bank and the IMF (Zhao 2018: 647–649).

With the "new era" dawning, China has introduced its own blueprint for the reform of the liberal international order, which it calls "the Community of Common Future for Mankind" (类命运共同体, *renlei mingyun gongtongti*, or CCFM),<sup>3</sup> The concept (although it appeared occasionally in the speeches and documents of the Hu administration) was introduced by Xi Jinping in 2013 and has been used intensively ever since. It has become the core foreign policy concept of the Xi administration, and a central element for introducing China's worldview and China's stance on international politics.

The CCFM combines the concepts of the earlier administrations, including the "diversity of civilizations" and the "harmonious world," but also draws heavily on the academic discussions of international politics, especially the so called "tianxia theory" (天下论, *tianxia lun*) which claims that China has always held a "worldly" conception of international politics (see Puranen 2019).

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2 Many of these developments started during the Hu era (see Doshi 2019).

3 The official English translation of the concept uses the word "future," although the Chinese word *mingyun* means destiny or fate.



The CCFM criticizes Western hegemony in the international order, but also offers some suggestions for guiding the liberal international order in a more peaceful, just, and stable direction.

The CCFM is often claimed to be too vague to serve as anything more than a rhetorical device. Nevertheless, the concept is clear enough to provide, first of all, a Chinese outlook on the international order and the state of international politics in general, and second, several guiding principles according to which China will conduct its foreign policy in the future (see, for example, Tobin 2018). Moreover, the official concepts of the Chinese leadership are not to be taken as mere empty rhetoric. The Communist Party of China, since the Hu administration, has intensified its efforts at developing a modernized socialist ideology, which has been stripped of its utopian elements, but which would effectively and practically guide the implementation of policies. Ideological concepts such as the CCFM are thus very carefully drafted and developed, and when presented and described by top-level leaders such as Xi Jinping, they represent the actual strategic planning of the party leadership (Heath and Kavalski 2014: 59–74).

The CCFM provides interesting views on how the Chinese leadership understands its relationship with the liberal order and how it is aspiring to shape it. It is essential to study the concept in detail, especially as described by Xi Jinping in his most important speeches.

## **10.5. From the liberal order to a Community of Common Future?**

At the surface, the Community of Common Future for Mankind paints a positive and cosmopolitan picture of international politics. It claims that during the era of globalization, the interests of all countries – big and small – are increasingly interconnected, and the “Cold war mentality” of zero-sum geopolitics and military alliances is simply outdated. In order to meet the various challenges posed by globalization, the destinies of all states are coming together to form a “common future.” The current state of the world is, according to Xi Jinping, also favorable for advancing CCFM:

The world is undergoing major developments, transformation, and adjustment, but peace and development remain the call of our day. The trends of global multi-polarity, economic globalization, IT application, and cultural diversity are surging forward; changes in the global governance system and the international order are speeding

up; countries are becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent; relative international forces are becoming more balanced; and peace and development remain irreversible trends. (Xi 2017c)

Against the prevailing Western pessimism, Xi frames the world as developing in a favorable direction since peace and development are “irreversible trends.” An important part of these developments, although never pointed out clearly, is the weakening of the West, which is hinted at in the phrases “increasing multi-polarity,” “cultural diversity,” and “international forces becoming more balanced” in the world.

At the same time, however, certain “uncertainties and destabilizing factors” are arising. According to Xi, the main threats to the world order are that the:

global growth is sluggish, the impact of the financial crisis lingers on and the development gap is widening. Armed conflicts occur from time to time, Cold War mentality and power politics still exist and non-conventional security threats, particularly terrorism, refugee crisis, major communicable diseases and climate change, are spreading. (Xi 2017b)

The Chinese list of threats also differs from the Western concerns: China is not worrying about the degeneration of democracy or the rise of authoritarian governments, nor does it see the order itself as being in danger. It puts the emphasis on imbalances, both within the economic and the political structures of the international order. It is these imbalances (such as the development gap) which feed other threats, including terrorism and the refugee crisis.

From the point of view of the CCFM, the Western program of liberalism is, and has been, unable (or unwilling) to fix these imbalances. In order to balance the international order, the CCFM puts forward five core components which should guide the reforms: partnerships, a new security order, balanced globalization, diversity of civilizations, and an ecologically sustainable “beautiful world.”

The core unit of state-to-state relationships in the CCFM is *partnership*. According to Xi, military alliances and general principles of power politics, still enduring in the prevailing order, need to be replaced with a network of partnerships “based on dialogue, non-confrontation and non-alliance.” The partnerships emphasize “win-win -cooperation” and mutual respect in each other’s internal affairs: no state shall interfere in the affairs of another in any way. The partnerships will also be established on the principle of equality: “big countries should treat smaller ones as equals instead of acting as a hegemon imposing their will on others” (Xi 2017b).

Official statements are rather silent on who will build these partnerships and how. As China is the only state so far to endorse such partnerships, the concept seems to mean bilateral relations between China and other countries. Xi himself has argued that with the partnerships, China “will build a circle of friends across the world” (Xi 2017b).

Based on the structure of partnerships, a “common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable *security order*” can be established. Echoing the “new security concept” proposed by Jiang Zemin, Xi has claimed that “the security of all countries is interlinked and has impact on one another” (Xi 2015). Security is thus something that states cannot possess alone, but which has to be constructed together. Within the new “universal security framework” of the CCFM, the antiquated Cold War era alliances will be replaced with “partnerships,” and the alliance systems as a whole will be dissolved (Xi 2017c).

This new security community would, according to Xi, attempt to prevent conflicts from emerging in the first place, but when they do rise, they will always be handled by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The CCFM prefers consultation between the parties of conflict supported by the international community, but if the consultations fail, the UNSC can take “mandatory actions, so as to turn hostility into amity” (Xi 2015). The mandatory actions are not explicated any further, but they hint that the sovereignty principle has at least some limits.

The third component is *balanced development*. According to Xi, globalization and economic liberalism are not at the root of the troubles of the international order (Xi 2017a). On the contrary, the world needs *more* globalization, but it has to be more inclusive and balanced so that “its benefits are shared by all.” This balancing will include deepening “trade and investment liberalization” (Xi 2017c) and a thorough reform of the established financial institutions:

Only when it adapts to new dynamics in the international economic architecture can the global governance system sustain global growth. Countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal members of the international community. As such, they are entitled to participate in decision-making, enjoy rights and fulfill obligations on an equal basis. We should adhere to multilateralism to uphold the authority and efficacy of multilateral institutions. (Xi 2017)

The CCFM proposes a democratized economic order in which the developing countries would have a greater representation. In his speech at the United Nations in 2015, Xi declared in a straightforward way that “China firmly supports greater representation and say of developing countries, especially African countries, in the international governance system,” and that “China’s vote in the United Nations will always belong to the developing countries” (Xi 2015).

The fourth core component is the *diversity of civilizations*, which reflects China's unease with Western dominance of the international order. According to Xi:

there is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization, and civilizations are different only in identity and location. Diversity of civilizations should not be a source of global conflict; rather, it should be an engine driving the advance of human civilizations. (Xi 2017b)

Within the CCFM, all civilizations should respect and learn from each other's differences. This diversity also means that "no country should view its own development path as the only viable one, still less should it impose its own development path on others" (Xi 2017a). The focus on civilizational diversity is an indirect criticism of the West: as all civilizations are seen as equal, the Western great powers should not have any of their prevailing privileges in international institutions, nor should they hold the monopoly on defining the guiding values. Interestingly, however, China has, during the Xi era, been more willing to promote its "Chinese model" as an "option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence" (Xi 2017c).

The fifth and last component is the building of a *beautiful world* by pursuing "green and low-carbon development" (Xi 2017b). The concept is not described in detail, but by elevating ecological aspects at the core of the CCFM, China articulates its environmental concerns and portrays itself as a responsible power on this crucial issue as well.

