

9 The omnipower

The United States and regional orders

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Introduction

The surge of regionalism in recent years would seem almost by definition a development outside the sway of the United States, the global hegemon. Regionalism prioritizes the local; a hegemon exemplifies the global. Yet, at least since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been the most important actor in the global evolution of regional order¹ and governance.² Indeed, it is difficult to discuss almost any regional order without reference to the role of the United States. America is the world's 'omnipower' in its involvement in almost all efforts at regionalism. The rise of new regional powers and the emergence of regional governance are also the product of many factors that have nothing to do with the United States. Yet, any effort to map and understand the trajectory of regional orders requires an understanding of the role of the United States therein.

This relevance would seem to be obvious. What is surprising is how little it has been studied. The US role in international order and governance has been examined and theorized in many ways (Kindleberger 1973; Cox 1983; Wallerstein 1983; Keohane 1984; Gilpin 1987; Ikenberry 2002; Kupchan 2002; Nye 2002; Reus-Smit 2004; Jervis 2005; Lieber 2005; Walt 2005; Brooks and Wohlforth 2008). These studies, however, tend to ignore how international order relates to regional order and the role of the dominant global power in providing regional order. There has also, of course, been a surge of studies on regional powers and governance in the past 15 years (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995; Gambble and Payne 1996; Frankel *et al.* 1997; Mattii 1999; Fawcett 2004; de Lombaerde and Schulz 2009). Yet, that surge pays relatively little attention to the influence of the United States.

This essay addresses that gap by attempting to answer a number of questions. Why have scholars not studied the topic more? How does the United States relate to regional governance? Why has the United States shown varying interest in different regions? How is the United States government organized to influence regional governance? How do US interests and actions interact with local concerns? How has the United States shaped the emergence of regional governance? What is likely to be the nature of the US relationship to regions in the future?

The answers to these questions mostly relate to the 'five Ms' that drive US policies relevant to regionalism: *might* (i.e. US relative capabilities), *milieu* (i.e. international order), *mission* (i.e. US purpose), *method* (i.e. US organization) and the *mix* (i.e. US interaction with regional powers). My thesis is that the study of regional governance needs to attend more to the relationship between the United States and regional powers; that right now there is a political and intellectual agenda that diminishes that impact; and that over time the US role in regional orders could increase even as its global power shrinks.

Mostly neglected: the US role in regional orders

The general role of the United States in regional order and governance has been a stepchild in two literatures.

The first is the massive body of writings on the United States as the hegemon, hyperpower, or unipolar power in international politics.³ Most of the authors in this category hail from the United States and are focused on how the United States shapes international order or relates to the largest players such as the European Union (EU) or China. However, the centrality of regions to international order, and the relations between the United States and regional powers, gets less attention.⁴

This is undoubtedly the bias of a literature that privileges American power and great power politics and sees less utility in studying relations with lesser countries and their more complicated local conditions. These scholars focus on such global themes as economic liberalization, international institutions, the spread of democracy or the War on Terror, rather than on regional nuances and variations. This oversight is a significant gap in an international system that is constituted by regions (see below) and where regional powers are gaining increasing sway. It leaves the issue of what role the United States plays in regional dynamics open-ended at best.

The second literature that mostly neglects the role of the United States is the large and rapidly growing study of regional powers and regional governance. Not surprisingly, many of these writings are dominated by non-American scholars. Here, the United States is mentioned as an important actor but its role in regional orders or governance is rarely explicitly explored (see Farrell *et al.* 2005).

Why this neglect of US influence on regional orders? There appear to be both political and scholarly reasons. The rise of regionalism may in part be a political phenomenon intended to balance US influence. Moreover, the United States could be accused of offering a proto-imperial policy agenda of capitalism and democracy that is tone-deaf to regional complexities and thus it lacks the nuances needed to manage regional dynamics. Some authors see US policy (at least under the George W. Bush administration) as a threat to the development of regions (see Hetne 2005: 269, 286). At times regionalism, as studied in the academy (especially outside the United States), often has the flavour of a political project: regions are seen as a morally and functionally superior form of

organization. They offer a normatively desirable alternative to undesirable US hegemonic (policy or intellectual) influence.

