Part 1

Introduction

1   Regional transformation in international relations

T. V. Paul

Regional transformation has emerged as a major topic of research during the past few decades. The transition of Western Europe into a pluralistic security community and the limited but meaningful efforts at security-community-building in Southeast Asia and the Southern Cone of Latin America have contributed to this upsurge in scholarly interest. With the end of the Cold War, the proper understanding of regional conflict and cooperation patterns assumed wider significance. Today, conflicts and the spillovers they produce in regions such as the Middle East and South Asia are acknowledged as being of paramount concern to international security. International Relations (IR) theory has made much progress in explaining change in regions. Yet, these often remain as "islands of theories" and it is time to take stock in order to see if connections can be made among them to obtain a comprehensive understanding of regional transformation.

From a practical standpoint what is significant here is the failure of many regions and subregions to transform into peaceful communities after the end of the Cold War. Moreover, in some regions the earlier trend toward greater cooperation and peaceful order has not been progressing all that well, following the initial enthusiasm of the post-Cold War years. Knowing when and how a region transforms into sustained peaceful order or the opposite – a conflictual order – is of utmost importance for crafting appropriate policy initiatives. This is all the more crucial given the intensity of conflicts in the regions of enduring rivalries, some of which are nuclearized, and their significance to the larger international order. Is regional transformation a linear process or is it possible to achieve a semblance of order only to return to disorder at different points in time? It is also significant to understand how and why some regions remain characterized by perpetual conflict or enduring rivalries despite efforts at resolution from within and outside.

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What are regions?

Defining "region" has been a challenging exercise in the IR literature, with differences between perspectives which focus on geographic proximity as central to identifying regions on the one hand, and those that contend that some form of cultural uniformity is the crucial variable on the other.[1] Others have focused on ideational variables to argue that regions are "socially constructed"[2] and they are not simply geographical constants, but expressions of changing "political practices" with "distinctive institutional forms."[3] Taking into account these considerations, I define a region as a *cluster of states that are proximate to each other and are interconnected in spatial, cultural and ideational terms in a significant and distinguishable manner.* The justification for this definition is that in order to make the concept of regions less woolly one may need to focus on a specific yet limited number of variables rather than a host of them. This definition will also allow us to incorporate perceptions held within and outside on what constitutes a specific region. In other words, people and states in a region ought to perceive themselves as belonging to this entity, although they need some level of physical and cultural proximity to do so. Interconnectedness also implies sustained interaction among the states and societies comprising a region. Going by the above definition, it is also possible to think in terms of sub-regions such as the Caribbean and the central or Southern Cone of Latin America within a larger region as useful conceptual units of analysis.

From a systemic perspective, regions develop into subsystems because of the regularized interactions and interconnectedness among states that comprise them. The regularity and intensity of the interactions are such that a change at one point in the subsystem can affect other points, although some changes may have more effect than others.[4] While the

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[1] Amitav Acharya has brought forth the value of "regional worlds," a concept originally used by the now defunct regional worlds project at the University of Chicago. Here regions are defined as those that "not only self-organize their economic, political and cultural interactions and identity, but also produce their own mental image of other regions and the global space in general." Amitav Acharya, "Regional Worlds in a Post-hegemonic Era," SPIRIT Working Papers, June 2009. Others have spoken in terms of "regional identity," which implies the mixing of cultural-historical and political-economic contexts. Anssi Paasi, "Region and Place: Regional Identity in Question," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 4 (2003), 478.

[2] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 48.

[3] Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 12.

[4] William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1973), 89–117.

larger international system is defined in terms of the interactions among major powers, a regional subsystem can similarly be defined in terms of the interactions among the key states of that region and the major power actors heavily involved in regional affairs.[5] Security concerns link the states to the extent that "national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another."[6] A great power active in a region may be part of the regional security complex by imposing or receiving negative and positive security externalities.[7] This characterization of a regional subsystem takes us away from geographical and cultural proximities and may suffer from measurement problems beyond the strategic arena. I am not fully convinced that the great powers should be part of the definition of a region (unless they are spatially and culturally linked) other than when we talk of a "regional subsystem" or "regional security complex," wherein a distant power may have powerful influences over the course of interactions in a region in the security arena.

Of importance for our purposes are the conflict and cooperation patterns in a given region. Are these conflicts enduring or episodic? Is war, defined as organized violence, a real possibility in a given region? Or is war unimaginable for the members of the region whose disputes rarely escalate to military conflicts? However, there may well be in-between categories, that is regions with no war yet, with periodic crises, and weak levels of cooperation patterns. This may well be a function of deterrence or some normative factors. The question is what critical variable or variables determine the transition from one state to the other for a given region?

Change in this context is viewed not as episodic but as longer-term with meaningful consequences to war and peace in a region. Change means serious alterations have occurred in relations among states, and in terms of their core national interests, strategies, behavioral patterns, perceptions, and institutional structures. Meaningful change is similar to the fundamental or transformational change that Kal Holsti has identified. Among the types of change he posits are: "change as replacement," "change as addition," "dialectical change," and

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[5] David A. Lake, "Regional Security Complexes: A Systems Approach," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, ed. David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 45–67; Barry Buzan, "A Framework for Regional Security Analysis," in *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers*, ed. Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986), 8; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*.

[6] Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 106.

[7] Lake, "Regional Security Complexes," 64.

"transformation." These have different markers and consequences.[8] For instance, "change as replacement" may occur when the status of dominant power(s) in a region changes, whereas "change as addition" may reflect a new source of internal or external disorder in the region. "Transformational change" may happen when the existing power structures and interstate relationships are uprooted and an order based on deep peace or deep conflict emerges. Limited changes can occur when a region mired in conflict changes to somewhat less conflictual order or vice versa – that is, a region somewhat peaceful would transform to episodic conflict and crises.

Transformational change in a region could occur through the introduction of democratic order, robust economic interdependence, or an institutional framework among the core countries that constitute a region. Similar to social change, "identifying significant change" in regions "involves showing how far there are alterations in the underlying structure of an object or situation over a period of time," or to "what degree there is any modification of basic institutions during a specific period."[9] Understanding why regions change into different modes and possibilities or under what conditions such changes take place from the vantage points of different IR theoretical lenses is the focus of much of this volume.

International Relations theory and regional order

IR theory has much to offer us in understanding regional transformations. All the leading theoretical paradigms of IR have something to say about regional order, although they may differ on what order means – be it a simple state of affairs of strategic stability, or something more normatively oriented whereby in addition to strategic stability, some level of justice and predictability in relations among states is needed to characterize the prevalence of order.[10] In other words, does order imply

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[8] See K. J. Holsti, "The Problem of Change in International Relations Theory," Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, Working Paper no. 26, December 1998.

[9] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 6th edn. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 121–22.

[10] Bull's definition of international order as a "pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society," is widely used as a starting point in discussing order. But it suffers from problems like conflating international society with international order. Andrew Hurrell's conception of pluralist and liberal-solidarist notions of order appears to give more clarity to the concept. See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order* (Oxford University Press, 2007). Muthiah Alagappa defines order as "a formal or informal arrangement that sustains rule-governed interaction among sovereign states in their

a minimum condition of coexistence of nation-states by avoiding war-fare, or a broader conception in which they can "live together relatively well" and "prosper simultaneously."[11]

The specific logic of each paradigm on regional order is based on several assumptions and core premises. Yet a comprehensive treatment of this subject is missing from the literature, as scholarship remains atomized among different theoretical perspectives. Cross-paradigmatic engagement on regional order has much virtue if it can generate theoretically innovative and testable propositions and policy-relevant ideas.

Let us consider each of the leading IR perspectives and how they view regional order and regional change.

Realism

Realism and its different manifestations – classical, structural, offensive, and neoclassical – all have relevance to understanding regional order. Given the anarchic nature of the international system, and by extension regional subsystems, the fundamental source of regional order in Realism is balance of power.[12] For realists, if a proper balance or equilibrium in power distribution is achieved and maintained among the major powers and the leading states of a region, no aggressive state is likely to emerge. This is especially true of Neorealism, which posits that regional order is very much a function of the structure of the larger international system, as well as of the balance of power among the great powers. Bipolarity at the international level preserves regional peace while multipolarity promotes disorder.[13] In this perspective, the great powers are the main keepers of regional order.

This logic of balance-of-power theory is based on the premise that two states or coalitions of states are unlikely to go to war if there exists an approximate parity or equilibrium in their power capabilities. Since it is usually the stronger state that goes to war in order to dominate

pursuit of individual and collective goals." For a discussion of the different definitions of order, see his "The Study of International Order: An Analytical Framework," in *Asian Security Order: Instrumental and Normative Features*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford University Press, 2003), 39.

[11] Stanley Hoffmann, ed., *Conditions of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 2.

[12] Joseph M. Greico, *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Michael Mastanduno, "A Realist View: Three Images of the Coming International Order," in *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul and John A. Hall (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19–40.

[13] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

8   Introduction

its weaker opponents, hegemony of a single actor is the most danger-
ous condition, because the hegemon will be encouraged to impose its
will on others. When a hegemonic state emerges, weaker states, fearing
domination or extinction, tend to flock together in order to prevent con-
quest or domination by the stronger side.[14]

Another variant of Realism (opposite to balance-of-power theory) is
presented in hegemonic stability theory, which posits that order is the
function of the presence of a powerful state with the capacity to impose
peace, and which commands both respect and power.[15] The logic here,
as Gilpin states, is: "a group or state will attempt to change the system
only if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs; that is there
must be an expected net gain."[16] This is also the basis of theories that
suggest that a peaceful regional order can be achieved only if a power-
ful state – be it at the global or regional level – achieves overwhelming
preponderance as it would deter lesser powers from engaging in violent
conflictual behavior. This is why power-transition theorists, in contrast
to their balance-of-power counterparts, argue that the overwhelming
preponderance of a status quo power is a necessary condition for peace.
The logic here is that if there is rough equality in power, both the status
quo power and its challenger could foresee possible victory in a conflict,
whereas if one side, especially the status quo power, has a clear military
advantage, the weaker party has little incentive to use war as a means
to obtain its goals.[17] As Blainey argues, "wars usually end when the
fighting nations agree on their relative strength, and wars usually begin
when fighting nations disagree on their relative strength."[18]

One example of such a transformation is the Americas, where the
United States managed to establish its preponderance since the mid
nineteenth century. Such relationships in international politics show
that hierarchies can exist in international politics (despite the realist

[14] Ibid., 127. See also Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York:
Random House, 1964), 56. For the theory and its various dimensions, see T. V. Paul,
James Wirtz and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power Theory and Practice in the
21st Century* (Stanford University Press, 2004). On the role of power capabilities, see
Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke, eds., *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions
of The War Ledger* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Randolph M.
Siverson and Michael P. Sullivan, "The Distribution of Power and the Onset of War,"
Journal of Conflict Resolution 27, no. 3 (September 1983), 473–94.
[15] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).
[16] Ibid., 50.
[17] A. F. K. Organiski, *World Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968),
364–66; See also Kugler and Lemke, eds., *Parity and War*.
[18] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 114. For a more
nuanced realist view of conflict and cooperation, see Charles L. Glaser, *Rational
Theory of International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

insistence on anarchy) and that dominant states can develop authority relationships with subordinate states on a durable basis.[19] Moreover, even when major powers do not obtain preponderance, they may still intervene episodically or regularly in the affairs of a region.

More clarity to realist conceptions of regional order is offered by Gil Merom. According to Merom, a "regional void" due to inattention toward the understanding of regions exists in Realism. He attempts to fill this by arguing that a leading power or systemic actor could dominate a region and make it "captive," or it could engage in a "contested" relationship with other dominant actors. Dominant actors intervene in a region for the "intrinsic, extrinsic, and negative value" that its serves for the great power competition.[20] Great power involvement in a region may take the shape of competition, cooperation, dominance, and disengagement and all these have implications for regional order and peace.[21] This characterization implies that regions can attract much major power interest, and the security order in a given region would depend heavily on how the major power politics plays out in it over a period of time.

Although realists do not accord much prominence to international or regional institutions, they do consider them as possible as an epiphenomenon of power politics among leading states.[22] In this perspective, it is the Cold War competition, and within it the presence of the US and its security umbrella, that helped to create the European Union and its institutions. Without this background structural condition, the Union would not have occurred. Similarly, in Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) developed in the context of Cold War rivalry and the relative stability offered by the American military presence in the Asian waters.

[19] David A Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[20] "The intrinsic value of a region is primarily a function of it being a 'significant element in the world balance of power,'" while the extrinsic value "is a function of its auxiliary potential as a site for the defense of a region of intrinsic value (including the homeland), or a site for an offensive deployment against competitors." "A region acquires a high negative value in the eyes of one systemic actor only in so far as it seems important for its competitors." Gil Merom, "Realist Hypotheses on Regional Peace," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 2001), 112.

[21] Benjamin Miller and Korina Kagan, "The Great Powers and Regional Conflicts: Eastern Europe and the Balkans from the Post – Napoleonic Era to the Post – Cold War Era," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997), 51–85.

[22] This notion is articulated most strongly by Susan Strange in the context of international regimes. See, her "Cave! Hic Dragones: A Critique of Regime Analysis," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982), 479–96; see also John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (winter 1994/95), 5–49.

One challenge to this argument is whether the initial condition for the rise of regional institutions inevitably means that the same structural conditions need to be present for their continued survival and progression. It is not clear whether the US decline or its unwillingness to provide security would inevitably lead to the collapse of regional institutions.[23] One may postulate that in the absence of US hegemony, the states in Europe may seek greater institutionalization even if they spend more resources on military capabilities. Moreover, in some other regions, like Southeast Asia, it was not the US but the states within the region that took the initiative to establish and institutionalize ASEAN as the core regional umbrella institution for cooperation.[24] Similarly, the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)was first proposed and promoted by smaller regional powers like Australia.

Realist insights can be translated to power politics among dominant regional states within regions. Accordingly, the dominant states of a region and the balance of power dynamics among them could be the source of security and order. The alternative also is possible, that is the preponderance of a dominant regional state could bring peace and order on a somewhat durable basis.[25] However, this is rarely achieved as balances of power often tend to recur, especially given the involvement of great powers in a region as supporters or opponents of the dominant regional actor or actors. These great powers rarely allow one regional power to dominate by siding with the relatively weaker power. The occasional alignment of the US and the regular alliance of China with Pakistan are examples of major powers indirectly balancing regionally dominant states such as India.

In sum, Realism's main concern is interstate interactions and not conflict or cooperation generated by forces within states. A key problem for Realism is its overemphasis on structure and the distribution of power while giving less importance to agency, although the newer version of Realism, neoclassical Realism, attempts to rectify that

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[23] For a perspective on these lines in international political economy, see Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

[24] There is indeed some difference of opinion on this. For instance, Micheal Leifer has argued that the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) would not have come about without "a stable, supporting balance or distribution of power that would allow the multilateral venture to proceed in circumstances of some predictability." Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security," *Adelphi Papers* no. 302 (1996), 53–54.

[25] Douglas Lemke, applying power transition theory to regions, argues that multiple hierarchies exist in the world's regional subsystems, similar to the overall international power hierarchy. For this, see Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

problem.[26] I believe neoclassical realists are yet to develop a coherent theoretical approach to regional order, unless we consider works of Benjamin Miller that link systemic variables with state capacity and state to nation balance as in line with the neoclassical orientation, although he does not seem to make such a claim. Moreover, when we take into account the regional distribution of power, what is noticeable is the absence of peace in a region like South Asia where a form of regional dominance on the part of India exists.[27] A key weakness of realist theories is the relative inattention to change in regional orders and how one can achieve transformation, beyond order or stability, to enduring peace. This may be a general problem with much of social science theories relying on structural variables, as deeply embedded structures tend to change very infrequently.

Emphasis on structural/systemic forces can impart some value to an analysis on regional order, but often scholars of this vein neglect the subsystemic and internal sources of order. A good example is the end of the Cold War and its differing impact on various key regions of the world. For instance, South Asia and the Middle East saw less impact of the demise of the Cold War for regional peace, while Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia witnessed the resolution of some conflicts and strengthening of regional institutions. This is because the main sources of regional conflict in South Asia and the Middle East may have little to do with systemic rivalry, although superpower activism aggravated or affected the dynamics of conflict and cooperation in these regions. In fact the processes occurring within these regions themselves seem to affect the larger international system, often disproportionately. The regional powers such as Israel or Pakistan are not simple bystanders of great power politics in their regions; they attempt to asymmetrically influence the major power system often in their own distinct ways.[28] In regions such as Southeast Asia, regional states have actively pursued (and

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[26] Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[27] I have argued elsewhere that the regional power balance in South Asia is "truncated," i.e., although India is seven times larger than Pakistan in many parameters of power capabilities, this asymmetry is constrained by Pakistan's alignments with major powers, clever strategies, possession of weapons systems including nuclear arms, and a terrain that offers some advantages especially in waging asymmetric warfare. See T. V. Paul, "Why has the India–Pakistan Rivalry Been so Enduring? Power Asymmetry and an Intractable Conflict," *Security Studies* 15, no. 4 (October–December 2006), 600–30.

[28] Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," *Foreign Policy*, no. 2 (spring 1971), 161–82.