What would be China's place within the community? Within the CCFM, all civilizations are equal and partnerships between states are also established on an equal basis, no matter what the size of the states involved. According to these precepts, China should not have any special role within the community and Xi himself has claimed that "whatever level of development China will attain, it will never establish a hegemony, nor expand its influence"<sup>4</sup> (Xi 2017). The CCFM, in other words, would have no hegemonic center and it would ideally respond to common challenges through the United Nations.

To summarize, the Community of Common Future for Mankind does not aim to overthrow the liberal international order, but to reform and diversify it: it is a liberal international order with less liberalism in it. The CCFM retains the deepening globalization and free trade as its major principles, but wants more control on how their benefits are shared. It preserves or even strengthens the security framework around the United Nations, but, at the same time, reinforces the principles of sovereignty and equality of states.

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4 中国无论发展到什么程度，永远不称霸，永远不搞扩张

Putting heavy emphasis on diversity and non-interference, the CCFM would not have any unifying value systems, except for overriding respect for differences. It would be a practical community, in which states are allowed to act as they want as long as they are not harming other states. As the threshold for intervening in the internal affairs of states is very high, the CCFM would not have any strong means for dealing with conflicts within its member-states, nor even for identifying what kind of conduct crosses the line and requires “mandatory action.” Although Xi did mention in his UN speech of 2015 that “justice, democracy and freedom are common values of all mankind,” the phrase is more inclined to redefine the meanings of these concepts with terms favorable for the Chinese government: “justice and democracy” means more say for developed countries in international forums, and “freedom” merely the right to choose non-Western political and development models.

Without any clearly defined guiding values, the CCFM can hardly be seen as a functional framework for an international order. Western values cannot be tolerated, but there is nothing to replace them, and this lack of alternative “Chinese values” is a well-known problem in China as it attempts to project its “soft power” around the globe. During the reign of Xi Jinping, China has begun propagating a Chinese value system of “core socialist values” (社会主义核心价值观, *shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi guan*), which, it is hoped, could serve as a foundation for a new value system to emerge (see Gow 2016). Yan Xuetong, a well-known professor of international relations, has also proposed that in the international context, China could offer its traditional Confucian values of benevolence, righteousness in the place of Western values (Yan 2018). Neither initiative has so far received any notable international enthusiasm.

## 10.6. A challenging community

Although China’s foreign policy concepts have had a rather lukewarm reception so far, their development needs to be followed closely. Among the new challenging visions within the “multiplex world,” China’s is the most serious since it possesses the largest and most rapidly growing capacities for pushing it forward. Its discursive power is, indeed, taking small but important steps: the

CCFM has already been written in a United Nations resolution,<sup>5</sup> and within the international academic community, the idea of a unique “tianxia” worldview has been noted even by Western scholars of international politics.

Although the CCFM is vaguely described, it offers certain guiding principles which give general directions for Chinese foreign policy. Besides introducing a “Chinese” framework for reforming the international order, the community can also be studied as a strategic guide for constructing a stable environment in which China can develop its strength undisturbed. The more profound reform of the order could perhaps come later.

On the other hand, a China-centered international order could already be brewing under the shadow of the CCFM rhetoric. According to some analysts, the concept of the CCFM is aimed primarily at the developing countries (see Zhang 2018). With its “harmonious” and “non-hegemonic” stance, China is building stronger and more trustworthy relationships with the developing world, and with bilateral partnerships and deepening economic dependencies – especially pushed by the BRI – China is indeed expanding its “circle of friends across the world.”

The design of the CCFM, as offered by Xi Jinping, describes a harmonious and peaceful world order in which great power competition would have become a thing of the past, and in which mankind would strive together against global challenges. “All under heaven shared by all,” as Xi Jinping has himself outlined it. Beautiful as it sounds, the CCFM is also in almost absolute contradiction with Chinese domestic policies.

When describing the concept of “diversity of civilizations,” for example, China remains silent on how it treats its own minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang, where the cultural and religious rights of the minority populations are brutally repressed. Within Xinjiang, perhaps even millions of Uyghurs are being detained in “re-education centers,” where they are being forced to learn core socialist values, among other elements of China’s official ideology (Maizland 2019). China has claimed that the re-education centers are sanctioned by the United Nations as legitimate counter-terrorism activities – a statement that merely demonstrates how differently international law can be interpreted (State Council of The People's Republic of China 2019).

The positive attitude towards globalization and “open world economy” praised in the CCFM rhetoric stands in stark contrast to China’s domestic economy, which is one of the most protected and closed economies in the world. And lastly, China has itself become rather flexible with the non-interference principle it claims to value. It intervenes harshly against any country which

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5 A UN General Assembly resolution aiming to prevent an arms race in space promotes “the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, with the objective of shaping *a community of shared future for mankind*” (see UN 2018).

deals with issues that China considers its internal affairs – most notably, the so-called “three T’s”: Taiwan, Tibet, and the Tiananmen Square protests. Meeting Tibetan or Taiwanese leaders or Chinese dissidents causes an immediate aggressive response from the Chinese foreign ministry even if the government of the concerned country is not involved (see Siika 2015).

In fact, China has lately increased its attempts at controlling even the narratives on these affairs, and also within the West. This has been noted especially in the context of academic freedom, as academics studying “hot topics” are finding their visas denied, and their home institutions are facing problems signing cooperative relations with their Chinese counterparts (see Parton 2019). So far China has justified its interference by claiming that its issues of concern are its “internal affairs,” but this could be changing and what is related to China’s “internal affairs” could be easily redefined.

As its rise continues, China will likely push forward its vision of the Community of Common Future for Mankind with increasing vigor. And while the liberal core values of democracy and universal human rights are facing increasing setbacks, the liberal international order without liberalism which China is essentially offering will seem more and more appealing, especially in the authoritarian world, even though (or perhaps because) it remains ambiguous and vaguely described.

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# Chapter 11

## International relations in the Finnish national epos, Kalevala:<sup>1</sup>

### Encounters of historical epochs and civilizations in the changing international order<sup>2</sup>

**Jyrki Käkönen**

*Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland*

#### **Abstract**

The idea in this chapter is that current globalization is converting the international community into a post-Westphalian order. In the globalizing world, the Other is no longer just beyond geographical borders, but also within those borders. The chapter also takes it as given that international relations were already a reality much before the so-called nation-state-based Westphalian order. The approach in this chapter is essentially based on the ideas presented by Kees van der Pijl in his three-volume work. Van der Pijl analyses international relations in the first two volumes in terms of various epos as well as myths. *Kalevala* is a mythic epos which tells the story of the relations and interactions between two different communities. Based on the story in *Kalevala* and van der Pijl's analysis, I would define international relations as encountering the Other without falling into the nation-state trap. In this chapter, I also connect the story of *Kalevala* to Professor Matti Klinge's sketch about two possible ancient sea powers which encountered in the current Finnish region. Klinge's sketch offers a chance to connect *Kalevala*'s story into its possible prehistoric context. This connection undermines the Finnish narrative about a nation that,

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<sup>1</sup> In the text, *Kalevala* in italics refers to the epos, and Kalevala without italics to a place and community in the epos.

<sup>2</sup> An original Finnish version of this essay was published in 2017 (Käkönen 2017). This is a slightly revised version.

in the Hegelian sense, raised itself in the nineteenth century as a nation-state and as a member of the community of independent states.

**Keywords:** Folklore and international relations, international relations in traditional societies, *Kalevala*, Westphalian international order

## 11.1. Introduction

International order or the order we know in international relations (IR) as the Westphalian order is being challenged by structural changes. Simultaneously, the mainstream theories we use in understanding that order and explaining international politics are also being challenged. The Westphalian order has its roots in the historical development of the European state system and the aggressive global expansion of the European system. Theoretically, that system has been explained by concepts based on European experience but assumed to be universal concepts.

John Hobson (2012) has proved that, inevitably, all theoretical traditions and schools in IR are based on a Eurocentric worldview. It is hard to find in IR theories elements about experiences from civilizations beyond Europe.<sup>3</sup> The essential subject in major IR theories is the so-called nation-state. There is also a common understanding that there is a universal social history from traditional societies to nation-states, whose legitimacy is based on people's sovereignty.