In terms of the scholarly reasons, it may be the case that regions are governed by dynamics not within the sway of the hegemon; there is no need to include a significant role for the United States. Intellectually, US scholarship is seen as dominated by 'rational choice' theoretical accounts that ignore both regional difference and the language/area/cultural skills necessary to understand and explain those differences (see Smith 2002). Arguably, US scholars have often short-changed the study of regionalism on a global scale because of this bias.

Whatever the reasons, with a few notable exceptions – as will be detailed below – the role of the United States in regional order has been slighted. How US power, milieu, interests, bureaucratic organization and relations with local actors affect the development of regional powers and orders thus demands more attention.

Might: the omnipower

The United States has a unique position in the world today both because of its power and presence.

In terms of power (i.e. capabilities) the United States has unprecedented power in terms of economic, military and technology capabilities. No other actor can match the United States across these dimensions. The EU has larger aggregate economic power, but it has not opted for military power and has difficulty acting like a unitary state. Also, it is not a member of some of the world's main regional orders, such as the Americas or Asia. China is large and growing but still behind the United States. It is slowly extending its activities to different regions of the world (for example, Africa and Latin America) but its role in regional governance arrangements is limited. Russia has a large nuclear arsenal but is weak in other dimensions and lacks multiregional involvement beyond those areas that are adjacent to its borders (Brooks and Wohlforth 2008).

The United States has been referred to as the world's only 'hyperpower'. Yet this term does not actually capture the role of the United States today. It is certainly the world's dominant country in terms of material power. Yet this power married to its far-flung geographical presence is what distinguishes it. It is not only strong, it is everywhere; it is the 'omnipower'.

US might alone, however, tells us very little about key questions regarding America's role in regional orders. It does not inform us about how might connects to the content and structure of international order and how that relates to regional orders. It is silent on what purposes the United States will pursue with its might or how it will go about doing so. It does not enlighten us as to how the United States' efforts will mesh with those priorities of regional powers and institutions. The actions and impact of the omnipower require that we move beyond the simple fact of US relative capabilities to understand the setting, mindset, behaviour and influence of the United States.

Milieu: international order, regional orders and the US pivot

Contemporary international order is not a single entity: it has two dimensions. The influence of the United States as an omnipower is based on its unique position in an international order that encompasses both global institutions and local regions (see Hurrell 2008). Indeed, that international context is one of the important factors behind the prominence of regions. The United States occupies a place of significant leverage at the nexus between the two.

One dimension is a functionalist global order based on multilateral institutions among states, inter-state governance mechanisms and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operations on specific issues. This dimension incorporates Ikenberry's vision of an international system based on multilateral institutions and US-led alliances (see Ikenberry 2006). It also includes, however, a different notion of order that is more similar to Hurrell's 'solidarist' conception characterized by more extensive and intensive patterns of both inter-state governance and of complex governance beyond the state' (Hurrell 2007: 10). The key connection across these two views is that the international arena is organized globally in functional/issue terms. And whether the actors are bureaucracies, NGOs, private citizens or states, the United States (or US society) plays a significant role.

In addition to formal institutions, the functionalist global order is also characterized by dominant norms and rules. These are often embedded in diplomatic processes, multilateral institutional charters and treaties, but also include more informal norms about desirable behaviour. For example, after the Second World War countries embraced a norm of anti-imperialism and protection of sovereignty. This norm shaped how powerful countries competed for influence (Finnemore 2003).

There is a second dimension to international order, one that has not been eclipsed by shrinking global space: we live in what Peter Katzenstein has called a 'world of regions'.⁵ These regions do not exist independently but instead watch and learn from one another and are connected by sinews that make them an entity in their own right. International order is linked to, and indeed in part constituted by, the matrix of regional orders. Likewise modern regional orders are sustained by their role in, and dependence on, the international order.

