Chapter 4
Regional Actorship: A Comparative Approach to Interregionalism

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4.1 Introduction

According to the dominant paradigm in international relations, the nation-state is the main, if not the only, relevant actor in the international system constituted by nation-states. However the 'nation-centric paradigm' is now being overtaken by the 'post-national paradigm' (Nicolaïdis and Lacroix 2003), and 'methodological nationalism' is being overtaken by 'methodological cosmopolitanism' (Beck 2004). This dualism is not simply a matter of 'either or', but rather what kind of theoretical glasses we are using. Neither of the images represents 'the truth'. Accordingly, in this study, regions are seen as 'actors' in order to grasp their potential actorship even though this could be questioned on empirical grounds from one situation to another.

Somehow, a general theory of regionalism in the world system must begin to be built. There are a number of competing approaches according to which a region may appear as a geographical area, a military alliance system or a trading block. A region can also be seen as 'imagined community' since any historical region contains shared cultural traditions that can be used in a region-building process. As Tony Payne puts it, 'regions are always in the making, constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through social practice and discourse' (2004: 20). Amitav Acharya similarly argues for 'an agency-oriented perspective that acknowledges local resistance to, and socialisation of, powerful actors and attests to the endogenous construction of regions' (2007: 630). This dynamic understanding of region as process is central to the new regionalism approach (Hettne 2001, 2003; Hettne and Söderbaum 2000). An 'approach' is more modest than a 'theory' and serves the

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purpose of dealing analytically in a non-reductionist way with a multidimensional phenomenon. 'New regionalism' must be seen as a new political landscape in the making, characterised by several interrelated dimensions, many actors (including the region itself) and several interacting levels of society. Hence several theoretical approaches are needed (as stated in the Introduction to this book).

The region is moving into a centre place in current theories of international relations and international political economy, hence the growing interest for the dynamics of regionalism, as well as for interregionalism, as a possible world order. However, the study of regions and regionalism still lacks a firm ontological and epistemological foundation. What is a region? And how to approach it? Unless we simply focus on the state-led regional organisation as such, the relevant region must be seen as continuously changing and growing in size, as shown in the case of the repeated enlargements of the European Union (EU), the more active role taken by the African Union (AU), the convergence of Southeast Asia and East Asia into a possible East Asian Community (EAC), and the merger of the Southern Cone and the Andean region in the new Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The ontological target is moving.

What about epistemology? 'Comparative regionalism' has often been suggested as a useful point of departure for theorising regionalism (Breslin et al. 2002; Hettne 2001). This approach has to be built from a rather fragmented field, consisting of European integration studies, regional area studies, international political economy, international relations and comparative politics (De Lombaerde et al. 2010). As in this chapter, the controversial starting point is often the case of Europe, not least because the EU is promoting regionalism in its own image around the world (see Santander in this volume). The universally rejected bias of Eurocentrism can nevertheless be overcome and kept at bay. It is difficult not to see regionalism in the light of the European experience, but it is of course essential to take into account the specific preconditions and dynamics of each region. It is now appropriate to speak of regionalisms in the plural rather than the singular. This necessitates inputs from area studies specialists to the field of regional studies.[1] It is also essential to specify what is to be compared. Should it be the region as a whole (whatever that may be) or a specific regional process (regionalisation)? As will become clear, the region is itself a process. This is obvious in the case of Europe, but the shape of other regions is also changing with the challenges they are facing, and with the way they try to deal with these challenges through the pooling or sharing of sovereignty, thereby increasing their capacity to act as regions.

Normally a region is not associated with actorship, but rather seen as an 'arena', a 'level' of action, or limited to a regional organisation. Regions are here understood

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[1] This sounds easy, but a closer dialogue between area specialists and students of globalism and regionalism is in fact a difficult one. Either the latter has to devote time to many types of empirical realities in a number of regions, or the former must widen the interest to other regions, as well as international relations theory and international political economy. For a well-known example of the first option, see Peter J. Katzenstein's *A World of Regions* (2005). The risk with a too strong empirical approach is the neglect of potential future change.

as processes; they are not geographical or administrative objects, but potential subjects, and thereby actors in the making; their boundaries are shifting, and so is their actorship and capacity as actors. Our recent history in the Westphalian era has been completely dominated by national actors. This has also resulted in state-centric theories of international relations. Regional agency has come to life due to the transformation of the EU from being simply an area and an instrument for economic cooperation, to being a political actor. The same process can be discerned in other regions, which increasingly take on an external role. The need for regional agency comes from the challenges of globalisation, as most nation-states are unable to manage pressing global problems on their own.