One problem in Eurocentric problematization of international politics is that it does not exist without nation-states. Therefore the (modern) international system is only 400 years old. This leads to the assumption that tribal communities, for instance, could not have had international relations. However, Ragnar Numelin (1950) has demonstrated how traditional communities had international relations and diplomatic ties. Another problem is that the current international order is challenged by actors whose historical experience deviate from a Eurocentric worldview and whose civilizational history is older than European civilization. This refers to the rise of China and India to the high tables of global politics (see, for instance, Jacques 2012; Kupchan 2012; Tharoor 2012).

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<sup>3</sup> In the context of the English school, Barry Buzan and Zhang Youngjin have combined the ancient Chinese tributary system into the concept of international society and integrated the two different traditions (Zhang and Buzan 2012).

The rise of China and India may change the international order so dramatically in the next 30-40 years that, by 2050, it would be difficult to find any of today's features. For instance, the US National Intelligence Council has predicted tremendous changes in its reports, "Global Trends 2025" (US National Intelligence Council 2008) and "Global Trends 2030" (US National Intelligence Council 2012). The potential power transition is connected to the reality that Chinese and Indian imagination of the international order is not necessarily based on the Eurocentric worldview. For China and India, the Eurocentric world might be just a 400-year aberration (see, for instance, Mishra 2012). The rise, or rather return, of these ancient civilizations may challenge the Western-centric IR theories, too. The issue will be the transition to the post-Western-centric epistemic age. Amitav Acharya (2011; 2018) says there is a need to develop a truly universal or global IR by combining Western and non-Western experiences and approaches.

The possible power shift may also need an idea shift. It would require getting acquainted with world history from the Chinese and Indian perspectives as well as becoming familiar with their traditional worldviews. Their history and intellectual past will have an impact on their policies in the changing international order. According to Behera (2007), Indian history can provide elements in constructing non-Eurocentric IR theories. How then is all this connected to the Finnish national epos, *Kalevala*? The connecting factor is the transition into a time when nation-states did not exist because *Kalevala* opens a window beyond nation-states and provides one option to track international relations in a pre-Westphalian system. The point here is that it is possible to read *Kalevala* as a description about relations between two communities and how those relations were maintained.

Kees van der Pijl has tracked international relations in world history before the evolution of nation-states in his three-volume study, *Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy*. In the first two volumes, van der Pijl talks of how to encounter the Other, the stranger. The nation-states, or, more correctly, the unified states, removed the Other beyond the state border (van der Pijl 2007: 164). Before that, during the time of the empires, the Other had to be faced within the borders (van der Pijl 2007: 179). The globalizing world today has begun to resemble the world of the empires once again because, due to migration, the Other is again within the borders and, symbolically, we are back to tribal societies (van der Pijl 2007: 189).

Another interesting aspect of the first two volumes of *Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy* are the various myths it examines, including that of Gilgamesh and those from the Old Testament in the Bible. Van der Pijl (2010: x-xi) interprets them both as stories of foreign policy. In many myths, the focal point is how to confront the Other. From both perspectives, the issue

in international relations is different praxes in interaction with the Other. In a historical sense, this means that the Westphalian system is just one historical episode in confronting the Other (van der Pijl 2010: vi). Ancient myths open up a perspective to understand international relations as a phenomenon that is wider than the nation-state perspective allows. Steven Chan has also demonstrated that it is important to bring into IR non-Western elements. He has himself enlarged the perspective by bringing in the Bible, the Koran and different legends as well as myths (Chan 2009).

In his project, van der Pijl understood international relations as interactions between communities distant or alien to one another (van der Pijl 2007: vi). Using this interpretation, traditional societies and tribal communities could have international relations and international politics. Another important aspect in van der Pijl's project is that for him, myths and epic stories function as lenses through which to see international relations as a wider phenomenon than just interactions between modern sovereign nation-states. The relevance of the myths is in connecting the historically known into the unknown past (van der Pijl 2010: 25). In the Finnish context, *Kalevala* is a mythic story about two communities and their mutual interactions. This offers the option to interpret *Kalevala* as a story about confronting the Other.

## 11.2. *Kalevala* as an object of a study

The above introduction is supposed to justify the use of *Kalevala* as a place to track international relations. *Kalevala* is a story about a mythic past. The version I use here is the so-called school *Kalevala*, an abridged version of the original *Kalevala*<sup>4</sup> published in 1862 (*Kalevala* 1862). To use this version does not have any impact on the result. According to Laaksonen, the school version removed mainly repetitions and does not change the substance of the epic, especially when the interest is in possible international relations. The only serious exception is the battle to regain the Sampo and that has been compensated for with excerpts from Sampo and Väinämöinen's Christian-Patriotic farewell words. (Laaksonen 2005: xix)

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4 I have used the abridged school version of *Kalevala* as my source for this article because that is the most read version.

In *Kalevala* studies, a common understanding has been that the story is a creation of Elias Lönnrot (see, for instance, Kaukonen 1987: 34).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, many scholars have argued that *Kalevala* cannot be used as source material for cultural-anthropological, anthropological, or historical studies. According to Kaukonen (1987: 116), *Kalevala* does not have any more value as a historical source than a historical novel. Scholars have also stressed that Lönnrot's *Kalevala* has to be understood in the context of the nineteenth century, i.e. in the context of Lönnrot's own time (Karhu 2002: 252; Niemi 1980: 60-61, 65). This brings up at least two factors which have had an impact on the construction of *Kalevala* as a coherent story: the nineteenth century's rising nationalism and national romanticism, and Lönnrot's own pacifism. According to Niemi, Lönnrot has built the character of Väinämöinen, a central figure in the epos, to serve the ethical aims of *Kalevala* (Niemi 1980: 62).

In the context of national ideology, the story in *Kalevala* begins in the mythic creation of the world and ends in the emergence of a unified nation that is on the verge of a bright future. According to van der Pijl (2010: 1), all over the world, communities have imagined their origin to be in heaven, in an eternal world beyond the known. In this respect, *Kalevala* is connected to countless stories about the origin of humans and nations. It is at the end that *Kalevala* changes into a mythic story about the birth of a nation. The end of the 40th poem refers for the first time to an emerging unified nation instead of two combating communities. In the world of *Kalevala*, there was no Finnish nation yet.

At the end of the 45th poem, Väinämöinen prays for Finland's success, and in the following poem, he sings about the new age beginning in the wide backwoods of Finland. In the last poem, the age of the great singer or shaman has come to an end and the new epoch of Christianity is shining on the horizon (see Karhu 2002: 256). In this last episode, Väinämöinen departs and leaves for the future generations a myth about the mythical past of a nation.

According to Kaukonen (1987: 27), Lönnrot depicted *Kalevala* as the story of two communities, the Pohjola and the Kalevala, and their interactions in a prehistoric time. For Lönnrot, *Kalevala* told the history of the Finns before the emergence of the Finnish nation. Lönnrot also thought that the poems were transferred from generation to generation and maintained their original form and substance (Kaukonen 1987: 27). Kaukonen himself understood that the Pohjola and Kalevala never really existed (Kaukonen 1987: 30). Therefore,

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5 Lönnrot himself had a strong understanding about the historical origin of epic poems on which he based *Kalevala*. For him, these poems revealed something real about the ancient past of the Finnish people. However, *Kalevala* studies have proved that the poems do not have any connection at least to known historical facts. This is not a problem in this essay since the interest is not in historical facts, but in what the mythic story can reveal about international relations.



Kaukonen concluded that in *Kalevala*, Lönnrot built a great imaginary tale about an imagined ancient past (Kaukonen 1987: 127). This means that the tensions between the Pohjola and the Kalevala were also imagined by Lönnrot (Kaukonen 1987: 58). Lönnrot derived inspiration for the contrasts between the two communities from Homer, and according to Kaukonen, the differences he depicts are not to be found in the original folklore (Kaukonen 1987: 201).