In both of these dimensions of contemporary order, the United States occupies a critical position. In the first functional dimension, the United States is a leader in almost all of the global institutions that exist among states. US preferences and power, moreover, have been important in the shaping of informal global norms, as was true in the emergence of an anti-imperialism (formal imperialism) norm (Crawford 2002). In the more informal world of transnational bureaucratic governance, the United States is often the central player (Slaughter 2004). Even in the world of NGO activism, US society provides many resources and organizations, and thus many transnational movements (particularly those that have no US connection) may need to lobby the United States to achieve their ends (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

In the second dimension, Katzenstein's (2005) image of a 'world of regions' connected by the US 'imperium' is apt. The United States is not only in each of the regions, but it helps connect them as an important partner in direct country-to-country negotiations, as a source of, or member in, regional organizations, as the force behind global processes such as trade and finance and as a dominant actor in global forums where regions come together (for example, the United Nations).

These two dimensions of international order help account for the significant US role in regional governance. Both dimensions offer potential avenues of US influence on regional governance, powers and politics. Most important, the synergy between the two gives the United States unique 'swing power' leverage (Buzan and Waever 2004: 455–6). That is, they offer different means of influencing regions that can be alternated or combined depending on circumstances. A growing literature has documented the way in which the growth of international regimes has allowed powerful actors new means of influence (see Gruber 2000; Drezner 2007). This same dynamic seems to hold true in the nexus of global and regional forums.

The United States' ability to act either through global or regional means gives it exit options that can enhance influence. Thus US action in the World Trade Organization (WTO) may help the US get what it wants in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and vice versa (Gruber 2000: 166–7). US relations with Japan can facilitate US aims in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and throughout Asia more generally. Japan, for example, joined the United States in protesting the initial idea to exclude the United States from the APEC. The United States has used a 'Trilateral Strategic Dialogue' with Japan and Australia as a means of shaping Asia's politics – a kind of mini-regionalism to shape regionalism (Tow 2008).

Or, consider dealings with North Korea (and nascent Northeast Asia regionalism more broadly): the United States can act through the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the United Nations (UN). It can also act through regional groupings such as the Six-Party Talks (SPT), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), the APEC or even the ASEAN itself. The United States is making use of the SPT to bolster the NPT. Likewise it is using the NPT to fuel the cause of the SPT. These talks present a potential basis from which to further nurture Northeast Asia regionalism. They were directly linked to the founding of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (Snyder 2009; Task Force on US Standing in World Affairs 2009). This same dynamic is true in other regions as well. For example, the United States could influence Latin America through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of American States (OAS) or in bilateral negotiations. Similarly, that influence can be used to leverage international order. For example, intellectual property rights (IPR) provisions in bilateral agreements may be used to establish a basis from which to make headway on an IPR jam in any WTO negotiations (Simmons 2006: 441–59; Drezner 2007).

Hence, the United States can exercise leverage on regional powers and regional governance through both the global and regional dimensions of international order. This can take place through the engagement of global institutions, through regional arrangements or through bilateral relations. To better understand this 'swing' influence and its effects, it is useful to examine the mission, method and mix of the US role in regionalism.

Mission: US interests in, and ideas about, regional orders

The United States is involved in many regions. However, the level of US engagement with different regions has varied significantly. These differences cannot be explained simply by US power; it requires us to look at how the United States thinks about its interests and its means of influence.

To be sure, US might has affected its mission. That is, as the United States has grown in relative power in the international system, it has taken a more active role in the world arena. The United States moved from declaring the Monroe Doctrine in the early 1800s to assertively implementing the Doctrine in the late 1800s, to an active international role beyond the Western hemisphere after the First World War, to a committed internationalism after the Second World War, to a more unilateral form of hegemony after the Cold War. Each expansion of responsibilities was made possible, and perhaps encouraged, by changes in power. Likewise, as US relative power declines it is likely to affect US policies towards regionalism, as will be discussed below.

Yet US ideas about the world have not moved in lockstep with its power. US engagement with the world has varied greatly during the time it has been the dominant international power. After the First World War the United States was the single most capable state, yet it eschewed making commitments to international institutions and particular regions (such as Europe) especially those that would involve security commitments abroad. During the Second World War, however, the United States re-thought that position and embraced the need to join and build international institutions, including security commitments in particular regions. After 9/11, the United States embraced a more assertive and unilateral approach, although it subsequently quickly retreated from that emphasis. US ideas about its mission abroad vary with experience and political conditions, and not just with its overall might (Legro 2005).

