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Microregionalism and World Order: Concepts, Approaches and Implications

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Microregionalism is not new. A case can be made, for example, for understanding the late-nineteenth-century creation of the modern German state as the political spillover from multiple and interconnected processes of economic regionalization amongst the hanza (Rorig 1967). Similarly, in her contribution to this volume, Manoli shows how many of the contemporary features of Black Sea microregionalization repeat similar processes from a pre-state era. More recently, the formal creation of subnational and cross-national growth triangles within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has given a renewed impetus to the study of microregionalism (Thambipillai 1998). Informal subnational economic processes of interconnectedness across national borders in Europe (Morata 1997), across the US–Mexican border (Lowenthal and Burgess 1993), and in the ‘region states’ of East Asia (Hiroshi Kakazu, Min Tang and Myo Thant 1998) have added to the impetus to carry out sustained research on microregions.

Yet, despite the growing number of formal microregionalist projects, and informal microregionalization processes, microregionalism remains understudied. Perhaps more correctly, while political and economic geographers and urban planners have long recognized the importance of microregionalism, it has yet to receive significant attention in the politics and international relations disciplines. True, a number of good works do assess the causes and significance of individual microregional projects. And some scholars have taken a first step in considering their significance and implications, typically in the relationship between microregions and wider macroregional and/or global processes.² Nevertheless, nothing exists which attempts to draw

together a number of disparate cases in a theoretically informed way. This volume, then, aims to fill this lacunae in the literature by providing a wide-ranging assessment of a number of different case studies – wide-ranging in terms of both geographic coverage, and in terms of the types of microregionalism assessed.

This book is the third volume in a series that started with Gamble and Payne's *Regionalism and World Order* (1995), followed by Hook and Kearns' *Subregionalism and World Order* (1999). In combination, these contributions evaluate three different levels of regional interaction in the modern world: metaphorically, the books have moved from 'higher' to 'lower' levels of regionalism. That is, the first book dealt with regionalist projects promoted by the big powers, such as the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It thus took up projects with preferential trading arrangements (the EU) as well as those promoting non-discriminatory practices (APEC). The second book on subregionalism moved down a level to examine those projects promoted by the weaker, non-core states of the global political economy, as illustrated by the Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), and the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC). The term 'sub' was used here in a sociospatial, rather than simply a spatial, manner. Subregionalism here referred to the fact that these states were seeking to strengthen cooperation and inscribe identities in a more circumscribed space than the 'higher levels' of regionalism discussed in Gamble and Payne. In essence, these subregionalist projects take on their significance within the context of the more embracing regionalist projects and identities promoted by the powerful states.

The present volume focuses on the 'lowest level' of microregionalism, or what Hook and Kearns (1999) also termed 'sub-subregionalism'. The objective here is to place the study of microregionalism in the context of the analyses proffered in the first two volumes. The underlying assumption is that microregionalism and other forms of regionalism should not be viewed as contending forces. Debates indicate that different regional processes are not contradictory. On the contrary, they are complementary and parallel to each other. Both processes are inter-linked and therefore microregions may contribute to the emergence of a sub-region and vice-versa (Rosenau 1995: 26). As Hettne argues, regionalization serves to *strengthen* microregions, 'as the geopolitical environment becomes transformed and creates new possible alignments and a direct approach to the world economy for the subnational regions' (Hettne 1999: 15).

It should be clear from the above that we share with Bowles (1997) the view that one of the defining characteristics of the 'new regionalism' is coexisting, multiple forms of regionalism. Or as Hurrell (1995: 38) similarly argues: 'There are no "natural" regions, and definitions of "region" and indicators of "regionness" vary according to the particular problem or question under investigation.' Microregionalism, then, not only coexists with other forms of regionalism; it is inextricably linked to them. In the case of microregionalism within the EU, for example, partners of more-or-less equal standing and power have joined together. In many respects, however, the European case is illuminating as much for its atypical qualities as for what it says about microregional processes elsewhere. In our case studies, microregional processes include either South–South cooperation, or what Grugel and Hout (1999) and Bowles (1997) would term North–South regionalism – processes that cut across a North–South divide.³

Our key concern in this introduction is to place the context of our study of microregionalism within the wider study of regionalization and regionalism and globalism and globalization. That being said, the actual debate on the meaning of the key term in this debate, globalization, has served as much to obfuscate as to elucidate the essential features of this dynamic process. Similarly, the terminology of regionalism is contested and is frequently confusing. For example, much of the literature on subnational and cross-national regional integration uses the terminology of 'subregionalism', with 'sub' referring to the idea that these processes occur below the 'normal' or usual framework for examining regionalization processes. Thus, if the 'region' is the EU, then processes that occur below this level are 'sub-regional'.