Even if *Kalevala* is understood as the creation of Lönnrot and there is no point in trying to find in it any historical evidence (Niemi 1980: 33), it is still possible to analyze intercommunity relations based on how Lönnrot perceived them. On the other hand, *Kalevala* is based on traditional folklore, according to Kaukonen (Kaukonen 1987: 115; Kaukonen 1988: 57). As a matter of fact, all the details in *Kalevala*, according to Kaukonen and Karhu, are from pre-Christian folklore and mythology (Kaukonen 1987: 134; Kaukonen 1988: 161; Karhu 2002: 254).

The folklore on which *Kalevala* is based describes life in the world before the so-called Swedish crusades to Finland in the early second millennium. According to Karhu, Finnish scholar J. Krohn locates the folklore of *Kalevala* in 300-900 CE and K. Krohn locates it in 900-1100 CE (Karhu 2002: 31-32). The *Kalevala* epic as a heroic epic is associated with the emergence of nations and early state formations, although the stories in the epic take place in a mythic time (Karhu 2002: 89).

The Viking period witnessed a transition process in the Baltic Sea region. The first state formations emerged around that time.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in the context of nation formation in *Kalevala*, three epochs overlap: the mythic epoch of tales, the epoch of transitions in the Baltic Sea region in 800-1100 CE, and Lönnrot's own time of national romanticism.

Karhu (2002: 259) has said that Lönnrot had a strong pacifist orientation. That might explain why the long episode about the battle of Sampo was cut off from the so-called school *Kalevala* –Lönnrot wanted *Kalevala* to be a kind of pacifist epos. In the world of *Kalevala*, war and intercommunity violence play a marginal role. Therefore, in Finnish peace research, for instance, *Kalevala* is often presented as a base for the prevailing peaceful Finnish culture and political orientation. For instance, Pekka Korhonen has shown how, in *Kalevala*, the concepts of power and might are connected to social structures in which everyone has their own place as well as power over each other. In this respect, the concept of power in *Kalevala* is not connected to violence (Korhonen 1989: 12).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, the Danish kingdom emerged around 800 CE (Salo 2004: 183).

<sup>7</sup> The minor role of violence in *Kalevala* has made it possible to present it as a peaceful epos. It has also justified the conclusion that Finnish culture in general is peaceful.

According to Korhonen, Väinämöinen held power as a leader of the *Kalevala* (Korhonen 1989: 12), but more important in his case was his might, which did not come from his structural position. Power is present in position but might makes it possible to make things happen. According to Korhonen, might makes it possible to fight, silence dogs, go to the underworld and return, or to make boats. Might is connected to magic wisdom, knowledge, and skill (Korhonen 1989: 12). In *Kalevala*, the one with might always wins, even if the might is imperfect (Korhonen 1989: 13). In *Kalevala*, pacifism is demonstrated through battles that are never won by swords, even though swords are used (Korhonen 1989: 12).

As a construction of Lönnrot, *Kalevala* is first of all a pacifist heroic epos in which the wisdom and might of the leaders bring welfare to the whole community. However, in the nineteenth century, Finnish nationalism's militaristic aspects were connected to *Kalevala* (Niemi 1980: 64) more or less in the same way as Hindu nationalists have interpreted *Veda* texts in India (Bhatt 2001). According to Niemi, in the spirit of the Finnish neutrality policy after World War II, *Kalevala* was again understood as a pacifist epos (Niemi 1980: 64).<sup>8</sup>

In this essay, it does not matter whether *Kalevala* was just a creation of Lönnrot. It can be still used as an object of study. In this sense, one could track in *Kalevala* Lönnrot's own and, in a wider sense, his own time's understanding about politics and international relations. On a general level, it is possible to track international politics in literature, movies, or other such places (see, for instance, Shapiro 2009). In the case of *Kalevala*, the issue is also about the elements that have their origin in prehistoric times. There is no doubt that *Kalevala* is based on folklore, although it is not folklore anymore. Folklore does not necessarily concern itself about historical events or persons, but it is often based on historical reality even though details change over time as the story becomes a myth. Therefore, the events and persons in folklore cannot be connected anymore to concrete historical facts.

In any case, folklore as well as *Kalevala* reveal something about ancient worldviews, values, and human behavior. However, Kaukonen (1987: 135-136) writes that Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen, the central figures in *Kalevala*, are not born from a human being and are at least demigods. For Salo (2004: 514, 518), Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen are gods since only a god is able to hammer the sky. Although *Kalevala* talks about a mythic past, it does not necessarily dwell much on gods, rather it talks of human beings who could have lived, or whose models could have lived, in the ancient past. Therefore, *Kalevala* tells us more than just about Lönnrot and the worldview of the nineteenth century.

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8 The early *Kalevala* interpretations and the political use of *Kalevala* indicate that it is possible to read *Kalevala* in many different ways.

### 11.3. International relations in *Kalevala*

*Kalevala* depicts several communities: the Kalevala, Pohjola, Lappi, Saari, and the unnamed community to which Kullervo, a tragic figure in the epos, belongs. In the poems, the Pohjola and Lappi are clearly separate units. This is self-evident in the 12th poem or indirectly expressed in describing Joukahainen as a Lapp, but he is not from Pohjola. Although there are several communities in *Kalevala*, the story in the context of international relations is about the relations between the Kalevala and the Pohjola. Also, Niemi (1980: 61) argues that the main story is built around the tension between the Kalevala and the Pohjola.

These two core communities, the Kalevala and the Pohjola, are alien to each other. The perspective in the epos is Kalevala-centric. The main characters in the epos are Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen from Kalevala. Kalevala is presented as a peaceful and wealthy community. Its welfare is based on the spiritual power of Väinämöinen and the outstanding practical competence of Ilmarinen. Kalevala is also presented as a wealthier community than Pohjola. This can be seen in the poem where Ilmarinen and his bride, who is from Pohjola, begin their journey to Kalevala. The new bride is leaving a wealthy community to move to an even wealthier community and house.

The Kalevala and the Pohjola know about each other, but not much more. The poems clearly show that for Väinämöinen, Pohjola was an unknown territory and society. Likewise, when Väinämöinen came to Pohjola to get married to the daughter of a leading family there, Louhi, the matron of Pohjola, did not recognize him even though Väinämöinen is supposed to be a well-known figure. In the epos, the Pohjola appear as the Other to Kalevala and are often described in derogatory terms. For instance, in the tenth poem, the Pohjola is presented as a community of man-eaters and where heroes disappear or are submerged. Louhi, the matron of Pohjola, is presented as a sharp-toothed, evil, and immoral witch (see Karhu 2002: 100). Kaukonen writes that Louhi is presented as a symbol of evil (Kaukonen 1987: 137).<sup>9</sup>

Pohjola, as the Other of Kalevala, is presented in the poems as evil, and also as a threat. Pohjola is not a poor community, but it is not as wealthy as Kalevala, and certainly not the periphery of Kalevala.<sup>10</sup> The idea of a welfare gap between these societies is manifested in the fact that Pohjola desires the

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9 An interesting aspect is that only women of power and might symbolize evil in the epos. This opens a different perspective to *Kalevala* – what kind of gender perspectives Kalevala supports and how these are connected to Lönnrot's own time.

10 This means that in the epos, the issue is not about a hierarchical relation but, rather, a relation between equals.

mythic Sampo, from which Kalevala's prosperity is believed to flow. Pohjola wants to become richer than Kalevala. As the Other of Kalevala, Pohjola is also the place where Kalevala heroes can find wives for themselves.

The epos makes it possible to estimate that these two communities are neighbors, although their centers are separated by a long distance. Travelling between the centers of these communities takes several days. However, *Kalevala* or Lönnrot does not tell us whether the mutual relations of these communities were peaceful or violent. In any case, in the context of anthropology, it is possible to conclude that in *Kalevala*, from the international relations perspective, the essential issue is how to manage the relations between these two communities.

Traditional communities have long managed their mutual relations through gifts and intermarriages. Both means of interaction were supposed to create interdependence and enable a peaceful co-existence. Thus, when Väinämöinen or Ilmarinen wanted to take brides from Pohjola, their interest was to establish a peaceful connection between the communities or maybe even to establish an alliance against a third community. The aim was to create a connection between the leading families in the two communities. The hammering and donation of the Sampo to Pohjola can be understood as a gift, although the perspective changed after the Sampo began to make the Pohjola prosperous.