A region exhibits a similarity to a nation, in that a region is an 'imagined community', and like a nation it has a territorial base. But there are also differences, for instance the variety of interests and the problem of coordination within the region. The unique feature of regional agency is that it must be created by voluntary processes and therefore depends on dialogue and consensus within the emerging region in which the nation-states typically cling to their sovereignty. Regional agency is thus distinct from state action, which operates according to a different logic, particularly in the case of a strong national power.

This chapter firstly develops a comparative framework built around the concept of regional actorship: the mutually supportive role of regionness, presence and actorness. In the subsequent two sections the framework is employed in a comparison between the historical emergence of the European region and current regionalisms and interregionalisms in East Asia and Latin America (LA). The final section draws conclusions about the relationship between regionalism, interregionalism and world order.

4.2   An Anatomy of Regional Actorship

Regional actorship is used as a summary concept for a region's ability to influence the external world, and for instance engage in interregionalism. The preconditions for regional actorship must be looked for both in internal developments in the region and in its external context. The relative cohesion of the regional actor shapes external action, which in turn impacts on regional identity and regional consciousness through the expectations and reactions of external actors *vis-à-vis* the region. The concept of regional actorship is built around three interacting components: internal cohesion and identity formation, or *regionness*; international *presence* in terms of territorial and population size, economic strength, diplomacy, military power, etc.; and capacity to act purposively in an organised fashion in order to shape outcomes in the external world, or *actorness*. Actorship for a region is thus a complex phenomenon and the three components may influence each other. An increase in the level of regionness leads to a more distinct presence, which in turn actualises the question of actorness, due to expectations flowing from various forms of presence.

4.2.1 Regionness

Regionalism is usually seen as the ideology and project of region-building, while
the concept of regionalisation is reserved for more or less spontaneous processes of
region-formation by different actors—state or non-state. When different processes
of regionalisation intensify and converge within the same geographical area, the
cohesion—and thereby the distinctiveness of the region in the making—increases.
A regional actor takes shape. This process of regionalisation can be described in
historical terms of five levels of *regionness*: regional social space; regional social
system; regional international society; regional community; and regional institu-
tionalised polity (Hettne 1993, 2003; Hettne and Söderbaum 2000). The concept
of regionness defines the position of a particular region in terms of its cohesion.
It is derived from the European experience and must therefore be modified and
universalised to be relevant for other regions.

Regional social space is a geographical area, normally delimited by natural,
physical barriers. Even if the region is rooted in territory, it must be understood as a
'social' space. In social terms, it is organised by human inhabitants, at first in relatively
isolated communities, and later constituting some kind of translocal relationship,
which can result from demographic change or changes in transport-technology.

The increased density of contacts, implying more durable, but still unsettled,
relations, is what creates a *regional social system*. Historically the often precarious
security situation ('security complex'), characterised by competing political units,
lacking organised diplomatic relations, has often led to an empire, or even more
often to pendulum movements between a centralised and a more or less decentralised
order (Buzan and Wæver 2003). The centralised imperial systems achieved order by
force and coercion.

The region as an *international society* implies a set of rules that makes interstate
relations more predictable (less anarchic), and thus more peaceful, or at least less
violent. It can be either organised (*de jure*) or more spontaneous (*de facto*). In the case
of a more institutionalised cooperation, the region is constituted by the members of
the regional alliance system or regional organisations.

The region as a *community* takes shape when a stable organisational framework
facilitates and promotes social communication and the convergence of values,
norms and behaviour throughout the region. Thus a transnational civil society
emerges, characterised by social trust also at the regional level. In security terms we
(after Karl Deutsch) speak of a 'security community' (Deutsch et al. 1957; also see
Chap. 5, by Santini, Lucarelli and Pinfari).

Finally, the region as an *institutionalised polity* has a more fixed and permanent
structure of decision-making and therefore stronger acting capability, or actorship.
Such a regional polity does not have to be characterised by the normal terminology
used to describe political systems but can be *sui generis*, as in the case of Europe, or
Europolity. At present no other region in the world can be described in these terms.