The new political economy of regionalism

Despite a terminology which, at its simplest level, treats the concept of the region as 'separate', it is the interrelationship between and amongst them that needs to be kept in mind. In other words, a number of seemingly separate yet intricately linked regionalist projects and regionalization processes tie microregionalism and microregionalization to the wider debate on globalism and globalization, regionalism and regionalization, and subregionalism and subregionalization. This might not be a neat and simple concept that lends itself to short and pithy headlines, but, as Hettne and Söderbaum (2000) argue, the world is complex, and acknowledging this fact is much better than truncating reality to the fit Procrustean bed of methodological or ideological predilection.

The distinction between regionalism and regionalization made by Gamble and Payne (1996: 250) in the first volume in this series remains a good starting point for any analysis of regionalism. Regionalism refers to the conscious, deliberate and purposive attempts made by national states to create formal mechanisms for dealing with common transnational issues. Such regionalism may well be a response to economic factors and may even have been promoted by non-state actors, but the regional project is defined as one which is promoted by governments and proceeds through intergovernmental interaction. In this sense, it is 'top-down' in terms of governments implementing policies which impact on the economy and society.

Regionalization refers to processes which, rather than resulting from predetermined plans of national or subnational governments, *primarily* emerge from the actions of non-state actors.⁴ These cross-national processes can be initiated by nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and other actors. Transnational cooperation by NGOs to deal with shared transnational environmental issues is illustrative of such a cross-national process. However, regionalization is more often assessed as having a primarily economic basis. 'Spontaneous' microregionalism, as the exemplary cases of the zone of the Sea of Japan and the 'triangles of growth' indicate, may develop without or beyond the formal will of institutionalized governmental arrangements (Smouts 1998: 35). This particular form of regionalism is driven by economic forces, production and finance, that do not acknowledge formal borders. Under this understanding, microregionalization places an emphasis on the creation of transnational economic spaces which result from the deliberate or indeliberate action of other actors which 'at least initially may foster a relocation of authority from the political to the economic realm' (Rosenau 1995: 25–6).

In the extreme 'hyper-globalization' thesis of Kenichi Ohmae (1995: 6), the role and significance of state actors in the creation of what he terms 'region states' is essentially ignored. The significance of state borders is also, at the very least, downgraded: 'What defines [region states] is not the location of their political borders but the fact that they are the right size and scale to be the true, natural business units in today's global economy.' But the role of non-state economic actors is patently important. Indeed, as we will argue later, the structure of the global economy and the predominance of neoliberal economic paradigms provides the context for this study. However, we should avoid teleological explanations and take care not to depoliticize the debate. As an illustration, on a general level, neoliberalism – as

promoted by purposive state actors and international organizations – does not just exist in a political void. It is predicated on political and ideological preferences and, if not promoted, is certainly facilitated by the decisions of governments and international financial institutions (which are themselves clearly not apolitical). Or, indeed, in the case of outward investment in East Asia, the negotiated deal by the US and Japanese authorities to realign currency exchange rates cannot be ignored. As seen in the case of the currency realignment following the 1985 Plaza Accord, for example, decisions at the global level are crucial to understanding the way opportunities for different levels of regionalization to proceed are interrelated.

Furthermore, a key finding of this study is that national and local governments across the world have implemented numerous policy initiatives to facilitate increased transnational economic relationships – to open their national economic space to a wider transnational economic space and often to locate the national economic space within a global capitalist division of labour and production. So rejecting the overly apolitical approach of Kenichi Ohmae, we propose an analysis that emphasizes the importance of the state (at both national and local levels) as a facilitator of economic integration, and the relationship between state and economic non-state actors (between agency and structure). Returning to Gamble and Payne (1996: 334), regionalization can be summarized as being a process which: *'Although seldom unaffected by state policies, the most important driving forces for economic regionalization come from markets, from private trade and investment flows, and from the policies and decisions of companies'* (emphasis added). Thus, as far as the different levels of 'isms' are concerned, from globalism down to microregionalism, all should be understood as political projects promoted by the interaction between a variety of actors. Indeed, for Shaw (2000), moving away from the old statist approach to regionalism is a characteristic of analyses of new regionalisms. While the old regionalism simply focused on state actors, the new regionalism should add inter-state global and regional institutions, non-state actors such as multinational corporations, and also (though perhaps to date with less impact) emerging civil societies and national and international nongovernmental organizations. The balance in importance of these actors varies on a case-by-case basis. This is important to note, and it is one of the main intentions of this volume to contribute to the emerging literature on comparative regionalism.