Gifts and Ilmarinen's marriage maintained peaceful relations between Kalevala and Pohjola. However, when a bear killed Ilmarinen's wife, the daughter of a leading Pohjola family, there was no longer any reason to maintain peace. Pohjola was not ready to provide Ilmarinen with a new wife, and Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen set out on a war expedition to Pohjola, seeking to bring the Sampo back to Kalevala. Thus, cracks appeared in the Kalevala-Pohjola relationship once the marriage was no longer there to sustain peace and Pohjola is not ready to provide a new wife for Ilmarinen. Earlier, Lemminkäinen had tried to steal a wife from the Pohjola, but that did not break the peace between Kalevala and Pohjola because the Pohjola confined their revenge to Lemminkäinen and his house.

As Kalevala prepares to go to war, it becomes apparent that Väinämöinen is no stranger to war. The story indicates that the expedition against Pohjola gave Väinämöinen the chance to take his boat out to war once again. But first, Väinämöinen tries to regain the Sampo by peaceful means – by putting the people of Pohjola to sleep with his music. When this fails, the expedition turns into an armed conflict. The Sampo is a motif for the conflict between the two communities. Once the bond connecting the two communities was severed, Kalevala was keen to get the Sampo back because its people believed the Sampo was the reason why the Pohjola were prospering and they were keen to

turn the tides of fortune towards themselves (see Niemi 1980: 61). In the war that follows, the issue is about armed forces, and in this connection, Pohjola appears as an evil force.

The stealing of the Sampo led to the build-up of tension between Kalevala and Pohjola. Pohjola became poorer, but it took revenge by causing many deaths and disasters in Kalevala. Väinämöinen retaliated with a second war expedition to Pohjola. Metaphorically, the issue is about release of the light that Louhi, the matron of Pohjola, has to allow after Väinämöinen has won. After this battle, Väinämöinen departs from Kalevala and the community braces itself for the rise of a new epoch in the form of Christianity.

Even on a more general level, war was not unknown in the epos. In fact, it is present in several different connections. In the third poem, Joukahainen offers Väinämöinen his father's war spoils instead of his sister. The 12th poem presents Lemminkäinen's individual war expedition to Pohjola as a revenge for his wife repudiating him. The 18th poem also reinforces the fact that the people of Kalevala knew war. Annikki's and Ilmarinen's father had been to war. War was also familiar to the Pohjola: in the 18th poem, Pohjola was prepared to meet approaching strangers as peaceful guests or enemies. The beginning of the 21st poem again refers to the presence of war in the world of the epos since the matron of Pohjola, Louhi, is not sure whether the approaching bridegroom and his group come in war or peace.

War is present in the epos also in the character of Lemminkäinen. Lemminkäinen was evidently a warrior who fought his own wars and, in this respect, plays a marginal role compared to the more peaceable Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen. This characterization reflects well the conclusions of anthropological studies, which claim that leaders of traditional societies were men of might rather than skilled warriors (Holsti 1913; Numelin 1950). The leaders of traditional societies were more likely to be those who could help increase the welfare of the community than those who went to war. In Kalevala, this is an aspect that emphasizes the peacefulness of the epos.

A kind of side story in the epos is the story of Kullervo who was sold as a slave to Kalevala. This indicates that Kullervo's native community had trade connections with the world of Kalevala and Pohjola. But the fighting families of Kullervo's father and uncle were distinct in that they were more dependent on hunting and fishing than Kalevala and Pohjola. It is possible to infer that the vicious circle of blood revenge in Kullervo's parents' world was connected to the utilization of resources which were not enough for the subsistence for two different communities.

In spite of Lönnrot's own pacifism, war is strongly present in the world of *Kalevala*. In various poems, it is possible to find memories about violent enemies or bravery in battles. The 36th poem describes the destruction caused by

wars. In fact, it is possible to find in the epos three different kinds of war: for robbery, for revenge and blood revenge, and for territory. A war to conquer alien territory is not to be found in *Kalevala*. But there are also signs about commercial transactions and relations between even distant communities. This indicates that in the wider international system of which *Kalevala* and *Pohjola* were a part, there were both violent and peaceful economic relations between communities.

The characters of Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen have made it possible to overemphasize *Kalevala's* peacefulness. They were both men of might rather than of the sword. This aspect is present in the third poem where Väinämöinen sings Joukahainen, a man of the sword, into a swamp. Also, Kyllikki, when abducted by Lemminkäinen, demands that Lemminkäinen leave war expeditions as a condition for her marrying him. In the struggle between *Kalevala* and *Pohjola*, *Kalevala* finally relies on the power of the sword in fighting the disasters caused by *Pohjola*. Finally, the epos ends with the establishing of peace and the birth of a new nation.

Anthropology offers a chance to pick up one more aspect from the epos. A common feature in traditional societies, the internal cohesion of communities was increased by feasts on different occasions. During the feasts, the whole community either enjoyed jointly earned wealth or the wealthier families shared their wealth with the whole community. Hospitality was a means of building bonds and increasing social cohesion in the community. *Kalevala* contains several mentions of such feasts.

The first big feast in the epos is organized when Väinämöinen comes to *Pohjola* for the first time to seek a bride. Initially Väinämöinen is not warmly received, but things improve and the house of Louhi serve their guest the best of what they have. Here we have a glimpse of what Immanuel Kant much later described as an elementary precondition for perpetual peace, namely cosmopolitan hospitality. The second time, at the wedding of Ilmarinen and the daughter of *Pohjola*, we see everybody from the poorest to the wealthiest eating at the feast.

In the epos, community as an actor and object of an act happens only in the case of war, and more specifically when the *Sampo* is stolen. Otherwise, the poems recount the acts of individuals. However, this is not a factor that would impede the study of international relations in *Kalevala*. In the epos, the individuals represent their communities. Where there is an intercommunity marriage, there will always be intercommunity relations. Thus, the offering of the *Sampo* as a gift to Louhi was not in the form of an individual present, but to bring welfare to the whole community. In modern international politics too, states seldom act directly. Often it is individuals who represent the state who are the actors. For instance, in the case of the Prophet Mohammed caricatures

in the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, the actors were one individual and the editors of the newspaper. But the reactions in the Islamic world were directed against the Danish state and all Danes.

## 11.4. *Kalevala* in the context of the ancient world

### 11.4.1. *Anthropology and Kalevala*

Above, I have talked of the argument that *Kalevala* cannot be used as a source for studying the prehistoric epoch in Finland. But I have also referred in a general way to anthropological studies in order to undermine that interpretation. Next, I try to show more explicitly how anthropological studies reveal that *Kalevala* and the folklore on which it is based may tell us something about the world that once existed. When Lönnrot collected the poems which he used for the epos, anthropology as well as its results were still at a nascent stage.<sup>11</sup> This means that Lönnrot could not base *Kalevala* on anthropological studies although he knew well the stories of Gilgamesh and other epics which he used in organizing folklore into the form of the epos.

An interesting aspect of *Kalevala* is that it is full of features and details as well as aspects of worldviews which modern anthropology connects to traditional societies. This could have hardly come from Lönnrot's imagination. Therefore, we have to understand that both *Kalevala* and the folklore beyond the epos tell us something real about prehistoric communities.

No doubt, *Kalevala* does not just reveal Lönnrot's worldview. Lönnrot was not able to make up the intercommunity relations depicted in the epos from his own imagination since he did not have any specific knowledge about the international relations of the time. However, one aspect in *Kalevala* is intercommunity relations, especially encounters with the Other in diverse situations, such as in violent conflicts, in commerce, in offering gifts, in paying tribute, and in the intermarriages of leading families in each community. In a

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<sup>11</sup> The ethnography that preceded anthropology produced knowledge about traditional societies. However, the objects of ethnography were savages and how their communities lagged behind more civilized societies. Those studies did provide information about traditional communities, their customs, and values, but they were less interested in intercommunity relations. The studies that Lönnrot could have utilized in describing intercommunal relations appeared sometime after 1840, too late for Lönnrot. (see, for instance, Trouillot 2003)

way, *Kalevala* tells us about one core issue in international politics: encountering the Other.