The approach of seeing a region as process implies an evolution of deepening
regionalism, not necessarily following the idealised, stage-model presented above,

which mainly serves a heuristic and comparative purpose. Since regionalism is a political project, created by human actors, it may move in different directions. It might indeed also fail, just as a nation-state project can fail. Seen from this perspective, decline means fragmentation and decreasing regionness as well as dilution of identity. The failure of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to keep the post-Soviet space together is an example of such a fragmentary process. Such processes have implications also for interregionalism, which consequently suffers its ups and downs.

4.2.2 Presence

The concept of 'presence' constitutes a bridge between endogenous and exogenous factors. A stronger presence implies a greater capacity to act, but the actor must be subjectively conscious about its presence and prepared to make use of it. Furthermore, a stronger presence means more repercussions and reactions, and thereby pressure to act. In the absence of such action, presence itself will diminish and leave a vacuum behind. Europe, unique among regions in terms of presence, is more than the EU's foreign policy, and more even than the aggregate of the EU's policies across all areas of its activity. Simply by existing, and due to its relative weight (demographically, economically, militarily and ideologically), the Union has an impact on the rest of the world. Its footprints are seen everywhere. It is the largest donor in the world. The size of its economy is comparable to that of the United States (US). It is also building a military capacity, meant to be used outside the region. All this provokes reactions and creates expectations from the outside. In the 'near abroad', presence is particularly strong and can even develop into the outright absorption of new territory (enlargement).

Presence is thus a complex and comprehensive material variable, depending on the size of the actor, the scope of its external activities, the relative importance of different issue areas, and the relative dependence of various regions upon the European market.

4.2.3 Actorness

'Actorness' implies a scope of action and room for manoeuvre, in some cases even a legal personality, however not common in the case of regions. In the case of the EU, actorness is closely related to the controversial issue of 'competencies' (who has the right to decide what?), ultimately determined by the member states as a whole group. Actorness follows from the strengthened presence of the regional unit in different contexts, as well as from the interaction between the actor and its external environment. Actorness is thus not only a simple function of regionness, but also an outcome of a dialectic process between endogenous and exogenous forces.

Actorness has received a great deal of attention in the discussion of EU as a global actor. Bretherton and Vogler (2006: 30) identify four requirements for actorness: (i) shared commitment to a set of overarching shared values and principles; (ii) domestic legitimation of decision processes and priorities relating to external policy; (iii) ability to identify policy priorities and to formulate consistent and coherent policies; and (iv) availability of, and capacity to, utilise policy instruments (diplomacy, economic tools and military means) (also see Sjöstedt 1977). Obviously, these requirements are fulfilled in different degrees in different foreign policy relations and different foreign policy issue areas: from the 'near abroad' to far away regions; and from the areas of trade, in which the EU is a strong actor, to security, where the competence given to the EU is contested and highly controversial. In other words, actorness is shifting over time, between issue areas and between foreign policy relations. This has to do with the peculiar nature of the EU as an actor and the complexity of its foreign policy machinery. The most problematic requirement of actorness appears to be that of domestic legitimation, in view of the democratic deficit of the EU. This is posing a severe challenge to EU actorness, particularly in the field of security.

In contrast with nation-states, regional actorness must be created by voluntary processes and therefore depends on dialogue and consensus. This mode of operating is the model Europe holds out as the preferred world order, since it is the way the new Europe (as organised by the EU) developed. With increased levels of actorness in different fields of action and in different parts of the world, Europe will be able to influence the world order towards its own preferred model of civilian power: dialogue, respect for different interests within an interregional, pluralist framework based on democracy, social justice and equality, multilateralism and international law (Telò 2006).

4.2.4   Regional Actorship and Interregionalism

Even though the concept of regional actorship is derived from the EU as a global actor, it is nevertheless meant to serve as an analytical framework in studying the transformation of *any* region from being an object to becoming a subject, that is with a certain actor capacity in its external relations. This can be done comparatively as tried in this chapter. The concept is also relevant in order to understand the preconditions for interregionalism. For two regions to establish a functioning relationship, it is essential that both have achieved a certain degree of actorship, that is, a combination of internal cohesion, external presence and organised actorship. Otherwise there will merely be a subject-object relationship, which oftentimes seems to be the case in the EU's relations with weaker or dispersed counterpart regions (Söderbaum and Stålgren 2010). Interregionalism can thus be described as a relationship between actors more or less well provided with the three components of actorship. These components, varying in importance, can compensate for each others' weaknesses. A weak presence can for instance be compensated for by

stronger internal cohesion (regionness), or a more effectively organised actorness. To this comes the importance that the interregional interaction may have for the internal cohesion. A strong presence does not necessarily lead to regional actorship. North America as organised in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for instance, is strong in terms of presence but as a region it is weak in terms of regionness and actorness. Other regions short of actorship are the Middle East, which is paralysed by interstate and intrastate conflicts, the Mediterranean, which is a social construction by the EU Neighbourhood Policy, as well as Caucasus and Central Asia, which can be described as 'pre-regions'. Africa is well provided with regional organisations but this has not led to strong actorship. The AU is modelled on the EU but whatever regionness there is to be found is of a rather informal nature with roots in pre-colonial times.