In his essay on the new political economy of area studies, Payne (1998: 255) notes that the literature on hegemony was developed

primarily as a result of 'a selective reading of the US post-war experience minimally qualified by reference to nineteenth century Britain'. In some respects, it is a shortcoming that the comparative regionalism literature is in danger of repeating. In the US-based literature in particular, NAFTA might be compared to the EU, and often to APEC. So while this volume does contain two chapters considering microregionalism in the Americas, we have taken care to include examples from often neglected areas of the world – particularly Africa – in order to provide a more comprehensive set of cases for considering regional processes through a comparative approach.

From the global to the micro

To recap, then, a key aim in this volume is to consider a complex matrix of relationships, and to trace how these relationships are manifest at the local level. For obvious reasons, the case studies in this volume concentrate on the specifics of the individual microregional projects, but all are predicated on Smart's (2000: 74) understanding that: 'capitalist practices are embedded in local structures, and that certain contexts can generate new and vibrant variations upon the theme of capitalism. If nothing else, globalization produces a considerably diverse set of local outcomes'. This understanding, then, does not posit the local against the regional or the regional against the global as loci of analysis. Rather, it suggests that assessing the relationship between and amongst the local the regional (and multiple forms of region) and the global remains a fruitful avenue for research.

The global

As far as globalism is concerned, we argue that the globalist project is a statist project which has been pursued with vigor by successive US administrations, supported by the neoliberal agendas of other governments in the advanced capitalist world. It seeks to spread specific political, economic, security and social forms of interaction and understanding on a global spatial scale. It is symbolized in particular by Reaganite–Thatcherite efforts to spread the market economy. Globalization, in contrast, is a process of growing interconnectedness in these different dimensions. Whereas the US as a state actor has thus been purposive in seeking to realize national interests through the pursuit of the globalist project, globalization processes are driven forward by actors which need not be motivated in these terms. This is the case, for example, with US business enterprises which develop a

global strategy in order to maintain international competitiveness and ensure continued profitability.

The regional

Similarly, many regionalist projects are promoted by the stronger states in the international system, as with the EU, NAFTA and APEC. In terms of scope, the regionalist project seeks to pursue interests and create a shared identity within a circumscribed regional space. In the case of the EU, for example, the ending of the Cold War has allowed a redefinition of the European identity (or identities) to include parts of Scandinavia and former East European states. In the case of NAFTA, geographical contiguity has served to help demarcate the region. In APEC, however, trade, investment and other forms of market exchange linking economies as diverse as Chile and Taiwan have been used to impute a concept of 'Asia Pacific' with meaning as a way to tie together insiders in a shared identity. At the same time, it excludes outsiders from the tantalizing bounty of the East – at least that was a common perception before the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Regionalization processes, as with globalization, are promoted by business enterprises and other non-state actors pursuing interests on a regional spatial scale. In this sense, regionalization as a process is linked intricately with globalization as a process, as the former is part of the more encompassing processes occurring at the global level. As in the case of business enterprises pursuing a strategy focussing on a specific region, as illustrated by British enterprises exclusively focussing on business in the EU, US companies in NAFTA, or Japanese companies in APEC, regionalization processes are simultaneously separate from, as well as symbiotically a part of, globalization. What counts is the level at which the analyst seeks to apprehend these different projects and processes.

Likewise, subregionalist projects are pursued by states, but these are the weaker states in the global political economy. As in the cases of CEFTA, ACS and EAEC, these projects have emerged in the context of, and often in reaction to, the larger regionalist projects pursued by the stronger states. Similarly, as with regionalization, business enterprises pursuing interests in a subregion are simultaneously separate from, as well as a part of, globalization processes. At the same time, subregionalization is intertwined with regionalization.

The microregion

It is the contribution of this volume to bring the study of these phenomena down to the little-studied level of microregionalism

Microregionalism refers to those processes of growing regional interconnectedness that occur below the national level, and which cut across national borders. In many cases, the microregionalist project is promoted by non-state actors, such as subnational political authorities. Nevertheless, it shares with the regionalist and subregionalist projects promoted by states the motivation of seeking to reinscribe spatial relations in order to promote political, economic, security, cultural and other interests. Unlike the higher-level cases, then, subnational actors often play the pivotal role in promoting microregionalism. Indeed, one of the key findings from the case studies in this volume is that the conflicting goals and aspirations of local and national governments frequently act as a brake against microregional integration. As with regionalization and subregionalization, however, business enterprises seeking to realize interests on a microregion level are simultaneously separate from, as well as a part of, globalization processes.