Above, it has already been indicated that warriors seldom became the leaders of traditional communities. Niemi, by referring to Haavio, emphasizes that Väinämöinen was not the leader of his community because he was a war leader, but because of his competence as shaman. However, Väinämöinen led his people to war to defend the vital interests of his community. (Niemi 1980: 34) In principle, in *Kalevala*, heroes combated with knowledge rather than weapons (Karhu 2002: 263). Further, Väinämöinen's knowledge and Ilmarinen's practical competence symbolize the welfare and superiority of the whole community (Karhu 2002: 100).

Rudolf Holsti (1913: 164) said that in traditional communities, people who can best benefit their societies are the ones most likely to rise to leading positions. Much later, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997: 127) concluded that traditional communities respected those who were practically talented, those who had knowledge, and those who were healers. Following Holsti, it is possible to say that Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen were natural leaders because of their civilian talents, even though they were also war leaders (Holsti 1913: 171, 177-178). In his thesis, Holsti emphasized that this in fact was the praxis also among the Finnish tribes, where leaders normally were men of might and war leaders were elected only when war was imminent (Holsti 1913: 213). If the civilian leader and the war leader were the same person, then, most likely, they had paranormal competencies (Holsti 1913: 221).

The competencies thus connected to leadership indicate that it was expected that the tribal leader would be able to increase the welfare of the community and make it self-sustainable (Holsti 1913: 234, 237-238, 253). The leaders in *Kalevala* represent the typical leaders of traditional societies. This means that the characters in *Kalevala* or their real models may have existed and were not just imagined by Lönnrot.

As Numelin (1950) has stressed, traditional societies interacted with each other and created international orders or world orders. For instance, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997: 122) have shown how prehistorical North Californian communities had intensive regular connections even beyond language barriers. It is clear that communities entered into mutual relations with other communities. Human beings reproduce life in social interactions and cooperate with other communities (van der Pijl 2007: 8). This is what traditional societies have done and what modern nation-states also do. Simultaneously, communities occupy and control certain territories and try to exclude others from these to make them outsiders (van der Pijl 2007: 9).

The welfare of a community depended on the territory they were able to control and what the territory could provide. The territory did not always



provide enough means for subsistence, but sometimes it gave surplus for exchange with other communities and provided a base for social networks and transactions. For instance, surplus made exchange possible for prehistoric tribes in North California. This exchange often happened in the form of a feast. Potential allies were invited to share the surplus in a common feast and this generated responsibilities in the mutual relations of the communities. (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 129)

Leaders of communities would also store surplus for exchange or, in a worst-case scenario, for resolving conflicts. Exchange took several forms: simple exchanges, feasts, or collective hunting and gathering. Tribal communities often cooperated and held joint feasts or spiritual ceremonies in which communities met on an equal basis. (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 127). In such joint social events, human communities compensated for wars, isolation, and stagnation through alliances, trade, and gifts (Mauss 1999: 135).

In traditional societies, a bond created by a service or a gift created a bond between souls. Giving an object to another person symbolically meant that a part of you was given to them (Mauss 1999: 40). A gift was supposed to create an atmosphere of friendship between the donor and the receiver (Mauss 1999: 50). In this context, the presenting of the Sampo to Pohjola was expected to establish a bond of friendship between Kalevala and Pohjola. In addition, reciprocity was always connected to giving and receiving from both sides, indicating equality in partnership (Maus 1999: 80).

One way of establishing peace between two communities was marriage. However, although marriages helped to organize intercommunity relations (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 135), peace through marriage was not necessarily sustainable (Holsti 1913: 61). Intercommunity relations were connected only to top-level marriages and leaders could take several wives. Often latest wives were taken from faraway communities and paved the way for future alliances (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 127). In marriages that created an alliance, if the wife died, the husband expected his wife's family to provide him with a new wife (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 135). Maybe this was what Ilmarinen expected when he went to Pohjola to ask for a new bride after his wife was killed by a bear.

In addition to marriages and gifts, a common religion or customs organized intercommunity relations in traditional societies. According to Holsti (1913: 139-140) and Numelin (1950), this explains why traditional communities were less violent than one would expect. This goes strongly against the assumption that anarchy in the international system is the state of nature. This argument is not supported by any strong evidence. The state of war weakly supported cooperation that communities needed in the struggle for survival (Holsti 1913:

139). This explains why Maus (1999: 137) understands politics in traditional societies as a praxis towards cooperation and peace.

Traditional societies had rules for intercommunity interactions. According to Holsti, communities possessed a defined territory and its borders were known by others. Borders were respected and seldom contested (Holsti 1913: 268). Prehistorical Finns also had their demarcated territories (Holsti 1913: 272). A neutral territory or no-man's land between friendly communities reduced the interest in conflict. Buffer zones were also known to exist, but between hostile communities (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 134).

The various means employed to build peaceful intercommunity relations show that there were tensions and violent conflicts in intersocial relations. Holsti defined war in intersocial relations as a state where physical force was used to occupy territories or to plunder, no matter whether anyone was killed or wounded (Holsti 1913: 14). According to this definition, in *Kalevala*, we can see violence that can be understood as war. One function of war was to maintain or change the territories which defined the subsistence of communities (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 133). The issue was about how to feed people and keep scarcity at bay (Holsti 1913: 18).

Intercommunity wars were used also to avenge an unwarranted death – a blood revenge (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 133; Holsti 1913: 28). The death might be of a person from one family, but the whole community was involved in the revenge war that ensued (Holsti 1913: 31). However, whether to grab territory or to avenge a death, war was conducted as a ritual with clear rules: the first battle death usually ended the fight and defined the outcome of the war (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 133).

Plunder expeditions, like the robbing of the Sampo, represented a different kind of war, in which the enemy's habitations were destroyed, people were killed, and captives were taken. These kinds of wars occurred between communities that saw each other as archenemies and that had border disputes. (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997: 134) According to Holsti, wars connected to acts of robbery or occupation of territories were not common in the relations of traditional communities. However, when general welfare increased, wars of plunder became more common. In this connection, it is necessary to understand that without a certain level of welfare within the community, it was not possible to prepare a war expedition. (Holsti 1913: 20, 23)

It is possible to conclude that the heroes and leaders of *Kalevala* correspond well to modern anthropology's portrayal of the leaders of traditional societies. This further allows us to conclude that the heroes of *Kalevala* can tell us about real humans in the mythic past. Likewise, their behavior as leaders are an almost textbook example of the behavior and responsibilities of leaders of traditional communities. Also, intercommunity relations in *Kalevala*

resemble the picture anthropology offers about intersocial relations in prehistoric times. Thus, we can conclude that the communities that Kalevala and Pohjola represent could have existed. Even though tensions existed in their relations, they used marriages, feasts, and gifts to maintain peace and amity. This raises an interesting question. What possibly could those communities in Kalevala and Pohjola have represented?

#### 11.4.2. *Kalevala and two ancient Baltic sea powers*

After *Kalevala* was released, there have been attempts – both scientific and otherwise – to track the geographical location of Kalevala and Pohjola, like was the case with Troy. It has been said that these attempts cannot amount to anything since Kalevala and Pohjola are just mythic places. Lönnrot himself tried to connect the two places into what was known in his time about the origin of the Finnish people. Some have termed Kalevala the abode of the gods like Olympus, and Pohjola the place of the dead (Salo 2004: 546-547). Karhu (2002: 100) has understood Pohjola as a fabled place. Unto Salo has placed Kalevala in Great Sastamala, or, in a wider context, in the ancient Great Satakunta (Salo 2004: 515).