US attention to regions differs significantly. Most generally, US purpose or mission in particular areas is driven by three priorities: security, economic growth and the spread of democracy. In terms of security, wars and threats have heavily shaped the US footprint. The location of US military bases bears the stamp of the Second World War and its Cold War aftermath: they are situated in Europe and in Asia, especially in Japan. And, they were seen as bulwarks in the effort to contain communism. The US embraced a 'two-front' war strategy that envisioned fighting in two major regions abroad: only now is that strategy being re-thought (Shanker 2009).

Ironically, the rise of communism may have spurred US interest in regions that were once considered distant outposts. Yet even after the end of the Cold War, US security interests in regions endured. One early post-Cold War vision for handling these regions was to view them as a breeding ground for future competitors. The Pentagon's famous leaked 1991 defence policy guidance favoured a shift from a focus on containment to a new 'regional defence strategy' relying on a forward presence to 'preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests' (National Security Archive 2009). This document, with the same emphasis, was finally issued as 'Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy' in January 1993, and had considerable influence on subsequent US policy.⁶

Security and existential threats continue to shape US regional attention. The Clinton administration saw regions as a place where bad things happen that may hurt the United States – like in the Balkans or in Northeast Asia. In both cases security issues are prominent. The United States has been significantly involved in the Middle East, which is the destination for the lion's share of its foreign aid. This flow was mainly the product of the need to keep a close eye on a region that supplies the oil that makes the American economy and military run. The American presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, and increasingly in Africa, is a result of the latest security threat – terrorism. Also, the significant reorientation of US foreign policy towards Asia in the past 15 years reflects in part a concern about China emerging as the next peer competitor.

The potential for wealth is, of course, a partner to security in terms of where the United States focuses its attention. There is no doubt that the US involvement in Europe and Asia is driven by the size and dynamism of the economies in those areas. Likewise, oil and its attendant wealth make the Middle East a priority. Other regions will get attention to the extent that they offer new opportunities to the United States – as Latin America (for example, Brazil) and South Asia (namely, India) have discovered in recent years. More generally, US attention to regions may vary depending on the opportunities for economic expansion available at the global level. To the extent that there is stalemate in global multilateral talks such as at the WTO, the United States will tend more to enhancing regional preferential trading agreements. Such agreements are often at the heart of efforts to enhance regional groupings (Mansfield and Milner 1999).

Finally, the United States is motivated in different regions by a desire to spread its 'model': that is, free market democracy. Many view the United States as being propelled by its own self-image of exceptionalism. Yet, compared with security and economic interests, this particular mission has a lesser influence and significance. During the interwar period, the United States had become the most powerful nation in the world, but it also eschewed an active global role, despite Woodrow Wilson's efforts. In particular times and particular places it can become an important source of US behaviour. For example, under Presidents Wilson, Reagan and George W. Bush, the promotion of democracy played a prominent role (Smith 1995).

These enduring interests will, of course, be implemented in different measures by different administrations. The Clinton administration, for example, was perceived as being more interested and supportive of regional interests than the George W. Bush administration. The Obama administration to date has been attune to regional differences and, as discussed below, appears to be making relationships with regional powers a more central focus of its policies.

Method: how the United States pursues regionalism

Scholars have noted that US relations with, and involvement in, different regions have varied, with important implications for the type of orders that have taken shape. For example, after the Second World War the United States supported and encouraged the development of regional institutions and governance in Europe that would be handled through multilateral means. In contrast, in Asia the United States built and encouraged more of a 'hub and spoke' system of relationships. That difference reinforced other factors that led to the greater development of regional institutions in Europe compared with Asia (Higgott 1998; Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002: 575–607; Duffield 2003; Press-Barnathan 2003; Katzenstein 2005).