4.3   Comparing Regionalisation

This chapter highlights the close link between regions and interregionalism. In other words, it is necessary to start with an analysis of regionalisation and regional actorship in order to understand the preconditions for and the nature of contemporary interregionalism. The problem with comparative analysis is that the number of cases to compare, at least if this is to be done systematically, has to be limited. This section discusses the cases of Europe, East and Southeast Asia (*de facto* constituting East Asia) and Latin America, focusing on processes of regionalisation towards regional actorship.

The more recent regionalisation process in Europe can be described in terms of three convergences leading to increased cohesion: regime convergence, economic homogenisation, and relaxed security relations. In spite of having happened in Europe, these processes seem to qualify as general preconditions for actorship and will therefore be used as a backdrop for analysing the more state-driven regionalisation in East Asia and Latin America.

4.3.1   Regionalisation in Europe

The regionalisation process in Europe is constituted by different forms of convergence: of political regimes, economic homogenisation, and in the way security arrangements are organised. *Regime convergence* implies the reduction of differences within a particular political space, in this case an emerging region. The homogenisation of essential features of the political system can be seen as a precondition for joining the EU, and thus as a factor explaining enlargement. Normally a country Europeanises before being adopted as 'European' and forming part of the EU, whereby regionalisation from below changes into harmonisation and coordination from above. The recent (post-1957) process of political homogenisation in

Europe has gone through three phases: (i) in the South, the disappearance of military dictatorships in the mid-1970s; (ii) in the West, the more widespread self-assertion of the European Atlantic partners in the field of security, beginning in the early 1980s; and (iii) in the East, the fall of the communist regimes in the late 1980s and the Soviet collapse in 1991.

The transformation in the post-communist countries formed part of the general homogenisation process, or the Europeanisation of Europe largely coming from below. The Soviet Union's withdrawal from dominance in Eastern Europe dramatically reinforced the 'de-Eastern Europeanisation', which had been ongoing for some time, at varying speeds in different countries (Dannreuther 2004; Smith 2003).

The process of *economic homogenisation*, associated with uniform national adaptations to globalisation, led to a state of liberal hegemony in Europe, although at the beginning, when the EU was formed, the policy of state interventionism was widespread. Still European capitalism is referred to as 'social capitalism'. The economic regionalisation of Europe arising out of the intensification of the internal market project has thus so far been consistent with market-led economic globalisation. Indeed, both processes have been founded on the same neo-liberal paradigm and pursued by a majority of governments.

Security is the third field of convergence and coordination. The two post-war military blocs, albeit with a group of neutrals in between, manifestly expressed Europe's political subordination to the superpowers. It was an era of hegemonic regionalism, imposed from above and from the outside. From the viewpoint of economic organisation, the security imperative imposed a more or less corresponding cleavage pattern. In periods of *détente* it became evident that economic contacts tended to follow a logic of their own. In periods of high tension, economic relations, in contrast, had to adapt to the political imperatives built into the security arrangement. All this underlines the predominance of the security factor. In spite of this, the security factor was not expressed in institutional and policy terms until recently. Here, the break-up of Yugoslavia was the major learning process.

4.3.2   Regionalisation in East Asia

Inter-state relations in East Asia have historically been rather tense and unsettled. This should realistically be expected in a security complex with few institutionalised inter-state arrangements, thus making it into something even less than an 'anarchical society', which characterised 19th century Europe (Bull 1977). To this unsettled contemporary situation comes a historical legacy of interstate violence and problems of distrust, particularly directed against Japan, and not yet quite resolved. East Asia proper is economically dynamic, but weak in terms of transnational political structures and regional identity. The future of this region is either rather bleak (in case the potential conflicts are translated into war) or very bright (if *de facto* interdependence leads to convergence of interests, where every state gets a stake in stable peace). The latter scenario seems more likely.