It would defeat the purpose of this volume, however, if readers were to regard microregionalism as a secondary or in some way inferior form of regionalism. It is not. To be sure, microregionalism may well be seen as a secondary form of regionalism in some cases. Morata's analysis of the North-West Mediterranean Euroregion provides a good example here (1997: 292–3). Morata argues that microregionalism was driven by the development of wider European integration. In essence, the authority and efficacy of national governments in dealing with transboundary issues has been undermined both by the transfer of some fields of national sovereignty upwards to the EU and by the concomitant dismantling of national borders as barriers to inter-EU trade. Institutional changes at the EU level, as well as new communications technologies and the development of transportation, have encouraged the formation of regional networks based on common interests in terms of economic development.

The same is true, to greater or lesser extents, in many of the cases studied in this volume – Black Sea microregionalism in the context of both EU regionalism and subregional 'Euroregions'; the Zambesi Basin in the context of SADC (and EU–SADC relations); the San Diego–Tijuana microregion in the context of NAFTA; and Caribbean America in the context of both NAFTA and the plans for a Free Trade Area of the Americas. In other cases, however, the higher-level region is more difficult to identify and define. In East Asia, for example, while APEC does exist as a higher-level region, its relevance for objectively identifiable indices of regionalization is, to say the least, contested. If we perceive economic regionalization in East Asia as owing more to

informal economic interaction than to intergovernmental collaboration, then microregionalism is neither secondary nor inferior. Indeed, we might argue that, in certain practical terms, the higher levels of subregionalization in East Asia and regionalization in Asia Pacific are occurring through overlapping and interlinked microregionalist and microregionalization processes. In this sense, microregionalism should not always be conceived as a response to globalization and higher-level regionalism; rather, in some cases, it can be conceived as a promoter of higher-level regionalization and, indeed, globalization.

Building on Gamble and Payne's distinction between regionalism and regionalization – and at the risk of oversimplification – we can identify three main reasons for the actions taken to establish microregions. In terms of microregionalism, the first is the desire to exploit economic complementarity. An example here would be the development of the Tumen River Delta project. National and local state leaders⁵ are attempting to build a region that can exploit the capital and technology of Japan and South Korea; the natural resources of the Russian Far East (and potentially North Korea); and the abundant (and cheap) labour, land and primary resources in north-eastern China.

The second is where subregional growth areas are proposed and created to facilitate the joint development of natural resources, infrastructure, and industries in cases where the resources are located on or around the international border. A case in point is the Malaysia–Thailand Joint Development Area to explore and transport offshore natural gas to Songkhla in southern Thailand for onward redistribution to each country's market. In such cases, the initiatives stem from sharing capital investment, and potentially also from resolving territorial disputes (particularly in the case of offshore resources).

The third is where neighbouring subnational political authorities deem that local collective action is the most efficient mechanism for dealing with local transboundary issues. In the case study of the Zambesi Basin in this volume, we see an echo of the debates put forward by Mitrany on the Tennessee Valley Authority which did so much to generate functionalist understandings of regionalism⁶ – whether regional forms should be based on functionally discrete areas, or whether holistic bodies need to be created to oversee the interactions and spillovers between and from individual functional issues.

In analyses of microregionalization, the emphasis switches from the creation of formal sociospatial structures, identities and the actions of state actors, to informal or 'soft' regional linkages and the actions and decisions of non-state actors. In all this, though, the main impulse for

microregionalization is divergent levels of development between and amongst subnational areas of different national economies. Drawing largely from the examples of US–Mexico and European economic regionalization, these processes are typically characterized as the consequences of ‘growth spillover’. Non-state actors in the more developed region facing rising land and labour costs will try to exploit the relatively low production costs in a neighbouring, but cross-border area. In the USA–Mexico and China–Hong Kong cases outlined in this volume, the core urban sector essentially extends its economic influence over the border⁷ – hence the process is often referred to as ‘metropolitan spillover’ or as ‘extended metropolis’ (Chia and Lee 1993: 236).

What distinguishes economic microregionalization from other means of exploiting divergent levels of development is geographical proximity. This is an important point to note about this level of regionalism. In a sense, while geographical propinquity is often regarded as one of the quintessential features of a *region*, microregions, much more than regions, are geographically close. A case in point is the ‘Asia Pacific’ region. In terms of identity, it is precisely because of the difficulty of using geographical proximity to link say Chile and Taiwan, that trade finance and other economic indices serve as core ingredients for imputing the diverse economies of the APEC process with an identity as part of the same ‘region’. And geographical proximity is usually expected to increase economic interaction – it minimizes transaction costs, and reduces transport time; it also eases travel for executives and managers and allows for face-to-face interaction. This will be particularly important in the microregion where managers from the core area wish to maintain crucial management functions in factories in the neighbouring developing area. In the case of the San Diego–Tijuana corridor, for instance, the launch of NAFTA encouraged not only multinationals to relocate plants on the Mexican side of the border, but also Japanese multinationals to relocate plants on the Mexican side and management on the US side of the border.

Clearly, different state and non-state actors have different levels of ability to shape and response to globalization and different levels of regionalization. For those core economic participants in microregional projects, the impetus for participation is clear-cut: they can take advantage of their comparative advantage to utilize cheaper production costs in peripheral areas. They out-source production of those labour-intensive activities while retaining a close control over technology, management, quality, and so on. In short, business enterprises strive to maintain international competitiveness and

survive by becoming part of a cross-border production system at the microregional level rather than remaining solely part of a national economy. For the peripheral areas, however, the impetus for participation might on the face of it seem less clear-cut. Why should they submit themselves, and indeed, deliberately emphasize their position, as a low-cost production site, eager to be exploited by external capital? The answer lies in a fundamental change in the approach of peripheral elites to the global political economy. Rather than fearing dependence and exploitation, the fear now is one of exclusion. As Bowles (1997: 225) perceptively notes:

By 1991 the purpose of forming a regional trading bloc was no longer premised on the need to be more independent of the global economy but rather seen as a measure to ensure continued participation in it. The fear of developing countries was no longer one of dependence on the global economy but rather was seen as a measure to ensure continued participation in it.

Microregionalism, then, might be seen as a means by which developing economies can benefit from the comparative advantage of neighbouring areas and participate in the global economy – albeit an uneven and unequal participation.

That being said, the relationship between microregionalism and globalization needs to be considered in greater detail. In some of the literature, for example, a propensity exists to explain globalization as a technologically driven phenomenon. In their extreme forms, such technology-based understandings can lead to a rather rose-tinted view of the impact of globalization:

In the developed countries of the West, new technology will lead to big productivity increases that will cause high economic growth – actually, waves of technology will continue to roll out through the early part of the 21st century. And then the relentless process of globalisation, the opening up of national economies and the integration of markets, will drive the growth through much of the rest of the world. An unprecedented alignment of an ascendant Asia, a revitalised America, and a reintegrated greater Europe – including a recovered Russia – together will create an economic juggernaut that pulls along most other regions of the planet. These two metatrends – fundamental technological change and a new ethos of openness – will transform our world into the beginnings of a global civilisation,

a new civilisation of civilisations, that will blossom through the coming century. (Schwartz and Leyden 1997: 116)⁸

Technological change is clearly important. We share Oman's (1999: 36) view that a 'principle macroeconomic force shaping those dynamics and driving "globalization" ... is the ongoing development, formidable competitive strength, and spread ... of post-Taylorist "flexible" approaches to the organization of production within and between firms'. The results of these new modes of capitalist production are plain to see in many different parts of the world. Whether in Europe, the Americas or East Asia, subnational parts of national economies are being tied into the global capitalist economy. This interrelated trend means cross-border linkages are gradually becoming established between and amongst national economies. It can be seen, for example, in the expansion of trade and investment in East Asia as a result of growing land and labour costs in Japan and the NICs. These cross-border activities have been a crucial driver of both microregionalization, and wider Asia Pacific and East Asian economic regionalization in general. Illustrative of this trend is the Yellow Sea Economic Zone, where the subnational economy of Kyushu is increasingly becoming tied into a cross-border production system involving the Yellow Sea coastal regions of China and South Korea.

Clarifying terminology

Across national borders

The majority of the literature on microregionalism concentrates on cross-border economic interactions between geographically contiguous areas. However, in four of the cases in this volume, subnational areas are separated by sea – the Baltic Sea, the Yellow Sea (including the Tumen River case study), and the Taiwan Straits. Rather than perceive seas as barriers, we use the concept of 'liquid continents' to highlight the fact that sea-routes have, for thousands of years, been a major means of economic interaction. As noted above, this was also the case in forging international economic links in the pre-state era. Importantly, the ending of the Cold War played a crucial role in 'unfreezing' some of these historic links across the sea.

Economic regionalization

In one of the most influential works on post-war economic regionalism, Ballassa (1961) used the term 'economic integration' to

refer to the creation of formal cooperation between states – the movement towards a free-trade area, a customs union, a common market, an economic union, or complete economic integration⁹. In some of the cases under discussion here, we do see the emergence of formal microregions with clear boundaries and parameters inscribed by state elites. However, in keeping with our general understanding of the distinction between regionalism and regionalization above, other forms of microregionalization exist where state actors and intergovernmental dialogue are far less important. Thus, ‘regional economic integration’ here is used to refer to the processes of reducing the economic significance of national political boundaries within a geographical area, *either* as a result of inter-state dialogue, *or* through non-state directed forces (Anderson and Blackhurst 1993: 1). In other words, what is significant to our discussion is not whether economic and other interactions should be regarded as regional ‘integration’ or not, but that economic regionalization at whatever level is seen as a multifaceted and interrelated process that can include cooperation, harmonization, and convergence as well as integration, *per se*.

Below the national level

In general, microregionalism refers to subnational levels of regionalization, whether in the political, economic, security or social dimensions, albeit with the economic usually being most salient. However, there are exceptions to this general principle arising from the special position of ‘city states’, particularly in East Asia. In the case of Singapore and Hong Kong in particular,¹⁰ microregionalism can be seen as a mechanism of linking subnational areas of neighbouring states with these city-states (see the concept of ‘metropolitan spillover’ considered above). Given the size of these ‘city-states’, it makes little sense to talk of subnational parts of Singapore and Hong Kong.

What this suggests is that students of international relations in general, and international political economy in particular, need to take care to avoid simply considering the nation as the unit of analysis. Subnational governments across the world are taking increasingly important roles in shaping local economic futures – often in conjunction with international capital. Indeed, as the experience of competition from regions in Europe to attract Japanese investment shows, this is far from just an issue for developing states. This emphasis on the role of subnational governments creates a four-way matrix of relationships: local government to international non-state; local government to local government; non-state to non-state; and local government to national government.

State actors

This understanding places an importance on considering different types and levels of state and sub-state actors. In many cases, the key state actors are national state leaders. In others, it is local leaders of subnational political authorities that take the initiative. For example, Franco-Spanish microregionalism has emerged through dialogues between local state elites in Catalonia, Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrenees, while plans to create a Japan Sea Zone have primarily emanated from subnational political and bureaucratic elites in the Japanese city of Niigata. In other cases, the role of supra-state or regional actors also has to be considered.

An appropriate example here is the promotion of microregional integration between Singapore and adjacent areas of Malaysia and Indonesia. This policy was officially proposed by the then Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong, in December 1989. After considerable debate and negotiation between regional leaders, developing economic micro-regionalization (or what they termed 'growth triangles') was endorsed as an official ASEAN policy at the fourth summit in Singapore in January 1992 as a 'parallel and supportive mechanism of regional economic cooperation' (Chia and Lee 1993: 230). As such, micro-regionalism was a result of not only inter-state dialogue, but of negotiation within a higher regional organization in the shape of ASEAN.

International economic integration and national economic fragmentation?

One important element of microregionalization is the establishment of export processing zones (with various nomenclature). These zones represent a deliberate attempt to place part of the national economy within an international division of labour. Typically, these zones entail encouraging inward investment by emphasizing international comparative advantage in terms of cheap labour and land, and preferential fiscal policies, rather than in the nation as a whole. The vast majority of the production in these zones is for export to other markets. But while these zones mark a deliberate attempt to internationalize part of the national economic space, one of the consequences can also be to denationalize the national economic space. This occurs when export-based production relies not only on foreign investment, but also on imported components and other materials. As a result, these areas are in many ways more firmly locked into the international economy than they are part of the domestic economy. As Lardy (1995: 1080) notes in

relation to Chinese export-led growth: 'rapid export growth from foreign invested firms, a large share of which is export processing, has limited backward linkages and the domestic content of exports is very low. To some extent export industries appear to be enclaves'. Lardy's observation's echo Bernard and Ravenhill's (1995: 197) argument that 'foreign subsidiaries in Malaysia's EPZs were more integrated with Singapore's free-trade industrial sector than with the "local" industry'. These 'enclave economies' do not form part of what Jin Bei (1997: 65) calls the 'national economy' since the enclave economies: 'do not primarily involve the actualisation of ... [national] productive forces, but the actualisation of foreign productive forces... or the economic actualisation achieved by turning ... [national] resources into productive forces subject to the control of foreign capital owners.' Similar trends are identified by Heron and Payne in their contribution to this volume on Caribbean America. They note that 'production sharing enclaves' have served to increase the involvement of the Caribbean apparel sectors in the US production system. However, this has not generated horizontal linkages and integration within the apparel sectors in the Caribbean itself.

Even in stronger states, microregional projects can also influence, or result from, disunited national economic spaces (if not fragmentation). For example, both Taylor and Hook, in their chapters on the Maputo Corridor and the Yellow Sea Zone respectively, note that microregional initiatives were initiated by attempts in the dominant regional states to redress uneven national patterns of development. In South Africa, the logic of promoting transnational Spatial Development Initiatives was officially explained as needing to redress the structural spatial imbalances that resulted from the apartheid era, when economic policy favoured those areas and sectors that provided support for the National Party. In Japan, microregional projects represent a deliberate attempt to reorient the economy of Fukuoka prefecture and the cities of northern Kyushu away from the rest of Japan, and more towards East Asia, with a more particular focus on China and South Korea. Similarly, in the case of Okinawa, which remains as a peripheral subnational part of the Japanese economy, local political and economic elites are seeking to revitalize the local economy by developing cross-border economic links with Taiwan and the Shanghai region of China. In the face of the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble and tight finances at the national level, marginalized parts of the national economy like Okinawa have been forced to look to cross-border opportunities as a way to revitalize the local economy.

What this means in practice, however, is the integration of certain subnational parts of national economies, while other subnational parts are marginalized. In other words, there are peripheral parts of core economies, which are being left outside these various regionalist projects, at the same time as subnational parts of peripheral national economies are being integrated into microregional and other cross-border regionalist projects. For example, in the case of China, microregionalization is contingent on both wider East Asian regionalization, and globalized production and commodity-driven production networks.

Aims of the book

This project was not conceived as an attempt to find a single explanation for understanding the emergence and significance of microregionalism. On the contrary, the underlying assumption is that the case studies will reveal different implications. In other words, microregionalism is not conceived as a single type of project, nor is microregionalization viewed as a single process; rather, both are seen as historically and spatially contingent. Our task is to understand and explain the reasons for the differences which emerge from these different historical and spatial conditions.

In keeping with the first two volumes in this series, the analysis is divided into three main levels of regional interaction and cooperation – political, economic and security relationships, with the social implications of these relationships, particularly in terms of norms and ideology, playing a supplementary role in some of the chapters. Given the nature of the microregionalist projects and microregionalization processes being assessed, traditional concepts of security are not expected to be at the fore. National security remains, after all, predominantly the preserve of national governments. Nevertheless, non-traditional understandings of security are very much part of the process of regional cooperation below the national level. Its importance can be seen, for example, in the cooperative police action and subnational and cross-national cooperation in controlling the drugs trade and criminal activity that threaten a state's security – a theme that is particularly important in the case study of Caribbean America. Similarly, cross-border environmental problems and illegal migration are increasingly viewed as key issues in national security, with an understanding by national state elites that, in certain cases,

such problems may be best dealt with through collaboration amongst affected local, rather than national, elites.

Nevertheless, the nature of microregionalism suggests that the nexus between politics and economics will dominate the discussion in these cases. While we have not been prescriptive in forcing a common template on the contributors to this volume, a number of key questions underpin our attempt to move forward the debate on microregionalism.

First, we ask if microregionalist projects work best when they reflect, rather than attempting to shape, new cross-national economic spaces. To use Scalapino's (1991–2) terminology, are they most efficacious when they encompass 'natural economic territories' rather than artificially trying to create 'new economic territories'. Put another way, does economic microregionalization follow or lead economic activity?

This issue is very much related to the question of what dynamics lead to the creation of microregional interaction, and the relationship between 'elite-led' and 'market-led' processes. And this leads us to our second major line of investigation, namely, the relationship between these processes, and the relationship between microregional actors. An obvious starting point for our analyses is an identification of the major actors involved in each case study, and, on a very simple level, placing the case studies into one of our two main types – is it *primarily* microregionalism or *primarily* microregionalization? Clearly, however, as we hope this introduction has established, neither microregionalism nor microregionalization are either mutually exclusive, or pure types. From this observation arises a number of secondary questions that emerge from an attempt to identify the relationship between these actors – both *across* national boundaries and *within* individual states.

How does microregionalism take place across national boundaries? For example, what mechanisms exist for dialogues between state elites, either at the national or the local level? Where such mechanisms do not exist – primarily for dialogue between local state elites – then how do elites create the political space in which dialogue can take place? In the case of US–Mexico relations, a legal basis exists for such interaction through the Border Liaison Mechanism. At the non-state level, we also ask what is the importance of associations of businessmen in particular in providing informal forums for cross-national dialogue – the East Asian Businessman's Forum, the Taiwanese Business Association in Dongguan in China, and the numerous associations that exist in the Black Sea region?

A key question that emerges here is whose interests are being represented in the promotion of a specific microregionalist project? For example, in his chapter on the Maputo corridor, Taylor argues that while the project has been conceived and promoted by the private sector in South Africa, economic microregionalization has proceeded with the active support of the South African state. Similarly, though economic integration between Hong Kong and southern China has primarily been driven by the investment decisions of non-state actors, the actions of state actors in the PRC have been significant – in establishing the SEZs in Guangdong, in reducing barriers to trade and investment, in providing start-up incentives, in relaxing border controls for Hong Kong business elites, and in providing the hard infrastructure necessary to move goods and individuals around the microregion.