Certainly, that difference is shaped both by the varying US mission in different regions, as previously discussed, and by the interaction with regional powers, which will be elaborated upon in the 'mix' section below. There is, however, another factor that allows and encourages such different types of relations: the organization of the US government for the conduct of foreign policy. That organization is both a product and a cause of past policy, but is important because, like most institutions, once in existence it has its own causal influence (Selznick 1957, 1984; Wilson 1989). The impact of bureaucracy and organizational inertia, for example, was apparent in the failure of the United States to prevent the 9/11 attacks (see the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States 2004). US relations with regions can be illuminated by looking at the fit between the international architecture, bureaucratic organization and US strategy.

It is noteworthy that the United States government is structured to manage its foreign affairs in ways that mirror the international order described above. It approaches the world in global functional terms and in regional terms via regional institutions and individual countries. For example, the State Department's structure reflects this broader mindset. It is divided into bureaus that have functional purposes – such as democracy, economics, energy, public diplomacy, security etc. – and a very large section based on regions: African Affairs, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, European and Eurasian Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs, South and Central Asian Affairs and Western Hemisphere Affairs.

The State Department might be seen as an anomaly in the US government; other agencies, though, are also similarly arranged. The Department of Defence's Combatant Commands, for example, are both functional and regional. The same two-dimensional structure holds true for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).⁷

US national strategy also reflects the global–region architecture. Typically, US administrations articulate a plan in terms that match the two dimensions of international order: the global functional (in terms of security, economic prosperity, the spread of democracy, etc.) and then regional policies. The two dimensions are distinct, and at times can be in tension: for example, the aim to spread freedom globally does not always resonate with the support of non-democracies in particular regions.

The content of President Clinton's 1998 National Strategy Security Statement (Table 9.1) is indicative of this architecture.

This structure, and the mindset that it reflects and encourages, indicates how the omnipower will influence regions. Essentially, America can choose between three means of moulding regional order. It can pursue: (1) international order; (2) regional organization; and/or (3) individual country approaches. In the international order path, it can utilize international institutions, international treaties and intergovernmental means to shape countries and regions. The United States as omnipower can also use its links and membership in regional organizations to sway events. Finally, it can use one-on-one bilateral relations to achieve its desired ends.

These multiple means of access, reinforced by the government's organizational structure, make the United States a powerful player in many regions. US influence will, of course, differ, and that difference will often be based on the mixing of the US mission with regional circumstances.

Mix: the interaction of unipole and local actors

How the United States is involved in regional orders is shaped not just by its might, mission and method, but also by the region. It is the mix of US aims and capabilities with those of regional actors that determines the degree and type of American influence. A number of factors seem to have shaped these mixes – including the distribution of regional power, complementarity of interests, regional identities and regional history. What follows are a few speculative propositions about how power and interests could mix and shape regionalism.

How power is distributed in a region can affect the possibility of regional governance and the type of order that exists (see Wohlforth 1999, Mearsheimer 2001; Walt 2009). In regions where power is dispersed evenly and no country is

Table 9.1 A national security strategy for a new century

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Source: The White House (1998).

as strong as the United States there is a significant chance of influence via multi-lateral mechanisms. Europe post-Second World War is the key example here, but Latin America also is suggestive. However, when there is a stand-off between two significant regional powers, multilateral regimes will be more difficult and thus US influence will lean towards bilateral relations and international governance mechanisms. This dynamic is apparent in US relations with South Asia (in other words, India vs. Pakistan) today, and has affected relations towards East Asia (that is, Japan vs. China) in the past.

To the extent that there is a dominant power in the region that is not a challenger to the United States there is the possibility for a strong bilateral relationship (assuming some shared interests) that furthers US influence in regional governance. This situation will also likely involve the desire of smaller powers in the region to draw in the United States to act as a constraint on the dominance of the regional hegemon. If the dominant regional power is a potential global competitor to the United States there will be less room for US influence to positively affect regional governance. The United States will be much less able to shape collective regional efforts except by joining with other smaller countries in the region in efforts to balance the competitor's rise. Such balancing efforts will be less significant to the extent there is shared purpose or ideology between the emerging power and the United States (think here of the US-UK power transition).

If there are compatible interests, economic and/or political, between the United States and a region, obviously this opens the way for influence and mutual deals. This essay has focused on the US side of the mix of interests but clearly any full analysis must consider the nature of regional actor interests. Walter Mattli has demonstrated how economic 'complementarity' helps account for the emergence of regional integration (Mattli 1999). The same holds true of US impact in furthering regional integration: where there are compatible economic interests or systems, the United States is likely to be more of a player in the region. Similar dynamics also hold true in the political realm. The United States should be more involved with (but perhaps have less sway over) regions that are democratic (this includes Europe, parts of Latin America and some areas in Asia). Hence, we would expect deeper ties with regions that are predominantly democratic (Stein and Lobell 1997: 114).

Other factors particular to different regions will, of course, also influence the mix, and, hence, how the United States relates to regional powers and order. For example, a particular regional history or identity will make the US role more or less acceptable. In regions that suffered devastating conflict or egregious failed leaderships (such as Germany and Japan), direct US involvement was more accepted. Yet, where there was a history of formal colonization or a strong nationalism, there were fewer incentives to pursue regional solutions, and the direct role of the United States is much less desirable – for example, in Africa, India and much of Asia as a whole (Mann 2008).

Mix is complicated: these are simply tentative propositions about the way it might work. What is without doubt is that the interaction between hegemon and

local actors will be important to how order develops. In sum, the might, milieu, mission, method and mix of US foreign policy all help shape the degree to which, and the way in which, the United States affects regionalism.

The omnipower and waves of regionalism

Each region comes with its own story of how its organizations and governance mechanisms have come about. In many cases they are *sui generis*. Likewise, the impact of the United States in each region is different. But there are some commonalities apparent in the way that the development of regionalism has clustered in historical surges.

Since the Second World War, regionalism has taken shape in two major waves. As Table 9.2 illustrates, the first wave occurred after the Cold War. The second wave occurred after the end of the Cold War. While the United States can hardly be said to have been the source of these waves, it did have a hand in both.

The First Wave. The rise of regionalism with the onset of the Cold War was an outgrowth of that conflict and the new US mission in the world. The United States' power – especially in terms of unprecedented peacetime military power – gave it the might to reach around the globe.

With its failed experiment of non-entanglement in the interwar period and the challenge of meeting global communism, the United States dramatically changed its view towards international institutions. In sharp contrast to its prior history, the United States embraced commitments to international institutions as desirable and central to US wellbeing (Legro 2000). Indeed, they were seen as so desirable that the United States became an institutional entrepreneur and actively encouraged almost all the institutions listed in the first wave in Table 9.2. These institutions would serve as regional coordination points for resisting the spread of communist influence – often by providing improved economic activity. The Soviet Union imitated such efforts on its side of the Iron Curtain (Comecon, Warsaw Pact). Hence, there was a cascade of regional organization.

The Second Wave. Another wave of regionalism followed the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the United States as the 'unipole', as the dominant global actor. The question is why?

In this case, the United States was less directly behind the creation of many of the regional institutions, but it was nonetheless the central global actor. The end of the Cold War opened up space for new forms of alignment. This was true both in Europe and in the former Soviet Union and among its alliances. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlargement was an outgrowth of that shift, as was the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Much of the impetus for regional organization came from economic aims. States wanted to join together to lower tariffs in a way that would spur economic growth and make them more competitive economically. This was especially the case because progress had stalled in terms of the global reductions in tariffs.

Table 9.2 Two waves of regionalism

	<i>Europe and Soviet Bloc</i>	<i>Latin America</i>	<i>Middle East</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>West and East Asia</i>
First wave: 1950s–1960s	NATO (1949–) WEU (1955–) Warsaw Treaty Organization (1955–1991) Council of Europe (1948–) ECSC (1952–) Euratom (1958–) EEC (1958–) COMECON (1948–1991)	OAS (1948–) RIO Pact (1947–) Central American Common Market (1961–) Andean Community (1969–) CARICOM (1973–) LAFTA (1969–1980)	Arab League (1947–)	OAU (1964–2002) AU (2002–)	CENTO (1950s) SEATO (1954–1975) ASEAN (1967–)
Second wave: 1980s–1990s	CSCE (1975–) EEC–EU (1992–) CIS (1991–)	Mercosur (1991–) FTAA (1994–) NAFTA (1993–)	Gulf Cooperation Council (1981–)	ECOWAS (1975–) SADC (1992–) COMESA (1994–)	APEC (1989–) ARF (1994–)

Source: Karns and Mingst (2004: 152).