The most fascinating and convincing argument in placing Kalevala and Pohjola in the historical context was presented by Matti Klinge in 1983 in a pamphlet that was a sketch about two ancient sea powers, the Estonian-Finnish and the Swedish-Finnish. The Estonian-Finnish sea power stretched from the east coast of the Baltic Sea to south-western Finland up to Turku. The Swedish-Finnish sea power stretched from the Swedish Mälars region to western Finland, ancient Kalanti, and Great Satakunta. In this geographical picture, it can be understood that moving between Kalevala and Pohjola took time and occurred mainly by boat and that the battle over the Sampo took place at sea.

Ancient Nordic sources support Klinge's sketch. Some existing sources refer to three states or wider political units in the Baltic Sea region: Jotland (Götland-Gotland); Finland, which could refer to the Estonian-Finnish sea power; and Kvenland, which refers to the ancient Kalanti and Satakunta further north to Southern Pohjanmaa (Klinge 1983: 22-23). Kainuu/Kvenland was among the first to voluntarily join the Swedish state emerging in the Mälars region. According to Klinge (1983: 8, 26), Vakka-Suomi and Satakunta had been connected closely to the Mälars region and the Suethood sea power since ancient times, and this connection became the basis of the Swedish-Finnish sea power into which south-western Finland was merged after what is called the first Swedish crusade to Finland (Klinge 1983: 26).

According to Klinge (1983: 12), linguistics gives evidence about strong connections between south-western Finland and Estonia in the past. This is why Klinge says that the first crusade to Finland was an incursion of the Swedish-Finnish power into Estonian-Finnish territory (Klinge 1983: 24). In a wider sense, the expedition was into the land of the Wends, which was an organized entity with own jurisdiction (Klinge 1983: 24, 46). Klinge connects the concept of Wend to Fenni, Finn, which refers to people living along a long seacoast and who are seafarers (Klinge 1983: 21). One reason why Klinge connects Wend to his Estonian-Finnish sea power is that in a dictionary printed in Turku in 1672, the Bay of Finland has been called “*sinus Venedicus*” (Bay of Wends) and in parenthesis “*sinus Fennicus*” (Bay of Finland) (Klinge 1983: 141).

That south-western and western Finland were oriented towards or connected in two different directions can be supported by the fact that the concept, *Suomi*, appears only in the Estonian language and that, originally, the concept referred only to south-western Finland. *Suomi* does not appear in any other neighboring language. In the ancient Swedish world, people east of the Baltic Sea were known as “*van*” and north of them as “*kveen*”. (Klinge 1983: 114) After the occupation of Finland, or, more specifically, south-western Finland, the concept of Vend, not Finland, was added to the title of the king of Sweden (Klinge 1983: 138).

In the picture Klinge constructs, he places Kalevala as the Estonian-Finnish sea power. Väinämöinen, whose time is often spent in building boats, is one of the leaders of this power. (Klinge 1983: 23-24) The boreal forests of Kalevala with birch and oak trees Klinge (1983: 14) located in western Estonia. In the context of Lennart Meri’s study, “*Höbevalge*” (*Silver White*), it would be logical to place Ilmarinen as a master blacksmith in Saarenmaa. This is supported by the fact that a meteorite landed in Saarenmaa in prehistorical times, and the iron from it was used to make iron products as well as swords (Meri 1983: 103-116). Klinge locates Pohjola somewhere in ancient Kalanti or Satakunta (Klinge 1983: 14-15).

Klinge supports his argument that ancient Kalanti and Satakunta already belonged to a Swedish kingdom before the first crusade to Finland by referring to Finnish historian Porthan from the eighteenth century. In Porthan’s world, there was no need for a nationalistic Finnish history and, therefore, it was easy for Porthan to write that northern Finland and Satakunta were already merged with Sweden at the time of King Erik Anundson in the ninth century and that south-western Finland was annexed after the crusade of King Saint Erik in the twelfth century (Klinge 1983: 46). This means that the crusade may have led to the destruction of the Estonian-Finnish sea power or Kalevala. Sweden took over part of that territory, and from the south, both the Teutonic Order and

Denmark occupied parts of Estonia. The power of Denmark was established in northern Estonia in the early thirteenth century, while Swedish power in Finland was gradually strengthened and expanded to Häme by 1240. (Klinge 1983: 62). These developments gradually detached south-western and southern Finland from Estonia (Klinge 1983: 68).

Klinge's sketch presents the Estonian-Finnish sea power as Kalevala and the Swedish-Finnish sea power as Pohjola. This means that the conflict depicted in the epos is the interaction between these two powers. In this interpretation, these two prehistorical powers gradually transformed into mythic communities after the first Swedish crusade, when the sea powers withered away. On the geographical Finnish territory, Sweden unified both elements first into what was called "*Itämaa*" (eastern territory of the kingdom) and later Finland. This timing of *Kalevala* overlaps with the timing given by *Kalevala* scholars.

Kaukonen (1988: 221-222) reacted strongly against Klinge's interpretation and argued that *Kalevala* was purely fictional history. He proffered his own understanding that no historical sources point to a king called Väinämöinen or to a kingdom that could be Klinge's Estonian-Finnish sea power (Kaukonen 1988: 202-203). Kaukonen adds that in the folklore, Pohjola or Väinölä (*Kalevala*) do not refer to states, and that Klinge has not pointed to any verse in *Kalevala* that could connect Pohjola to ancient Kalanti or Väinölä to Saarenmaa (Kaukonen 1988: 207).

In addition to the evidence Klinge provides in his pamphlet, archaeological findings point to a dividing line in southern and western Finland, and this could support the idea of two distinct sea powers on Finnish territory. In south-western Finland, artefacts have been found that connect it to Estonia. And, in the region of ancient Kalanti and Great Satakunta, artefacts have been found that connect this part of the country to the Mälars region in Sweden. According to Salo, historical artefacts make it possible to say that in the pre-Roman period, Finland was divided into two parts: in the south and south-west, the artefacts are closer to the artefacts in Estonia and the eastern Baltic region, and in the west, they are closer to the artefacts found in Sweden and wider Scandinavia. (Salo 2004: 168)

It would seem that ancient Kalanti was a polity of its own in prehistoric times (Salo 2004: 330). Already in the Iron Age, this region had strong connections to Sweden and tried to get support from there when people further in the east threatened them (Salo 2004: 358). The trade connections from this region were with Sweden and it was a channel for furs from western Finland further westwards (Salo 2004: 179, 333). Salo even argues that ancient Kalanti and Satakunta were less independent in their relations with Sweden than south-western Finland or Häme further in the east, whose relations with Sweden verged on the hostile (Salo 2004: 186).

According to Salo, there is no evidence that Swedish war expeditions attacked the Great Satakunta region, although, since the fourth century, Swedish expeditions had been active in the northern Baltic Sea (Salo 2004: 175, 355, 357). In fact, in the early eleventh century, ancient Kalanti and Satakunta were in peaceful contact with the Mälars region in Sweden (Salo 2004: 357-359). This is evidenced by the fact that far fewer ancient hill forts have been found in the Kalanti and Satakunta regions than in south-western Finland or Häme (Salo 2004: 183). In this respect, an interesting point is that the first crusade landed in Finland in the area that was already Christianized and oriented to Sweden (Salo 2004: 222).

It is also interesting that the first seat of the new bishopric of Finland was established in a tiny Nousiainen village and not in Turku (Salo 2004: 556). This leads to the assumption that Turku was not yet a part of the Swedish kingdom. To Klinge, this indicates that the first crusade was the Swedish-Finnish sea power's attempt to conquer at least parts of the Estonian-Finnish sea power's lands. However, around the time of the crusade, the geography of Arabian Idrish in 1150 talks of the town of Turku. This means that the town was not irrelevant. But in the context of Swedish expansion in Finnish territory, Turku was still pagan or not yet occupied. (Klinge 1983: 64)

Combining Salo's findings and Klinge's sketch, it is possible to conclude that before the Swedish crusades on Finnish territory, there were at least two distinct communities, sometimes even hostile to each other. One was oriented to the south towards Estonia, and the other to the west towards Sweden. Using Klinge's sketch, it is possible to connect Lappi also to this. In prehistoric times, the Sami people populated most of Finland. Even in the Bronze Age, the Sami people lived in southern Pohjanmaa, Häme, and eastern Uusimaa (Lehtola 1996: 29-30). Around 1000 CE, the Sami-populated territory began north of Häme and Great Satakunta (Salo 2004: 160-163). This means that Lappi in *Kalevala* could have stretched further to the south than Lappi in the historical age.

Archaeological findings add one more region or community to prehistoric Finland, namely Häme. In Häme, ancient hill-forts' chain speak of a common threat in the late Iron Age. Those forts formed a common defense system and reveal an organized society beyond ancient south-western Finland and the ancient Great Satakunta. (Salo 2004, 350-351, 355) This region was simultaneously threatened from the east and the west. The Byzantine Christianity had already begun to expand to Finnish territory in the eighth and ninth centuries (Salo 2004: 178, 183). Gradually, Häme become an object of Swedish expeditions from the west and Karelian and Novgorodian expeditions from the east (Salo 2004: 186).

Armed forces from Novgorod made a war expedition to Häme in the winter of 1042 (Salo 2004: 565). In the early twelfth century, forces from Karjala and Novgorod threatened the independence of the Häme community. These kinds of war expeditions most likely are one reason for the hill-fort system in Häme (Salo 2004: 565). The existence of Häme as an autonomous community gives us the option of placing Kullervo's origin there, and the hostile relations between his father and uncle could have dealt with fishing and hunting rights in the woods between Karjala and Häme. Another aspect is that Lappi and Häme shared a frontier region, which makes it possible to understand that Kullervo's father escaped to Lappi and saved his life in blood revenge.

If we place the story in *Kalevala* into the context of Klinge's sketch, we can see that in the mythic past, there was never any one original Finnish nation which settled on what is now Finnish territory. Recent genetic and linguistic studies justify this conclusion. Instead, the ancestors of the current Finns fought each other, and the Finnish nation was born within the Swedish empire. The expanding western Christianity and the Swedish empire gradually united Finland in transition from prehistoric to historic Finland (Salo 2004: 552). In this process, the mythic world of *Kalevala* transformed into a tale. While transforming folklore into an epos has a connection with the idea of nationalism, and the epos ends in the bright future of the Finns as a nation, it has been hard to interpret *Kalevala* in the context of the fighting Finnish communities. And in talking about one nation, it has been impossible to understand *Kalevala* and *Pohjola* as two distinct political units.

Both anthropology and Klinge's sketch reveal that *Kalevala* could be more than just an epic story, that it can tell us something about the past, the history. In the context of Klinge's sketch, *Kalevala* tells us about the relations between two distinctly organized political formations. And the relations between them were maintained, for instance, through intermarriages. On the other hand, Lönnrot's own pacifism explains why armed conflicts play a minor role in the epos, even though archaeological findings tell a different story. Both sea powers and their leaders have transformed into myths in the course of history.

## 11. 5. So, what?

In the introduction, I introduced *Kalevala* as a lens from which to examine international relations in today's changing international order, the rise of China and India, and to the challenge this transition will pose to theorizing international or world politics. At this point, it is time to ask how the international

relations portrayed in *Kalevala* can help us in improving our understanding about the current transition and in looking beyond Eurocentric theoretical approaches. One immediate lesson we learn is that there were international relations much before nation-states came into being. This means that by studying *Kalevala* or, in a wider sense, studying tribal societies, it is possible to understand international relations beyond state-centric perspectives. In a globalizing world, international relations are no longer transactions only between states. In addition to the states, there are actors such as terrorist and criminal organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, and migrants, all of which have an impact on international politics beyond the state-centric angle.

Relations and interactions between traditional societies point to the fact that intercommunity and inter-individual relations are not necessarily disconnected, but interdependent. Individuals represent their communities, and individuals and their behavior are the factors which help to fill in the picture about the Other. Inter-individual relations weaken or strengthen the relations between communities, which then defines the space for individual cross-border relations. According to van der Pijl (2007: 23), there are three different aspects in intercommunity relations: territorial sovereignty, protection, and exchange. It is natural that different factors may cause tensions in relations, but that does not need to lead to violent conflicts. Here we come back to the idea that anarchy was never the so-called state of nature. Relations were maintained through gifts, marriages, and joint feasts and rituals, which could also include organized ritual wars.

*Kalevala* supports the idea that international relations are basically about how to meet or interact with the Other. The formation of nation-states or unified states transferred the Other beyond the border and international relations changed into interstate relations (see, for instance, Inayatullah and Blaney 2012), and sovereignty as well as national security became the essential issues. In the global world, the Other is no longer beyond the border, but within (van der Pijl 2007: vii, 193). Another issue is that while China and India rise in world status, we have to face the Other that will not necessarily become as we are. This means that it may not be possible to understand this new Other using the same matrix that we currently use to understand international relations. We may have to learn to understand China and India from the perspective of their own historical conditions in order to construct something that we can call post-Westphalian or global IR. Diversity will be a permanent element in this new pluralist global order.

Above I have argued that on the bases of anthropological studies, *Kalevala* is not just a work of fiction by Lönnrot, but that it may reflect real ancient societies. Therefore, it can be used to study relations between traditional



communities. I have also argued in the context of Klinge's sketch of two ancient sea powers that Pohjola and Kalevala can well represent those sea powers. In this respect, *Kalevala* can actually tell us something about the mythic past of the Finns. However, to make exact historical conclusions is complicated since there are no historical documents about the people who could have been Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, or Louhi.

In reflecting the mythic Finnish past, *Kalevala* tells us about several ancient communities among whom relations were not always peaceful, although Lönnrot has tried to construct *Kalevala* as a pacifist epos. His interest is understandable since the construction of *Kalevala* is closely connected to the construction of the Finnish nation in the nineteenth century. The epos was used in constructing the Finnish identity, and a portrayal of different Finnish tribes quarrelling with each other did not fit in with this construction. The end Lönnrot devised for the epos reflects the birth of a unified nation which later took its place in the Westphalian international order among other independent sovereign states.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this essay demonstrates two different perspectives in studying international relations. First, *Kalevala* as an epos offers a chance to study the substance of international relations. In this respect, it does not matter whether *Kalevala* is just fiction or really tells us something about the past. Second, it raises the issue of sources in studying international relations. Epics, novels, or movies can tell us something about the encounter of the Other and Other worldviews which explicate international relations. As a good example, I would like to refer to Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo's novel, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1997), which examines the contradictory worldviews of the developing world and the welfare society, and what happens when one encounters the other.

## 11.6. *Summa summarum*

An epos like *Kalevala* can be used as a tool to enlarge the perspective in studying international relations, and it offers a pathway from a Eurocentric approach towards a more universal or global IR theory. This does not exclude the option to interpret *Kalevala* in the context of traditional political realism, but in any case, it presents a system in which there are no nation-states. In this respect, it opens an alternative perspective for studying international relations.

In the context of *Kalevala*, the core issue in encountering the Other is how to maintain peaceful relations. This leads to the conclusion that the aim of

politics is to construct peace. However, violence in international relations cannot always be avoided; it is more an exception than a norm in the totality of all international transactions. Peaceful transactions are also a precondition for the welfare of societies. Here the issue is not about the welfare of one society, but the welfare of the communities belonging to a system of several communities. Maintaining peaceful relations increases intercommunity transactions, which provide welfare for all.

In *Kalevala*, the issue is also about encountering different communities without any interest in transforming the Other into us. This is an important aspect in the world where the former hegemonic West now has to encounter China and India, which may not be Westernized into liberal, democratic market economies. It is most likely that future globalization will not be able to homogenize the world, but that it will become more pluralistic. Therefore, it is time to learn to accommodate diversity in order to avoid potential future conflicts.

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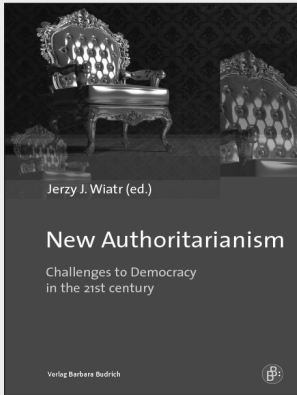
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