There are indications that the level of regionness is on the increase, both in terms of economic convergence and identity (Acharya 2007). The role of China is crucial here. There is a dramatic change in this classical empire from aloofness and introvertedness to a dynamic, optimistic constructive engagement with the outside world, including neighbouring countries in East and Southeast Asia. The record of the other giant Japan has been rather ambivalent, but, after its sensational landslide victory in 2009 the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) declared that it will be more 'independent' (*vis-à-vis* the US), re-establish Japan as an Asian nation ('member of Asia') through historical reconciliation and multilateral institution-building. As an example, the then leader of DPJ Yukio Hatoyama (2009) published a controversial essay in the *New York Times* in which he announced an end of US hegemony in the region, decried the US-led neoliberal model of globalisation, and advocated greater integration within Asia.

In the sub-region of Southeast Asia, *regime* convergence and *economic policy* convergence are obvious by the fact that former communist Indochina has been integrated in capitalist ASEAN. It should be remembered that interstate relations in Southeast Asia, now considered to qualify as a security community, were quite tense before ASEAN was established (Kivimäki 2001). Burma is now the only odd man in the grouping. An *ASEAN Charter* was agreed in 2007 (the 40th anniversary of the organisation) in the shadow of the intractable Burma crisis. It was therefore somewhat diluted compared to the bolder original ambitions, a codification of existing norms. Nevertheless, the charter created a legal foundation for the organisation and an ASEAN Summit, constituted by the region's Heads of state, to meet twice a year.

ASEAN has thus meant significant security cooperation, which has tended to gradually involve also the East Asian sub-region. Similarly, the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) process has also created a more cooperative atmosphere in the larger region: ASEAN Plus Three (APT), the 'three' being Japan, China and South Korea, illustrating the interactive relationship between regionalism, regional actorship and interregionalism (cf. Gilson 2002).

The Asian Financial Crisis and the 'war against terror' exemplify regional and global events promoting cooperation. The financial crisis underlined the interdependence within the larger region of East Asia and made the afflicted countries frustrated over the Western attitude. Of particular interest here is the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) based on bilateral currency swaps to counter speculation. Before this, there had been little discussion about regional approaches to the management of financial stability. In June 2008 finance ministers from the APT further agreed to create a pool of 80 billion dollars for the protection of regional currencies. This replaced the CMI arrangement and was a step towards a regional equivalent to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Yet, the two Burma crises (the political uprising and the cyclone catastrophe) revealed the lack of actorship in other issue areas, particularly security. Domestic crises (as in Thailand), and interstate tensions (as between Thailand and Cambodia and Thailand and Malaysia) are again becoming problematic. However, it should be remembered that, in the long perspective, the East Asian region as a whole has been remarkably stable, which to a certain extent is due to regional cooperation.

4.3.3   Regionalisation in Latin America

For an outsider, the Latin American continent may appear as rather homogeneous, but the internal divisions and cleavages are nevertheless substantial. Regional cooperation was therefore late in coming and has faced many setbacks. Latin America has strong Iberian roots due to its long colonial heritage (see Santander in this volume). The cultural imposition was opposed by a multitude of indigenous cultures, by a combination of oppression and resistance shaped into an 'Indian world'. Neither of these two cultures were compatible with the 19th century fragmentation into nation-states, which started as 'national' elite projects run by important Ladino families—in contradistinction to the continental 'Bolivarian project', which is now reawaken (see Santander in this volume). With regard to cultural legacy, there should nevertheless be some basis for Latin American integration, but often political and ideological differences have prevented genuine and long-term cooperation (Phillips 2004). There are quite a few regional organisations pursuing the project of building regionalism from above, the most ambitious being the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). The other regional organisations certainly have comprehensive regional agendas but they are rather *ad hoc*. There is also a problematic lack of supranational institutions able to manage inter-state conflicts.[2] MERCOSUR is now bent on widening rather than deepening (Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela), which increases presence but decreases regionness and actorness, among other things due to diverging attitudes towards liberalisation and free trade. On the other hand, a consensus could be built on the general sympathy for redistributive interventionism, being part of the Latin American (as well as European) political legacy.

In terms of *regime* convergence, there has recently been an overall trend towards democracy (whereas there was a contrary trend in the 1970s). For example, when the Honduran military forced out the country's president, Manuel Zelaya, in June 2009, the Organisation of American States (OAS) invoked its so-called *Democratic Charter*, and stated that Honduras would face suspension from the organisation if it did not restore Mr. Zelaya to the presidency. It was the first time the *Charter* had been used since it was adopted in 2001. Both MERCOSUR and UNASUR have similarly reacted against authoritarian tendencies.