Finally, we ask what are the implications of microregionalism for world order? The hyper-globalization thesis associated with Kenichi Ohmae goes too far. As is clear from the previous two volumes in this three-volume series, no one is suggesting that the state is irrelevant, or that the state system is on the verge of collapse. Far from it. Even where we identify non-state actors as the major driving force in microregionalism, we suggest that states and non-state actors remain important facilitators, if not collaborators, in microregionalist projects.

Of course, it might simply be the case that microregional projects have no impact or importance whatsoever. Microregionalism might founder in the face of conflicting national and local priorities, and/or conflicts over the role and scope of the region. For example, despite significant diplomatic activity involving policy-making elites from international organizations, states, and sub-state political authorities, the Tumen River Delta project has yet to emerge as a functioning unit of economic activity, as Hughes' chapter clearly points out. Black Sea microregionalism is also slow in emerging. Having said that, however, with the passage of time microregionalism might emerge as new levels of (primarily economic) governance in a globalized world.

On one level, microregionalism might be perceived as an emerging layer of economic governance between the nation-state and the global economy – a mechanism through which the domestic meets the international and the global. Microregions might, then, emerge as new sites of competency, and potentially authority, that could complement the role of the nation-state. If they succeed in promoting development and growth, then the legitimacy and authority of the participating national governments may be enhanced by participation in microregionalist projects.

Alternatively, microregionalism might be seen as a challenge to the existing 'Westphalian' authority of national governments and nation-states. For example, in Europe, the expansion and consolidation of the EU might lead to the creation of new layers of governance below the national level and across national borders. Microregionalism might simply be the right size and level of economic governance as states lose power 'upwards' to the 'super-region', and 'downwards' to the global economy.

Again, as subnational areas cooperate and integrate across national boundaries, they may become more oriented towards each other than they are towards their respective national governments. In Russia, we see different parts of the country being integrated into two very different higher-level regional economies – one part into the peripheries of Europe, another into East Asia. How these two subnational areas subsequently interact with each other, and interact with Moscow, is another question altogether. If the economic fortunes of Shenzhen and southern China become contingent on the decisions of non-state actors in Hong Kong, then subnational policy-makers in southern China might base their policies on what pleases Hong Kong business elites rather than the plans and programmes of national policy-makers in Beijing.

What this suggests is a gradual process whereby, due to competency at the microregional level, authority and legitimacy will follow. If the trend towards regionalism is any indication, the new world order could involve governance on multiple levels, including the regional, subregional, and microregional as well as the national; in multiple dimensions of power, the political, economic, security and cultural; and in multiple sites of competency. In other words, the state, as under the Westphalian system, will be transformed from *the* site of governance, as in the orthodox realist view, to *one* site of governance. For instance, in the case of the transborder problem of acid rain, or the subnational problem of the pollution of transborder rivers, a regional or subregional organization, on the one hand, and a subnational organization, on the other, might have greater competency to deal with these international tasks in comparison with the national state, the key traditional actor in dealing with international tasks. With time, these levels of regionalism and subnational authority might emerge as new levels of governance, with legitimacy and authority, not simply competency, to carry out these tasks. If such trends were to continue, the study of different levels of regionalism would in the future add to our greater understanding of the emergence of new sites of governance

and the transformation of world order this implies. In this sense, analyzing the link between regionalism and governance is central to future research in this field.

Notes

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2. For example, Mittelman (1999: 28), Hettne (1999), Hettne and Söderbaum (2000), Breslin and Higgott (2000), Schulz, Söderbaum and Öjendal (2001: 16).
3. The geographic connotations of North and South might be slightly problematic here as we are considering microregional projects which, by definition, are between geographically contiguous areas. As such, it might make more sense to talk about regionalism between more and less developed states.
4. Different terms are used by different authors to make the same distinction. Earlier writing on regional integration tended to use the terms 'informal integration' or 'soft regionalism'. Higgott (1997) prefers the terms *de jure* and *de facto* regionalism to describe the two different processes in East Asia.
5. With the aid and support of the UNDEP.
6. Mitrany's (1944) definitive statement on functionalism and regionalism is found in *A Working Peace System*.
7. See also Breslin (2000).
8. This quote is taken, with permission, from Higgott and Reich (1998) which provides an excellent summary of different explanations of globalization.
9. It is also used by economists to refer to the movement toward one price for any single piece of merchandise, service, or factor of production in different states. See Drysdale and Garnaut (1993: 189).
10. And to a lesser extent, