

# One world? Many worlds? The place of regions in the study of international society

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All of those who study and teach International Relations, and especially all of us who do so in Britain, owe a tremendous intellectual debt to Martin Wight. I do not intend here to add directly to the analysis of Martin Wight's own work. The continued flow of such analytical work, both on Wight himself and on the English School more generally, is itself a witness to his contribution and to his abiding influence.<sup>1</sup>

Different people will no doubt take different things from Martin Wight's work. In my own case, and in telegraph form, three guiding ideas have had a powerful and lasting influence: first, the view that international society has to be understood in terms of *both* power *and* the operation of legal and moral norms—what Butterfield and Wight spoke of as 'the principles of prudence and moral obligation which have held together the international society of states throughout its history, and still hold it together'.<sup>2</sup> Second, the view that that 'international society ... can be properly described only in historical and sociological depth'.<sup>3</sup> And third, the argument that 'a states-system will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity amongst its members', or, more strongly, that 'a states-system presupposes a common culture'.<sup>4</sup> Now, I myself believe that we need to go beyond Wight in unpacking just how culture matters, the extent to which it matters, and the conditions under which it matters. But that it is of crucial importance within contemporary global politics can hardly be a matter of serious doubt. And we are talking here not just about 'culture' in some very loose, general sense. In particular, we need to note Wight's keen awareness of the central role of religion and of religious values, both in the lives of individuals and in international life.<sup>5</sup> I will return to these three core ideas below and provide some illustrations of them. But

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<sup>1</sup> See, most recently, Ian Hall's excellent study, *The international political thought of Martin Wight* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006). See also Brunello Vigizzi, *The British Committee on the theory of international politics (1954–1985)* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 2005); Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: a contemporary reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds, *Diplomatic investigations* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Wight, 'Western values in international relations', in Butterfield and Wight, *Diplomatic investigations*, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Wight, *Systems of states* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), pp. 3, 46.

<sup>5</sup> See Scott M. Thomas, 'Faith, history and Martin Wight: the role of religion in the historical sociology of the English School of International Relations', *International Affairs* 77: 4, Oct. 2001, pp. 905–29.

beyond these particular ideas, there have been many times in thinking about this subject that a phrase or an idea of Wight's has come to mind, capturing an important intuition or expressing it in a particularly trenchant and memorable form.

Martin Wight was particularly known and admired for his analysis of comparative states-systems, especially comparative states-systems studied across time—the primary states-systems of ancient Greece, of China, and of Europe as it developed from the late fifteenth century. Here I would like to shift the focus and enquire into the place of regional states-systems or regional international societies within our understanding of contemporary international society as whole.<sup>6</sup> As my title suggests, I am especially interested in asking questions about the relationship between the one world and the many worlds. On the one side, we have the one world of globalizing capitalism, of global security dynamics, of a global political system that, for many, revolves around a single hegemonic power, of global institutions and global governance, and of the drive to develop and embed a global cosmopolitan ethic; and, on the other side, we have regions and the regional level of practice and of analysis. To what extent have these regional factors become more firmly established as important elements of the architecture of world politics, and to what extent are we living in an emerging multiregional system of international relations?

I will address this one world/many worlds relationship from three perspectives: first, in terms of how we understand and explain the place of regionalism in contemporary international society; second, in terms of how we might best study regionalism; and third, in terms of the possible ways in which regionalism has contributed, or might contribute, to international order more broadly. Since the emergence of a body of writing on the 'new regionalism' in the mid-1990s, the literature in this area has expanded very significantly. Nevertheless, it remains uneven. Ever more forests are cut down to fuel the voracious industry of analysts of Europe; yet work on other regions is more variable in amount and quality, and research on comparative regionalism remains surprisingly sparse. But the most important need is for comparative thinking both on how one-world forces and factors play out across different regions and on how the many regional worlds play into the evolving set of debates on international order and global governance.<sup>7</sup>

## The one world into the many

From the development of the earliest political communities, economic and political relations came naturally to have a strong regionalist focus, above all because of

<sup>6</sup> As far as I know Wight did not write in any detail on this subject. He does suggest that, because systemic pressures may vary in strength, 'in certain regions which are culturally united but politically divided, a subordinate international society comes into being, with a states-system reproducing in miniature the features of the general state system': Martin Wight, *Power politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979 [first publ. 1946]), p. 63. But it is the variation rather than the reproduction that is the focus here.

<sup>7</sup> For all the sweep and sophistication of their work, Buzan and Waever are primarily concerned with intra-regional security logics, and they tend to view regions as mutually exclusive: Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions as powers: the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Katzenstein does look at the place of regions within the broader system, but almost exclusively from the perspective of a US hegemonic order: Peter Katzenstein, *A world of regions: Asia and Europe in the American imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

the limits of technology, trade and communications. There was a strong regional focus to the development of many imperial systems, whether this took the form of contiguous expansion, as with the United States and Russia, or overseas expansion, as with France in north and west Africa. In the interwar period, both Germany and Japan sought to construct and coercively impose regional orders. Until the Second World War, the Inter-American System was exceptional in representing the development of a formal, if weak, institutional framework. The post-1945 international system, however, was to be built around the twin pillars of the sovereign state on the one hand and multilateral institutions on the other. The UN and the Bretton Woods institutions were intended to provide security and some degree of economic stability for a world of sovereign nation-states, not to replace the state. Regionalism was not totally written out of the script: the widespread belief that the nation-state had had its day and the strong revulsion against excesses committed in the name of nationalism stimulated regionalist thinking, above all in Europe, while some prominent figures (including both politicians such as Churchill and commentators such as Lippmann) favoured a system of international order built around regional spheres of responsibility. But, overall, regionalism was to play a subordinate and secondary role.