Hence both APEC and NAFTA were partially inspired by a desire to lower tariffs in the face of no progress in the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Countries were encouraged to pursue competitive regionalization so as not to be left at a disadvantage (Solis *et al.* 2009). As US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick noted in a 2001 speech, ‘we are creating a “competition in liberalization” with the United States at the center of a network of initiatives’ (Zoellick 2001).

The US’ impact on regionalism in this period took two different forms. First was the more direct route of helping make big regional deals happen, such as in the NAFTA and in the APEC (both ideas were launched in other countries). Here the United States was not only the critical actor but also had a unique ability to make its efforts felt in one dimension of international order (i.e. regions) when it faced obstacles in the other (that is, the Uruguay round). The second way is, however, more subtle. It is that the vitality and size of the US market gave it advantages that other countries could not match unless they joined together to form larger tariff-free zones with commerce-enhancing organizational changes (e.g. a common currency). This, of course, was an incentive behind integration in the EU. It was not the case that the EU formed to somehow balance the United States in geopolitical terms (Moravcsik 1998). Nonetheless, one of the driving factors behind the ‘intergovernmental’ deals undergirding the EU was recognition of the size and scale needed to compete economically with the United States. Similar dynamics have also occurred in Asia (Bowles 2002).

With the formation of the EU and the record of success of the European Community (EC), other regions had incentives to emulate its record and to gain their own type of leverage and advantage against the forces of globalization – and the new monolith of the system, the United States. Indeed, in some instances countries aimed to offset or preclude US influence (the ASEAN and the APEC, the ASEAN Plus Three, etc.). More recently the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has, in this vein, appeared and is notable as a mutual security (in other words, not just economic) organization. Here the United States has inspired regionalism as a means of competing with it.

Looking across these waves it is not possible to say that the United States has caused them. Other factors have been involved – such as the emulation of EU success in the recent wave. However, it is possible to see that the United States has been deeply implicated in their emergence, sometimes because of its international mission, but at other times because of the reaction of other actors to US might.

Omnipower over unipole: the United States and the future of regional orders

In the future, it is likely that as US might, mission and method varies – and has some impact on milieu and mix – so too will the dynamics of regional orders and governance diversity.

Clearly the intersection of might, milieu, method and mission will mould the relationship between the United States, regional powers and regional order. As seen above, in the past the US might have been a cause of regional order in both a positive (bandwagoning and US material encouragement) and in a negative (balancing/constraining the unipole) sense, and no doubt that will continue.

Yet, it is likely that as US power wanes in relative terms, these dynamics will change – as could the US ability to vary its influence through international vs. regional institutions. Indeed, the United States may find it increasingly difficult to leverage international institutions (think here of the shift from the Group of Eight [G8] to the Group of Twenty [G20]). It already seems that the United States has lost both control and sympathy within the UN. With waning resources, it is going to have to ask other countries to help pay more of the costs of the whole alphabet architecture of international order: the IMF, NPT, World Bank and others.

The problem is that the need for collective action to deal with pressing global problems will not diminish. That leaves the United States with fewer resources and less sway as it looks for alternative ways to lead. Some have posited that when the United States declines a smaller group of coordinated larger powers might be able to step in to make the system work together.⁸ Of course the challenge for this vision is to avoid free-riding among even a few world leaders.

In these circumstances the United States may be tempted to emphasize the regional vs. the global dimension of the international milieu. The path of influencing the world through US bilateral regional orders could look easier because even as US power shrinks in global terms, *vis-à-vis* any particular region, it will still be considerable. If the United States can find regional partners with resources and at least partially overlapping interests, an emphasis on regional orders may allow continued US influence and perhaps a way to increase the possibility of collective action to deal with the international order.

A speech by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the summer of 2009 speaks to this dynamic. In addition to renewing relationships with traditional allies in Europe and Asia, she declared that:

We will also put special emphasis on encouraging major and emerging global powers – China, India, Russia and Brazil, as well as Turkey, Indonesia and South Africa – to be full partners in tackling the global agenda. I want to underscore the importance of this task, and my personal commitment to it. These states are vital to achieving solutions to the shared problems and advancing our priorities – non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, economic growth and climate change, among others. With these states, we will stand firm on our principles even as we seek common ground.

(Clinton 2009)

This is, of course, an optimistic vision of the way that the United States will work with regional powers to address global problems, but it does nevertheless

imply a new *modus operandi* in the shaping of regional orders. Partnerships between the US and regional powers is one way to reduce the burden of hegemony. It is likely that smaller countries in regions with dominant powers will also invite US involvement so as to provide a buffer. Hence, the United States could find itself in an advantageous position to conduct a form of triangular diplomacy within each region.

Secretary Clinton's speech signals a shift of a different sort. A United States challenged by fading relative might (assuming it does not reject internationalism) could in the future be less of a global unipole and more of a regional omnipower.

Conclusion

The United States has been very involved in the rise and varieties of regional governance. US might is a large part of this story, but the extent of the US impact can only be understood by America's unique pivot position in international order and its method that reinforces that swing role. The US desire to use its pivot position has varied over time, as has the mix with other regional and local power aims. A likely future for a United States that is facing declining relative power (and concerned with the loss of leverage at the global level) is not a pullback from, but instead an increased engagement with, regional powers and governance.

Notes

- 1 By regional order I mean the dominant pattern of norms and behaviour.
- 2 By regional governance I mean explicit multilateral efforts and institutions among states aimed at their specific locale.
- 3 See citations above.
- 4 Katzenstein (2005) is an important exception.
- 5 The phrase comes from the title of Katzenstein (2005). On the growing importance of regions in international politics see: Fawcett and Hurrell (1995), Lake and Morgan (1997) and Buzan and Waever (2004).
- 6 For the history and impact of this document see Leffler and Legro (2011).
- 7 What is interesting, given all the discussion and disagreement over what a region is, is that the designation of a region across these agencies is not the same – perhaps another source of the confusion that exists in the US' relations with regions (Puglisi *et al.* 2007).
- 8 A 'small-K' group in Olsonian terms (Snidal 1985).

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10 Pakistan

Regional power, global problem?

Rajesh Rajagopalan

The ideas of 'regions' and 'regional powers' have intuitive attractiveness. Nevertheless, these concepts are fraught with difficulties, especially with issues of conceptual clarity and theoretical utility. The case of Pakistan as a 'regional power' (and, one should add, South Asia as a 'region') illustrates these problems well. Despite being endowed with significant material capabilities, which include being a nuclear weapon state, it is difficult to characterize Pakistan as a regional power. And, despite shared history, culture and social systems, it is equally difficult to characterize South Asia as a region in any theoretically significant ways.

Paradoxically, for a state that may be too weak to be a regional power, Pakistan has been surprisingly successful in pursuing its grand strategic goals and in exploiting global and extra-regional powers in the pursuit of these objectives, sometimes even bending them to its will. This also contradicts much of the literature on regions and regional powers. There is a general assumption in much of this literature that, as a consequence of the disparity of power between regional and global powers, regional powers are severely constrained by the global power agenda.¹ While material power disparities definitely constrain them, regional powers are also very adept at manipulating opportunities to advance their interests in a manner that belies their relative material weakness. Pakistan's strategy during both the Cold War and afterwards illustrates the capacity of weaker regional powers to advance their interests through such astute strategies. The Pakistan case suggests that regional powers are not simply subjects of the global order, but rather are agents who actively seek, often successfully, to manipulate global power resources to their own ends.

This essay is divided into four sections. In the next section, I examine the theoretical issues about regional powers by scrutinizing the regional theory literature in which the former is embedded, arguing that theories about the regional levels of analysis face a number of difficulties, especially in the South Asian context. Next, I examine the idea of Pakistan as a regional power and suggest that, despite its considerable material endowments, it is difficult to treat Pakistan as a regional power. But, however we decide on the conceptual issue of 'regional powers', the issue of agency remains: are weaker regional powers simply a variation of the vassal state, living out their lives at the mercy of great powers or do they have a measure of autonomy in pursuing their own goals in the international