In some countries the trend towards democracy has gone together with a mobilisation and strengthening of indigenous groups, in turn leading to populist or socialist positions frightening both Ladino-dominated countries (Argentina) and Ladino elites in the countries concerned (e.g. Bolivia). However, left-centrist governments now predominate and it would not be wrong to speak of a long-term regime convergence throughout the continent. Socialism has recently (in Venezuela and Ecuador) been referred to as '21st century socialism', now supposed to be democratic rather than revolutionary.

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[2] There are unresolved bilateral problems such as the protests from Argentine environmentalists against the building of a pulp mill close to Argentina's territory just across the Uruguay river. On the other hand, Argentina has been criticised by the other member states for depreciating its currency and exporting its own problems.

In *economic* life, there have also been regional convergences, though also in this case in different directions at different points in time. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, which severely damaged the colonial and post-colonial primary goods export economy, the development model based on 'import-substitution-industrialisation' became generally applied and popularised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (Hettne 2001). This structuralist strategy was successfully applied from the late 1940s to the 1970s. According to the model, the strategy should be combined with regional integration in order to create the biggest possible Latin American market, but in practice the strategy was carried out on the national level and therefore soon faced obstacles not possible to break through (Sunkel 2008). Instead, globalisation and opening up of the economies became the general answer after a turbulent 1970s with attempted revolutions and military dictatorships starting in Chile. A cautionary approach to state-intervention has, since then, been more generally acknowledged by most regimes, although 'neoliberalism' generally has got a bad name after the unsuccessful orthodox experiments of the 1980s and 1990s. However, few countries today believe in protectionism and strong interventionism, although such signals have not disappeared completely.

In the late 2000s, the presidents of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay and Venezuela, along with a representative from Uruguay, gathered in Buenos Aires and signed the founding charter of the Banco del Sur, or Bank of the South. This can be compared to the Chiang Mai Initiative in Southeast Asia. Later, twelve Latin American countries met in Rio and founded the Union of South American Nations. Thus MERCOSUR and the Andean Community (CAN) will ultimately merge. The Union is modelled on the EU, and there is talk of financial cooperation and a common currency.

The *security* situation as regards interstate relations is with a few exceptions relaxed, and has never been a big problem in Latin America in comparison with other regions. Similar to Southeast Asia (ASEAN), Latin America (MERCOSUR) has been referred to as 'security community'. This cannot be said about the domestic conditions in a number of countries, particularly in Bolivia, Central America, most recently Honduras, and the Andean area. The UNASUR was created for security reasons as MERCOSUR has been largely preoccupied with economic issues. It has shown a certain bias against the US, which made it hard for Colombia, in fact the only US ally on the continent, to join. In view of the problems already experienced by MERCOSUR and the CAN, the building of a new organisation for regional cooperation will not be easy. The tensions within these two organisations are multiplied in the UNASUR. However, a regional organisation covering the whole of Latin America is badly needed. Its usefulness was demonstrated in the support for the Bolivian government when threatened by fragmentation due to autonomy-seeking provinces. As mentioned above, UNASUR also took a stand in the Honduran crisis. However, competing initiatives multiply, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), emanating from Venezuela, and the Latin American Pacific Arc, sponsored by Peru. The latter is an interregional initiative, linking countries in Latin America and Asia. The number of initiatives indicates lack of substance, but also the felt need for various ways of sharing sovereignty, which so far has not happened to a very large extent.

4.4   Comparing Interregional Structures

Europe, North America and East Asia, constituting the 'Triad', make up the 'core regions' of the world economy, whereas Latin America, South Asia and Southeast Asia have an 'intermediate' position, linked to the Triad regions. Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East can be seen as 'peripheral regions', the criteria being degrees of economic dynamics and political stability, corresponding to levels of regional actorship and capacity for entering into interregional relations (cf. Hettne 2001).

In the Triad there are two 'interregional' (broadly defined)[3] organisations, the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEM, the first becoming largely ritual, the second being an EU–East Asia institutionalised summit process, in which East Asia is being organised in the APT. Thus APT is emerging as a new regional actor in the wake of crises in ASEAN and APEC, and in response to crises affecting the larger region, such as financial crises and pandemic diseases. Both Europe and Asia tend to consider ASEM as a welcome opportunity to discuss controversial issues in an informal but nevertheless slightly institutionalised context, with joint committees working on a number of issues. Thus, declarations at one summit may create the basis for subsequent action in a way that reminds about 'the community method' in Europe. ASEM is one of the few international organisations of political importance where the US is not a member, which is bound to be divisive in both camps, where some states value their relations with the US more, should it come to a conflict of interest. It should also be noted that one of the reasons for creating ASEM was that the EU had been denied association status to APEC. ASEM is on paper a comprehensive, multidimensional type of collaboration, in spite of limited formalisation. The EU–ASEAN relationship, an example of pure interregionalism, constitutes its institutionalised backbone. Julie Gilson (2002, 2005) has pointed out that ASEM provides a mechanism for institutionalising not only a partnership, but also the partner *per se*, the point being that, by participating in an interregional process, a regional identity is created, hence illustrating the close link between regionalism and interregionalism (also see the Introduction to this book). At more recent summits, the EU has downgraded its participation. It can of course be questioned whether summits with Heads of states are the best way of enhancing interregional cooperation.

The triangular relationship between the EU, the US and Latin America can be compared with the Triad in that there is a competitive relationship between the US and the EU *vis-à-vis* the third part (also see Santander in this volume). The US–LA relations are organised in the Organisation of American States (OAS), whereas the EU–LA relations are constituted in a summit process comparable to ASEM. The EU–MERCOSUR relationship is an example of 'pure' interregionalism, since there exists a formal agreement between two organisations. The interregional partnership

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[3] Transregionalism refers to actors and structures mediating between regions. To the extent that this takes place in a formal way between the regions as legal personalities, one can refer to (pure) inter-regionalism. If the pattern of interregional relations becomes more predominant, constituting a new regionalised form of multilateral world order, this can be referred to as 'multiregionalism'.

is built on three pillars, of which the first includes a political dialogue, the second a substantive financial support to MERCOSUR's institutional development, and the third economic and commercial cooperation.

The links between the EU and Latin America appear to be growing closer, albeit not necessarily in the form of 'pure interregionalism', partly due to the fact that the US seems to have lost interest in its own 'backyard', or perhaps is too preoccupied with other areas. Due to the fact that MERCOSUR, with the entry of Venezuela, moves further towards an anti-US stand, the US has tried to create divisions within the organisation, for instance by making a bilateral agreement with Chile and, more recently, friendly gestures to Paraguay and Uruguay. Colombia has for some time been subject to a 'special programme' fighting the drugs trade, and in a controversial move the US will have access to Colombian air bases. The US under Democratic leadership is becoming more lukewarm about Free Trade Agreements. A continental free trade area is thus not an immediate, or even long term, possibility (see Santander in this volume). Rather, the Latin American continent as a whole will ultimately unite, however difficult this may seem at the moment. In this context, and with regard to the future of interregionalism, it is also worth noticing that UNASUR seems particularly keen to reach out to non-Triad regions, as illustrated by the ongoing process of Africa–South America summits. The first meeting was held in Abuja in 2006 while the second was held in 2009 on the Venezuelan island of Margarita, which declared a commitment to interregional cooperation in the fight against poverty. The third Africa-South America summit was held in 2013 in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea on the theme of strategies and mechanisms to strengthen South-South cooperation.

4.5   Conclusion

This chapter takes the case of the EU as a point of departure, which probably will provoke accusations of Eurocentrism.[4] This problem is, however, not solved by closing our eyes on Europe. As we, for the purpose of comparative analysis, relate the case of Europe to various experiences of regionalism, there are at least three distinctions to be made: the EU as a *paradigm* of regionalism, showing regionalisation to be a systemic tendency in the current world system; as a *model* of regional integration, imitated in other geographical areas; and the empirical pattern of *interregional* relations between Europe and various world regions where the EU, due to its substantial actorship, has more or less impact. These distinctions are analytically separable, but nevertheless more or less impossible to keep completely

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[4] I once called Europe 'the paradigm' for which, although it was not meant as a model to apply, I have been criticised. A contrary view was expressed by Shaun Breslin, Richard Higgott and Ben Rosamond, who argued that, 'ironically, the EU as an exercise in regional integration is one of the major obstacles to the development of analytical and theoretical comparative studies of regional integration' (2002: 11).

apart in real world conditions. If external challenges motivate regional integration elsewhere, the EU experience will automatically turn up as an obvious example to consider, and, furthermore, this happens to be strongly supported by the EU foreign policy of interregionalism.

The idea of EU as a *paradigm* that other regions follow, not through imitation but rather as a general global tendency, is controversial, but should not be dismissed altogether if we believe in some sort of world system logic. It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that regions respond in similar ways to similar challenges, for instance intrusions from stronger powers affecting internal cohesion. Thus the presence of the US plays a major role in Latin America in creating obstacles but also incentives for regionalism. The same can be said about the role of Russia in the post-Soviet space (Russia's 'near abroad'). Except for the Baltic area, the room for regional initiatives seems limited, however, and the much needed CIS is dormant, if not dead.

That the EU is seen as a *model* is undeniable but the actual role it plays differs from one case to another; it may even serve as a negative model, as for example in the ASEAN distaste for EU-style centralised, bureaucratic decision-making (Nesadurai 2008). However, to the extent that the model is perceived as positive, as seems to be the case in most of Africa and the Southern Cone of Latin America, the EU will exercise normative influence, without having to impose its values through 'soft imperialism', although hard to resist (Hettne and Söderbaum 2005).

There are different sorts of foreign policy relations between Europe and other regions, such as enlargement, stabilisation, bilateralism, and interregionalism. The most important type of relationship from a world order perspective is *interregionalism*, but there are also more traditional bilateral links with regional great powers in far away regions (Brazil, Japan, China, South Africa) as well as regular summits on the continental level (EU–Latin America meeting, ASEM, EU–Africa meeting) (cf. Hänggi et al. 2005). 'Soft imperialism' undoubtedly appears in some of these cases (Hettne and Söderbaum 2005; Söderbaum and Stålgren 2010).

In conclusion, there are both differences and similarities in the processes of regionalisation in Europe and other regions. All of them need supranational coop-eration to manage internal crises and external challenges inherent in globalisation and to increase their cohesion. In Europe, regionness has reached the unique level of regional institutionalised polity, but there are no guarantees that this degree of cohesion can be sustained even in Europe. In East Asia the dynamics of economic regionalisation are stronger than the actual political preparedness to engage in a formal regional project (regionalism). In Latin America there are deep cleavages, which are rare in Europe (Bolivia is an example), and the political tensions between states (for instance Colombia and Venezuela) are also becoming stronger. Thus the record does not really support the end of sovereignty thesis, not in the case of Europe and certainly not in the cases of East Asia and Latin America. At the same time, it is undeniable that the forces favouring regional cooperation and some degree of sovereignty sharing are growing stronger, although not at an even pace.

Finally, a word on interregionalism and world order (cf. Hänggi et al. 2005). The next world order will be multipolar. The global crisis has made the Group of 20 (G20) rather than the Group of 7 (G7) the relevant plurilateral body. This raises the

issue of the nature of the emerging poles. Will they be regional actors expressing a collective concern or will they be regional great powers pursuing national interests? Disturbingly, lack of global responsibility characterises the emerging powers, with Brazil as a possible exception (having expressed the view that its interests are best served by working through Latin America). Russia is restoring its imperial position in the Caucasus and elsewhere, alienating its neighbours.[5] The urgency of its internal problems and its external needs, for instance energy, makes it less likely that China will act externally in a responsible way, the relations to Africa often mentioned as example of ruthlessness. India is increasingly preoccupied by various regional conflicts in South Asia and with its own great power status. South Africa is plagued by domestic conflict and may not live up to the expectations regarding it being a positive force in Africa's development and peace. The old powers do not provide good examples. The US has only recently abandoned its unilateralism. The EU shows an embarrassing lack of unity and as an organisation it is not consistent in its foreign policy, pursuing interregionalism as well as bilateralism *vis-à-vis* other world powers. Japan, in the shadow of the US and in a long recession, is rarely seen as a world power. However, in 2009 (then) Premier Yukio Hatoyama announced a more independent political position and an interest in being part of the Asian region, as well as a different view on the meaning of development (Hatoyama 2009). The road to a new world order is certainly not linear and different types of relations will coexist. Regionalism as well as interregionalism is a process of trial and error with uncertain outcomes and no single theory will explain this.

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[5] In the mid-1990s, China, Russia, and several Central Asian countries formed a new multilateral security organisation known as the 'Shanghai Five'. Now this grouping is organised in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It is still unclear if we shall see this as a security-driven alliance or a more comprehensive regional organisation in the making. The main concerns are 'terrorism, extremism and separatism'.

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