This changed, above all, because of the pressures of the Cold War. There had been regionalist exceptions in the multilateral order and these became increasingly important: thus article 24 of the GATT excluded customs unions and free trade areas from the obligations of non-discrimination while article 52 of the UN Charter specifically endorsed regional security arrangements. And, of course, the success of economic regionalism in Europe was the most important catalyst, encouraging a wave of attempts at imitation and export across many parts of the post-colonial world. These, we should remember, were not intended merely as limited exercises in interstate cooperation but in many cases were intended to be fully fledged federations complete with airlines, common currencies and flags. This wave of activism was followed by a slowdown in the progress of the movement of European integration from the mid-1960s and the near-total failure of regionalist economic arrangements outside Europe. However, after a decade or more of disillusion, regionalism began to gather pace once again from the late 1980s, with commentators pointing to the success and durability of ASEAN and the expansion of security cooperation in Asia, and to the wide-ranging return of economic regionalism, often involving exercises in deep integration and ambitious regional economic integration schemes, with the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and Mercosur among the most notable developments outside Europe. Regional groupings of widely varying kinds were appearing in almost every part of the world, and increasing attention was being given to the 'new regionalism'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, eds, *Regionalism in world politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne, eds, *Regionalism and world order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996); Edward D. Mansfield and Helen V. Milner, 'The new wave of regionalism', *International Organization* 53: 3, 1999, pp. 602–608; Björn Hettne, András Inotai and Oswaldo Sunkel, eds, *Globalism and the new regionalism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Mary Farrell, Björn Hettne and Luk van Langenbove, eds, *Global politics of regionalism: theory and practice* (London: Pluto, 2005); Amitav Acharya and Alistair Ian Johnston, eds, *Crafting cooperation: regional international institutions in comparative perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

It is clear even from the above very brief sketch that 'regionalism' is a blanket term covering a range of very different developments and processes. The precise terms are not in themselves important, but the underlying distinctions matter greatly. For example, it is important to recognize the differences between (a) regionalization (societal integration and the often undirected processes of social and economic interaction); (b) regional awareness and identity (the construction of different forms of cognitive regionalism); (c) regional interstate cooperation (the construction of region-wide interstate regimes in a variety of issue areas); (d) state-led economic integration; and (e) regional consolidation (when the region plays a defining role in the relations between the states of that region and the rest of the world, and forms the organizing basis for policy within the region across a range of issues). The study of the new regionalism has underlined the degree to which, even if its form and dominant rhetoric are economic, regionalism is an extremely complex and dynamic process founded upon not one but a series of interacting and often competing logics—logics of economic and technological transformation and societal integration; logics of power-political competition; logics of security (both interstate and societal); and logics of identity and community. Regionalism is best viewed as an unstable and indeterminate process of multiple and competing logics with no overriding teleology or single-end point, and dynamic regions are inherently unstable with little possibility of freezing the status quo.

In terms of explanation, the dominant tendency has been to look within regions. The core of the theory of regionalism focuses on the impact of rising levels of regional social and economic exchange and the links between economic integration, institutions and identity. As is well known, most of this work grew out of the European experience. It tended to take as its starting point the desire to create a common market and intentionally to privilege transnational economic interests, both to avoid the recurrence of war and conflict and to promote and protect both economic welfare in general and a particular kind of economic model. The most important division is between those who see regionalism principally in terms of state interests and interstate arrangements and those who see integration as producing more complex regional polities.

Although intraregional constellations of power, interest and identity remain fundamental, the relationship between the one world of the international system and the many worlds of different regionalisms cannot be neglected. All regionalist arrangements have to be understood in relation to systemic or 'outside-in' factors—even if the most important condition for regionalism in a specific case is the relative weakness of such factors. I shall look briefly at four areas.

In the first place, as has been frequently noted, the age of economic globalization has also been the age of regionalization, and much of the analysis of the new regionalism has been devoted to the links between the two tendencies. Thus regionalism is seen as a critical part of the political economy of globalization and the strategies that states (and other actors) have adopted in the face of globalization. Sometimes regionalism is seen as one among a range of contending world order projects and, in particular, as a conscious attempt to reassert political control

in the face of increased economic liberalization and globalization. For others, regionalism takes on a more specific focus as a tool of political economy, either reproducing dominant forms of neo-liberal economic governance at the regional level, or serving as a form of resistance to globalization and as a platform where alternative norms and practices can be developed (as in the recent emergence of a vehemently anti-liberalizing—and often anti-liberal—regionalism in South America). From this perspective, the crucial point is that the emergence and the fate of regionalism need to be understood within the global restructuring of power and production. The many worlds are very closely intertwined with the character and fate of the one. It may be the case, for example, that the dense network of regionalized production chains in the electronics and computer industries across China and South-East Asia are the product of decisions taken in the boardrooms of major corporations in the United States. The core driving logic is global even if the manifestation is regional.

A number of related arguments can be listed here, in very bald summary: that the region is the most appropriate and viable level to reconcile the changing and intensifying pressures of global capitalist competition on the one hand with the need for political regulation and management on the other; that it is easier to negotiate 'deep integration' and the sorts of profoundly intrusive rules needed to manage globalization at the regional rather than the global level, given that value and societal consensus are likely to be higher and the political problems of governance beyond the state more manageable at that level; that, for many developing countries, regionalism can be part of a process of controlled or negotiated integration into the global economy; and that, especially for developed countries, it offers a favourable level at which to recast the post-1945 bargain between market liberalization on the one hand and social protection on the other.

What of geopolitics and the international political system? Systemic factors were clearly fundamental to the emergence and success of European integration. They are also central to understanding the very different pattern of security relationships in Cold War Asia. For many analysts the end of the Cold War removed the security overlay that had either dominated, or at least strongly influenced, patterns of regional security in many parts of the world. Regions were 'set free', and regional logics came to predominate both in the *production of insecurity*—both traditional and, especially, non-traditional (often related to the negative externalities produced by increasing levels of regional exchange and interdependence, and often located on the problematic peripheries of strongly integrating regional cores)—and in the *management of insecurity*, with increased incentives for states within a region to deal with their own problems and a decreased incentive for outside powers to intervene or become involved.<sup>9</sup> (Note that this pattern contrasted not just with the Cold War but also with the globalizing security patterns of the classic age of European imperialism and, arguably, also with the ideological conflicts of the interwar period which took on, if not a global, then certainly a strongly trans-regional character.)

<sup>9</sup> See esp. Buzan and Waever, *Regions as powers*.

In the early years of the present century, however, we have seen a very powerful reassertion of arguments stressing the importance of global and globalizing security logics—both in relation to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and to the extent to which these threats are themselves tied to processes of globalization, and in relation to the way in which the United States has responded to these threats, imposing a very powerful global perspective and set of policies. Recent practice and a great deal of recent analysis have therefore propounded and reinforced the notion of ‘one world’. The impact on regionalism is contradictory. On the one hand, these developments help revive the old idea of regionalism as a means of insulating the region from external interventionism, or, more ambitiously, of using the region as means of counterbalancing or resisting the power of the United States. On the other hand, they can undermine regionalism—because of divisions over the relative priority to be attached to terrorism and proliferation issues and over the appropriateness of different sorts of response, and because a more engaged United States provides opportunities for regional states to seek to draw in and enmesh the United States to their own regional advantage. Analytically, the challenge is to look critically at the balance between the one world and the many. In particular, we should question the excessive globalism of the recent security debate, recognizing that, even if they also have global connections and ramifications, most security threats are tied to local and regional circumstances, and have to be understood through complex cultural and contextual filters. As during the Cold War, there is a real danger of imposing external categories on to regional realities (as in the simplistic and self-defeating attempt to divide the Middle East into ‘moderates’ and ‘radicals’).

There are two other sets of ‘outside-in’ factors to be noted. The first involves the relationship between the UN and regional bodies. We have become accustomed to the argument that weak states continue to exist because of external recognition, their juridical sovereignty appearing more important than their empirical sovereignty. In a similar way, many regional organizations are supported and held together at least in part by the support and legitimation afforded them by outside actors. The legitimacy of regional organizations comes from the role that they play (or at least are intended to play) in the broader structure of global governance. The other set of factors concerns the diffusion of the idea of regionalism itself: both the idea that regions matter and the way in which specific regionalist models come to be diffused across the world—through institutional competition (especially between the EU and NAFTA models of regional economic integration); through teaching and support (which have been a central theme of the external policy of the EU); and through conditionality (as with the process of EU enlargement). Understanding more about these processes and how they occur, and concentrating more on the broader phenomenon of ‘inter-regionalism’, is an important area for future research.

## **What does the focus on regions suggest about how we study international society?**

One possible answer to this question is, of course: nothing. It may be the case that the regional level of analysis in global politics has been sorely neglected within mainstream writing on International Relations. Perhaps this was always true; or perhaps it was simply that the end of the Cold War and the dynamics of globalization made it ever more important to unpack regional-level dynamics and factors. But, whichever is the case, all this might mean is that we should take the standard range of general theories of International Relations and deploy them at the regional level. The international politics of regional spaces, then, is not necessarily different in kind or in its essential character from the international politics of other spaces or domains. There is, in other words, no specifically 'regional dimension' to IR theory or to the study of international society. In favour of such a view is the extent to which the study of comparative regionalism has been hindered by so-called theories of regionalism which turn out to be little more than the translation of a particular set of European experiences into a more abstract theoretical language. Indeed, it is worth noting that the strongly comparative element in earlier regionalist writing has generally not been emulated by more recent integration theorists.<sup>10</sup> Rather than try to understand other regions through the distorting mirror of Europe, it is better to think in general theoretical terms and in ways that draw both on general IR theory and on other areas of social thought before they have become too encrusted by their application to a particular region or case.

Second, there might be categories of explanation which, although intrinsically general and universal, serve to highlight differences among regions. Most important here is the enormous variety of entities placed under the heading of 'the state', and the many different kinds of regional international societies produced by the process of state formation in different regions of the world. IR theory has too often assumed that 'a state is a state is a state'; or else has adopted extreme and unhelpful dichotomies between 'strong' states and 'failed states'. States may not necessarily have failed but yet bear little resemblance to Weberian idealizations, with important repercussions for regional politics. Equally, the history of regional state formation has helped to produce regional international societies that may have elective affinities with their allegedly universal Westphalian original but also have important distinctive features.<sup>11</sup> And third, regional distinctiveness might itself become more directly a part of the explanatory picture. A good example is the argument that the success of ASEAN and the absence from it of European-style regional institutions reflects an 'ASEAN way' based on distinctive regional norms and a particular kind of diplomatic culture. A further example would be the important work that has

<sup>10</sup> On the earlier period, see Joseph S. Nye, *Peace in parts: integration and conflict in regional organization* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). For an important exception to the neglect of comparative work, see Walter Mattli, *The logic of regional integration: Europe and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> This is a rich vein for further comparative study. For studies that open up some of these questions, see Miguel Centeno, *Blood and debt: war and the nation-state in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002); Ian S. Lustick, 'The absence of Middle Eastern great powers: political "backwardness" in historical perspective', *International Organization* 51: 4, 1997, pp. 653–83.

been done deconstructing the meanings of security in different parts of the world and the complex variations in the politics of securitization.

Nevertheless, there remain some important gaps. First, constructivist scholarship within International Relations has often concentrated on ideas that are global and exogenous to individual regions. Neglected in such accounts is the importance of considering either the *interaction* of such ideas with their local or regional counterparts, or regionally derived understandings of order.<sup>12</sup> Second, there is the role of language. Constructivists have rightly stressed the ways in which social meanings and intersubjective understandings are produced and reproduced in the practices of international relations. But it is not just language in general that matters; it is also the specificities of particular languages and linguistic systems and the role of language in both symbolizing culture and producing culture. Language cannot be understood as a straightforward or easy facilitator of communication and collective action. The relationship of political language to the world it seeks to describe is imprecise and approximate, often relying on Nietzsche's 'mobile unstable army of metaphors'. The use of political language (including the culturally specific resources of particular languages) is central to the attainment and stabilization of political power and to understanding the success or failure of different conceptions of regional and global political order. This leads to a third point: namely, the need to take Wight very seriously when he speaks of the need to understand international society in historical and sociological depth. The frequent ahistoricism of US constructivist writing is almost as striking as that of the positivist mainstream that it seeks to critique. This is a particular problem for the study of regionalism. Outside Europe there is a dearth of serious historical work on regionalism, particularly on regional institutions, the history of regionalist ideas and the ways in which regions have been constructed and imagined. Without such primary research there is a real danger of theorizing in advance of solid evidence and with a severely foreshortened time horizon.

Accounts of international society that follow Wight and give prominence to culture and values face many potential snares. It is important to separate culture from context. Culture does not necessarily matter, but difference and diversity do. Understandings of world order vary enormously from one part of the world to another, reflecting differences in national and regional histories, in social and economic circumstances and conditions, and in political contexts and trajectories. A careful emphasis on context can help navigate the treacherous waters between a reductionist universalism on the one hand and culturalist essentialism on the other.<sup>13</sup> It is also important not so to overload a definition of culture that it becomes impossibly broad; or to conflate elements that should be kept separate (as with the need to separate religion from culture in current debates on Islam). Finally, it is unhelpful to view the emergence of cultural particularism and of groups that appeal to nationalist or religious cultural values in terms of a dichotomy between

<sup>12</sup> See Amitav Acharya, 'How ideas spread: whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism', *International Organization* 58: 2, Spring 2004, pp. 239–75.

<sup>13</sup> See Laurence Whitehead, 'Afterword: on cultures and contexts', in Hans Antlöv and Tak-Wing Ngo, eds, *The cultural construction of politics in Asia* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 223–40.

modern and premodern societies. Fundamentalism arises out of intimate connection with modernity, not just in terms of the factors that may drive its emergence, but also in terms of the way in which globalization provides new channels for mobilization, new forms of political action, and also new possibilities of community.<sup>14</sup> This is yet a further example of the one/many relationship.

Nor can order simply be equated with the existence of a common value system and with normative consensus, as Wight sometimes seems to suggest. Value systems, after all, do not just happen. They are fostered by social agents for particular purposes, and they are maintained because it will often pay people in some way to ensure that they are. Think, for example, of the way in which understandings of 'Islam' are politically constructed, with a wide variety of political actors using religious ideas for instrumental and strategic purposes. Or think of the emergence in many parts of Europe today of the idea of a 'Judeo-Christian' identity, including among groups who only a few decades earlier had been violently anti-Semitic. Accounts of order that focus solely on the role of shared values run the risk of circularity, of post hoc reasoning, or of reducing human agents to automata blindly following internalized values. Nevertheless, to reduce clashes over values to a simple clash over power and interests is superficial. It risks underestimating the depth of conflict and its scope, as well as the complex ways in which values are related to rational action and interests to identities. Most importantly, as Aron constantly reminds us, power is only a means to an end, and the study of international society has to be concerned with what those ends actually are, with their inescapable plurality, and with the conflicts that arise among them.<sup>15</sup>

It has to be said that, as it developed, the English School was not especially attentive to regional and area studies. The emphasis was to be on the way in which things fit together, and on the study of international relations as a holistic and distinctive arena of social enquiry.<sup>16</sup> But the hostility of mainstream political science has been greater still, and more damaging. Regional specialists are criticized as naively atheoretical or preoccupied with old, worn-out theories and methods. Social science, it is commonly argued, should be global in its perspective and in its attitude to theory-building and theory development, an attitude reinforced by processes of globalization. As a president of the Social Sciences Research Council put it in 1996: 'Critical problems and critical research issues appear in forms that overwhelm conventional definitions of area and region.'<sup>17</sup> On this view, regional specialists have conspicuously failed to link their detailed understanding of particular regions with broader social-scientific concerns or to exploit the potential

<sup>14</sup> See Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: the search for a new ummah* (London: Hurst, 2002), pp. 13–29. If Islamism is best understood as a response to modernity, it makes still less sense to view radical jihadists in premodern terms: 'However old-fashioned their theology may seem to Westerners, and whatever they may think of themselves, radical Euro-Islamists are clearly more of a postmodern phenomenon than a premodern one' (p. 303).

<sup>15</sup> Raymond Aron, *Peace and war: a theory of international relations* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), esp. ch. 3.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Hedley Bull, 'International Relations as an academic pursuit', in Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell, eds, *Hedley Bull on international society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), esp. pp. 257–60.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Prewitt, 'Presidential items', *Items* 50: 2/3, June–Sept. 1996. See <http://www.ssrc.org/publications/items>. For an excellent analysis of the debate, see David Ludden, 'Area studies in an age of globalization', 1998, <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dludden/areast2.htm>, accessed 1 Dec. 2005.

of comparative analysis. In some cases they ask the wrong questions because they have not thought about comparable cases. In others they resort to exceptionalist or culturalist accounts and an exaggerated celebration of difference, uniqueness and non-comparability.

Although some of these criticisms are undoubtedly valid, the relative neglect of regional studies has been depressing and deadening. This is true not only for those who believe very strongly in the intrinsic importance of the regions that they study. It is also true for those who believe in the broader goals of political science. First, regional expertise provides the foundation for the detailed, case-study-based knowledge on which the disciplines depend. Arriving at different perspectives on the world, including international order, requires good case-studies, and these in turn require regionally specific knowledge that involves history, language and culture. Second, the insights provided by cross-regional comparisons serve to render social science concepts—the basis of all successful theory—more robust. This helps to guard against a too easy assumption that there is some kind of ‘given’ universe of ‘units’ (states, regimes, wars or indeed regions) that are inherently, or at least easily, comparable. Finally, theorizing on the basis of the comparative experience of different regions helps to avoid the tendency to develop concepts in Europe or the United States—often on the basis of local experience, or implicit inductive assumptions derived from that experience—and testing these in (if not on) the rest of the world.

Understanding how the one world affects the many and how the many worlds affect the one requires the serious study of regions. As Halliday has argued, one of the dangers of globalization is that it has been accompanied by a decline in the serious study of other regions, in the learning of languages, and in news reporting on the ground.<sup>18</sup> The world appears to be flat because people see only what they have the categories to see and the knowledge to understand. It is true that terrorism has increased the salience of (and the funding for the study of) some regions, reviving the old Cold War situation in which area studies is essentially about knowing ‘where your enemy will strike next’. But the selective and politicized funding of particular cases does not make for sound scholarship or reliable analysis. The problem of proliferation is just as much about understanding why some states and regions have not acquired nuclear weapons as it is about why others have pressed ahead.

## How is regionalism related to international order?

In this section I will consider four notions: regions as containers for diversity and difference; regions as poles or powers; regions as levels in a system of multilevel global governance; and regions as harbingers of change in the character of international society.

<sup>18</sup> Fred Halliday, ‘The chimera of the “international university”’, *International Affairs* 75: 1, Jan. 1999, pp. 99–120.

*Regions as containers for culture and for value diversity*

One of the perennial attractions of a statist, pluralist conception of international society is that it has seemed to provide one way—and perhaps the least bad way—of organizing global politics in a world where actual consensus on fundamental values is limited, or where there is widespread scepticism as to how a cross-cultural morality might be grounded. If ways of life are irreducibly varied and if rational argument cannot produce agreement, then surely the best course of action is to lower our sights and seek the peace between them? Thus the sovereign state as an institution (but not necessarily any particular state) and the apparatus of state sovereignty provide a container for pluralism and a framework for the protection of diversity. What animates this claim is the idea that peoples, nations and communities have their various identities and justifiably seek the protective and expressive power of the state to further those identities. If diversity and value conflict are such important features of international life, then we should seek to organize global politics in such a way as to give groups scope for collective self-government and cultural autonomy in their own affairs and to reduce the degree to which they will clash over how the world should be ordered. Hence a strong version of sovereignty; hence, too, the reciprocal commitment to non-intervention or to limited intervention; and hence the centrality of the balance of power as means of constraining the predations of the powerful.

The massive movement of peoples, the intensification of contacts and interconnections between societies, and the multiple dislocations of established ways of thinking and of doing have intensified identity politics in many parts of the world and have given a sharper and often destructive twist to struggles for cultural recognition. They have undermined the adequacy (and moral viability) of states as containers of cultural pluralism. If this is true, what of the possibility of recreating a form of global pluralism built around denser, more solidaristic regions?

The idea that regions are, and should be, the embodiments of cultural distinctiveness is an old one. It can be seen in the long history of pan-regional ideas and movements. The tendency to assume that all roads led inevitably to the nation-state has perhaps distorted our reading of such movements, or at least has led us to consign them rather too readily to a historical cul-de-sac. Such a view underplays the persistence of such views and the degree to which they continue to provide a powerful set of collective ideas and imaginings that can be tapped into by a range of political actors. Think of the continued power of pan-Islamic ideas and the ways in which globalization has given new impetus to the possibility of a transnational Islamic community; or the revival of Bolivarianism; or of the many different ways in which ideas about Asian identity recur. Moreover, even if the nation-state 'won out', stressing a stark conflict of pan-regionalism v. the nation-state misses the ways in which both of these powerful forces have continued to interact across time and to feed into debates about global political order.

Wight was, of course, profoundly concerned with the role that western, and specifically European, values played in underpinning the society of states, and

already by the early 1950s he was questioning the impact of the transition from a Europe-centred and western-dominated international society to a global and much more culturally diverse form of global politics. In his focus on culture he reflected the preoccupation of his time, drawing on Spengler's identification of a universal history proceeding through a series of eight cultures or cultural organisms, each 'windowless', self-enclosed and with little possibility of mutual understanding, and, of course, on Toynbee's belief that nation-states are to be seen as part of larger, civilizational entities and that history is structured around the rise and decline of these civilizations.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it is sobering for those who teach International Relations as though it were somehow naturally about states and great powers to note the enormous popularity and influence of these civilizational accounts, whether formulated by Spengler in the 1920s, Toynbee in the 1930s and 1940s or Huntington in the 1990s, all of which underscore the very powerful normative (and perhaps even aesthetic) appeal of viewing global order in terms of civilizations and cultural entities.<sup>20</sup> In all of these cases their language, ideas and images reflect a deep affinity with historically constructed but powerfully felt cultural beliefs and collective imaginaries—and, of course, provide an extremely powerful set of ideological resources in the battle for political power.

And yet seeking to recreate identity-based pluralism on a regional level confronts serious difficulties. This, it seems to me, is the central lesson that emerges from the debates over Asian values in the 1990s, from the current debates over Islam in Europe, from the 'who are we?' debates in the United States, and even from the dynamism of change under way within the Islamic world, where there is no better case of complexity and dynamism than contemporary Iran. Spengler's image of windowless cultures was always nonsense as an empirical claim and dangerous as a normative argument. The globalization and the deterritorialization of identity politics constitute some of the most important reasons why a neat pluralist global order has been rendered obsolete, and this is true at the regional as well as the national level. As Tully reminds us:

cultures are not internally homogeneous. They are continuously contested, imagined and re-imagined, transformed and negotiated, both by their members and through their interaction with others ... Cultural diversity is a tangled labyrinth of intertwining cultural differences *and* similarities, not a panopticon of fixed, independent and incommensurable worldviews in which we are either prisoners or cosmopolitan spectators in the central tower.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1963 [first publ. 1922]); Arnold Toynbee, *A study of history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934). On Toynbee's great influence on Wight, see Hall, *The international thought of Martin Wight*, esp. chs 3 and 6.

<sup>20</sup> In his conclusion to *The international thought of Martin Wight* Hall points, intriguingly, to Wight's frequent recourse to categories which are usually considered more proper to literature or aesthetics. For a study of Spengler's influence in terms of its aesthetic attraction and expressive power terms, see J. P. Stern, *The dear purchase: a theme in German modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 88–110.

<sup>21</sup> James Tully, *Strange multiplicity: constitutionalism in an age of diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 11.

*Regions as poles and as powers*

Many regionalist arrangements have been central to efforts to maximize bargaining power in a globalized world. Even if it is dressed up in other terms, a great deal of regionalist activity does have the character of an outwardly directed coalition. One form of potential power is directly focused on bargaining and coalitional strategies: but behind this lurks the critical issue (certainly in terms of trade) of market size, which in turn shapes the capacity to negotiate effectively, to retaliate within the structures of the WTO and to engage in 'regulatory mercantilism'—the way in which norms, practices and standards that develop within large economic areas become internationally established.

The idea of regions as poles has been a perennial feature of the debate over Europe's role. Some stress the notion of Europe as a pole or a counterweight to the United States. Whatever new forms of governance, statehood and sovereignty may have been developed within Europe, its impact outside will be through the creation of a power in a classic sense. The second line of argument is very different. Here Europe serves not as a counterweight but as a counterpoint. What is being projected here is not power—at least, not power in its traditional, hard, form. Instead, Europe's influence rests on its provision of a model: a model of social order and of a particular brand of advanced capitalism, but above all a model of governance beyond the state. For many it is this kind of soft power that Europe should seek to project. Europe, in other words, should seek to externalize its internal political project and the social and political values associated with it. And it is these values and this model that other countries and regions can invoke or appeal to.<sup>22</sup>

However, problems affect both of these approaches. There is no consensus on the power-political projection model. Despite its edging away from being a purely civilian power, the weaknesses of Europe as a power-political player are well known, especially in the military field. And the severity of recent challenges makes one doubt whether Kissingerian questions as to the seriousness of Europe as a 'real' political player in the military and geopolitical sense have been overcome or are likely to be so in the short or even medium term. The European paradox remains. Europe's tremendous success was in overcoming the old Hobbesian world of wars and conflict precisely by creating a set of political arrangements that simply could not function according to the old-style power-political logic of traditional nation-states. The soft power route is far more plausible and attractive. And yet the difficulties are also apparent here. In part this is because the projection of effective soft power also involves opportunity costs, risks and long-term commitment. Soft power is not a soft option. In part the difficulties follow from the uncomfortable gap between what Europe practises internally and many of its external actions and practices; and in part they follow from the tension between Europe's position as a model of governance designed to mediate difference on the one hand and its promotion of a set of universal values on the other.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. Kalypto Nicolaidis and Robert Howse, "'This is my EUtopia ...' narrative as power", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40: 4, 2002, pp. 767–92.

Seen from other parts of the world, the US and EU positions on international order are strikingly similar—in their substantive content, in the degree to which they involve revising limited pluralist notions of international society, and in the absence of sustained engagement with the views of other states and regions. World order debates often appear to take the form of a closed transatlantic conversation. This is not surprising. The language of ‘international order’ or ‘global governance’ is never politically neutral. Indeed, a capacity to produce and project proposals, conceptions and theories of order is a central part of the practice of power. In debates on world order, it is the voices of the most powerful that dominate the discussion, either talking about the world or taking their ideas to the world. Seen from the perspective of today’s discontented and perhaps from tomorrow’s revisionist powers, one is reminded of the words that Wight put into the mouths of the Axis powers in his account of the failures of the interwar system. ‘But we decisively repudiate the assumption which underlines the arguments of the Western Powers, that they are still as ever the guardians and interpreters of civilization.’<sup>23</sup>

Outside Europe, it is certainly the case that power dynamics play a central role inside many regions—as in Asia, where soft forms of security multilateralism are promoted as a means of managing the rise of Chinese power and of working against a tightening of the broader balance of power in the region. It is also important to underscore the more defensive imperatives that have come to characterize many recent examples of regionalism. We can see a continued emphasis on regionalism as a response to economic crisis and failure and to the shared regional perception of needing one’s neighbours as partners in a politically and economically nasty and threatening world. The political imperative to keep trying to ‘relaunch’ Mercosur with a strong emphasis on its character as a ‘political project’ provides one example. Asian regionalism provides another, whether in the face of the financial crisis or, in the case of ASEAN, in response to the diversion of foreign direct investment to China. Whatever the actual limits to purely Asian responses to the financial crises of the late 1990s, there has been a significant sense that the region needs to develop a greater sense of its own identity and of its own capacity to deal with economic vulnerability (especially in the financial and monetary field). The African case provides an even more striking example of regionalism launched on the back of crisis, human disasters, and widespread political and economic failure. But there is very little evidence that regions can become powers on the back of the sorts of regional institutions that have developed or that seem likely to develop. There is a tremendous difference between the relative success of various regional groupings in ensuring that regional states do fewer nasty things to each other on the one hand and creating the conditions for actively cooperating in the face of the outside world on the other.

But what of regions centred on powerful states? Such a situation may arise because the regional state is so overwhelmingly dominant that it can enforce its

<sup>23</sup> Martin Wight, ‘The balance of power’, in Arnold Toynbee and Frank T. Ashton-Gwatkin, *The world in March 1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1952), p. 525.

will, or because it succeeds in creating consensual hegemony within a region—maybe by providing economic benefits, or by underpinning regional security, or by claiming to embody a particular view of the world or set of values. Or it might arise when its regional position is actively supported by those outside the region. Thus, particularly at times when its own imperial credentials are called into question (as in the late 1960s or in the current period), the United States has looked to regional power and to the idea of regional devolution as a way of matching its world-order ambitions with its effective resources. Equally, there have been recent calls for oligarchical forms of global governance built around a relatively small group of major western states (as in the G8/G10) to be broadened to include key regional powers, especially in the interests of representational legitimacy. There is every reason to expect these arguments to continue. But we should also recognize that the practice of regional power is often problematic. Regions can be snares that reduce rather than increase the projection of power; regional great powers can be enmeshed in very unstable regional ‘backyards’ and ‘near-abroads’; and the other states in a region can be very resistant to being led by what outsiders may consider to be the ‘natural’ leader of the region (think of the opposition to Brazilian and Indian membership of the UN Security Council).

Despite these difficulties over the longer term, it is important to hold open the possibility of a world order made up of large ‘region-states’, which might have a variety of internal forms of political organization—including perhaps old-style spheres of influence, hegemonically centred institutionalism and unequal forms of federal union. In this regard we might pick up here Martin Wight’s view that most states-systems have a tendency to move towards empire, swallowing all of the states in the system. Or we might pick on the recurring regionalist argument that, for all the tenacity of the nation-state, there has been a shift towards larger-scale units of economic and social organization.

### *The region as a level in a system of multilevel governance*

As institutionalization and governance develop at the global, the regional and the local levels, we find a recurrent liberal vision of a productive partnership between these different levels. Three ideas are frequently highlighted: delegation, policing and mutual reinforcement. The idea of delegation has been common in the security arena, especially in terms of the relationship between the UN and regional bodies. The rationale is clear. The UN is massively overburdened. Regional states have a greater incentive to bear the costs and assume the risks of security management, and regional organizations and regional coalitions can contribute to burden-sharing, provide greater knowledge of the problems involved, and ensure greater legitimacy within the region, especially for peace operations that demand deep and long-term intervention.

And yet the natural advantages of letting regional states assume primary responsibility can be questioned. It is not clear that the balance of interests and incentives will press regional states to take up the burden of responsibility for regional security.

The complications of regional politics may, on the contrary, make it far harder for regional bodies to embark on risky and politically divisive action. Regional states and regional groupings may lack the resources to act effectively. Historic involvement and partisan interests may undermine the possibility of even-handed action at the regional level. And the lesson of the 1990s is surely that regional action remains dependent for its legitimacy on the uniquely one-world character of the United Nations.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, there are important grounds for questioning the view that, in the global politics of legitimacy, endorsement of the use of force by a regional body is the next best thing to endorsement by the United Nations. It is far from clear that regional audiences will see such legitimation in the same way.

The trading system provides an example of the idea of policing, with a global institution in the form of the WTO monitoring the proliferation of regional economic arrangements. However, it also provides an example of the difficulties of such monitoring, with the WTO unable for the most part to ensure effective multilateral surveillance.<sup>25</sup> And the human rights system provides an example of the idea of positive reinforcement. The UN system should play the central role in the process of standard-setting, as well as in the promotion and protection of human rights, with regional bodies entering the story principally in terms of more detailed specification of rights and implementation—as what John Vincent called the ‘local carriers of the global message’.<sup>26</sup> And yet the line between global promulgation and regional implementation has been a problematic one, and regional groupings have sometimes served as vehicles for the promotion of conflicting conceptions of both rights themselves and how they should be promoted.

### *Regions as harbingers of change and possible transformation*

There is a long history of looking to regions as harbingers of change in the fundamental character of international relations. In the 1950s the existence of ‘islands of peace’ seemed to represent a challenge to realism and to underscore the real potential for cooperative institutions; more recently, Europe has been seen as a new kind of polity, for example in John Ruggie’s image of Europe as a postmodern region that had left the old pluralist world of sovereignty and territoriality behind, or in Andrew Linklater’s claim that ‘intimations of the post-Westphalian world are apparent in Western Europe’.<sup>27</sup> For some, European politics have been so thoroughly domesticated that we should analyse them using the tools of comparative politics rather than of International Relations: Europe should be seen as a ‘normal’ federal state, its natural comparators not other regional state systems, but rather other federal systems.

<sup>24</sup> On this issue, see Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, ‘Who’s keeping the peace? Regionalization and contemporary peace operations’, *International Security* 29: 4, 2005, pp. 157–95.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Bernard M. Hoekman and Michel M. Kosteki, *The political economy of the world trading system: the WTO and beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), ch. 10.

<sup>26</sup> R. J. Vincent, *Human rights and international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 101.

<sup>27</sup> John G. Ruggie, ‘Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations’, *International Organization* 46: 1, 1993, pp. 139–74; Andrew Linklater, *The transformation of political community: ethical foundations of the post-Westphalian era* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), p. 9.

What are we to make of such claims? In the first place, it is obvious that Europe does indeed provide evidence of hugely significant change; but it is also important to recognize the limits to change, even in Europe. The scope of change here can be seen in the emergence of a structure of law and institutionalized governance that is qualitatively different from traditional international law; in the growth of a system of governance that cannot be reduced to a set of interstate relations and in which networks, comitology and cross-cutting interest-group politics all play important roles; and in a situation in which the logic and language of power have been fundamentally altered. The limits to change can be seen in the continued power of nationalism and the nation-state; in the formal limits to the integration process; and, perhaps most importantly, in the places where law and power meet and where informal norms and old-style pluralist practices continue to predominate.

Second, there is no evidence that Europe is indicative of some sort of generalizable post-Westphalian order or that it is likely to serve as a model for other regions; but this most emphatically does not mean that other regions have not witnessed significant processes of change. In North America, for example, patterns of regionalization have intensified dramatically—in trade, investment, energy, environment, migration and security. This has not led to the sorts of institution-building that much functionalist theory would suggest. But regional politics have shifted.<sup>28</sup> US power to control its region has been reduced as it has become more enmeshed in both the north and, especially, the south. Given the degree of power asymmetry, the important thing about NAFTA is not the weakness of its institutions but the fact that some institutional structure has developed. More importantly, different forms of complex government around and beyond the state have emerged: take, for example, the 270 or so treaties that exist between Canada and the United States; the 60 bodies around NAFTA; the close informal coordination around the North American Air Defense Treaty and the 34 formal agreements on defence-related matters; and the multiple administrative networks on everything from law enforcement to the operation of cross-border power lines. In the Americas there has been significant progress towards the development of liberal solidarist norms (especially in relation to democracy and human rights) and a revision of older and harder notions of sovereignty. And, for all the limits of formal interstate regionalism, South America is far more regionalized today than it was 30 years ago. Africa, too, has seen a shift in norms related to humanitarian intervention (as in article 4 of the constitutive act of the African Union). It has also seen an increased disjuncture between patterns of interstate regionalism on the one hand and patterns of intensified social, economic and military regionalization on the other. And, together with the Middle East, it is the most important reminder of the paradox of regionalism: namely, that a successful move beyond the state depends on the existence of reasonably well-functioning states. And in Asia, finally, the most important lessons of the past decade of regionalist debates have been, first, that it is not helpful to draw an overly sharp distinction between

<sup>28</sup> See Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony in a region that dares not speak its name', *International Journal* LXI: 3, Summer 2006, pp. 545–66.

power-based accounts of the region on the one hand and institutional and identity-based accounts on the other, and, second, that the power stories that one tells are being continuously reshaped by the changing patterns of social and economic regionalization.

## Conclusion

The idea and the possibility of international society lay at the centre of much of Martin Wight's own work and of his intellectual legacy. Seen from today's perspective, a stable and legitimate form of international society faces three core challenges: capturing common interest; managing unequal power; and mediating difference and value conflict. This challenge is, in a profound sense, political. International society is characterized by a complex plurality of ideas, views and values. It is also characterized by a plurality of political identities in search of recognition, some relatively secure within established states, many others standing in ambiguous or highly conflictual relation to existing institutional and political structures. Global inequality remains extreme, with much of the day-to-day process of governance and many fundamental social choices being made in the shadow of unequal and often coercively exercised power. Many moral ideas and norms are now embedded within the institutions and practices of international society, but the plurality of views, values and identities cannot be reconciled on the basis of any straightforward appeal to shared moral principles. And, although interest-driven cooperative logics play a fundamental role, and although analytical International Relations has made great strides in understanding the conditions under which they may play such a role, global governance cannot be reduced to the provision of international public goods or the resolution of well-understood collective action problems.

In addition—and this is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the conditions today and those prevailing when Wight was writing—there can be no retreat to a minimalist, pluralist international society based on an ethic of limited coexistence. In one of his most famous pieces, Wight differentiated between domestic society, in which understanding of the good life might be debated, developed and, potentially, realized, and international relations, which is condemned to remain for ever an arena dominated by the imperatives of 'mere survival'.<sup>29</sup> Yet shifting material circumstances and very different kinds of governance challenges have made this sort of distinction ever harder to uphold. To take only the most obvious example, 'mere survival' in relation to the protection of the global environment depends fundamentally on how societies are organized domestically and on how their various conceptions of the good life can be brought together and reconciled. We are condemned, then, to negotiate the terms of continuing and ever more extensive forms of collaboration and active cooperation. This does not mean that there is no space for pluralism and toleration of difference. Nor does it mean that there are not examples of governance at the international or transnational level that should be repatriated within domestic political systems. But it does mean

<sup>29</sup> Martin Wight, 'Why is there no international theory?' in Butterfield and Wight, *Diplomatic investigations*.

that that this space has diminished, and that the disagreements surrounding the terms of active and intrusive cooperation have become more intractable.

Given the severity of the challenge, where do regions fit in? We cannot consider the strengths and weaknesses of regionalism without setting it against other conceptions of political organization and world order. Here it is useful to look back on the sorts of intuitions and understandings that fuelled writing on regionalism in the early post-1945 period. At that time many writers (from Carr to Kojève) believed that the day of the nation-state was over in an age of total war, advanced and unstable capitalism, and atavistic nationalism.<sup>30</sup> The tensions of the emerging Cold War were undercutting the possibilities of effective universal or global governance. Empire (which is, after all, by far the most historically powerful alternative to the nation-state) was widely viewed by the 1950s as both normatively unattractive and decreasingly viable. If this were true, surely, it seemed, regionalism must emerge as either the most viable or the most attractive of the plausible alternative frameworks for social, political and economic organization.

To what extent does this pattern of thinking still hold true? Although debates on global order in the 1990s sought to avoid a stark dichotomy between globalism and regionalism and to stress the potential synergies between multilateral and regional organization, many of the institutional structures of global governance are clearly under strain. Well before the arrival of the Bush administration, the (allegedly liberal) multilateralism of the post-Cold War world had, for many states and social groups, already been heavily contaminated by the priorities and special interests of the rich and powerful. Collective security had become highly selective security; the management of globalization was dominated by those institutions controlled by the powerful; talk of liberalism and human rights managed all too easily to obscure and displace calls for the democratization of the international order and to ignore demands for greater economic equality and fairness. In addition, despite the best efforts of liberal imperialists and the surge of neo-conservative apologists for empire, there is very little to suggest that neo-hegemonic or neo-imperial forms of global order are either normatively acceptable or indeed remotely practical.

In previous rounds of regionalism, the regionalist wave rose, but then broke and receded. Predictions that regionalism was here to stay proved unfounded. Outside Europe, by the early 1970s various regions were littered with failed and discredited regionalist schemes, whether of economic integration or of political cooperation. This time around it is striking that, in many parts of the world, politicians and analysts seem convinced that regional cooperation has to move forward and has to be made to work—despite the strains besetting NAFTA, the fragility of Mercosur, ASEAN's difficulties in adjusting to a harsher regional environment, and the extremely limited results of regionalism in other parts of the world. From one perspective, this underscores the importance of distinguishing between regionalism as description and regionalism as prescription—as a normative position, as

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. E. H. Carr, *Nationalism and after* (London: Macmillan, 1945); Alexandre Kojève, 'Outline of a doctrine of French policy', 27 Aug. 1945, trans. Erik de Vries and with commentary by Robert Howse, repr. in *Policy Review*, <http://www.policyreview.org/aug04>, accessed 5 Nov. 2004.

a political programme or as a doctrine as to how international society ought to be organized. As with the more general idea of interdependence, there is often a strong sense that the states of a given region are all in the same 'regional boat', ecologically, strategically, economically; that they are not yet pulling together, but that, whether this is explicitly stated or implicitly implied, they should put aside national egoisms and devise new forms of cooperation. Regional projects, visions and ethically constitutive stories are important for successful region-building, just as they have been with nation-building. But regionalism cannot be exempt from the hard reality of economic viability and the cold logic of power and interest. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that Wight would have had any sympathy with the hortatory or salvationist argument that regional necessity must somehow imply regional viability.

But for all of the limits, the picture is not static. Wight is famous for characterizing international relations as an arena of recurrence and reproduction and for arguing that states-systems are the 'the loosest of all political organizations known to us'.<sup>31</sup> And yet, when we survey the many worlds of different regional international societies, it is clear that deep and significant changes have taken place, and that the regional societies, economies and politics that have developed cannot usefully be characterized as 'loose'. They do not point in a neat or uniform direction—in most cases not towards stable and effective institutionalization, nor towards a cosy and comforting liberal solidarism, still less towards some post-Westphalian transformation (even in Europe); but neither are they simply about recurrence and repetition. Within the many worlds these developments are crucial to understanding the many different directions in which governance is moving, the range of dilemmas being faced, and the different forms that regional politics beyond a state-based pluralism might take. For all its manifold frustrations, this is what Europe has been about, and what is most important about Europe—and, incidentally, why we should welcome a renewed debate on the constitution of Europe.

I have discussed some of the ways in which, within the one world, regions can be related to international order and to global governance. None is without its problems. And none is more important than the role that regions may come to play in the search for global political legitimacy. The notion that the current distribution of global decision-making power can be defended in terms of the values propounded by the currently dominant actors is likely to come under increasing challenge. Indeed, such arguments may well come to play the sort of critical role in the twenty-first century that the idea of national self-determination played in the twentieth. The organization of regions, the capacity of regions to generate and promote ideas of global order, and the claim of different regions to be represented more fully and more equally are likely to play a central role in the coming struggle for global political legitimacy.

<sup>31</sup> Wight, *Systems of states*, p. 149.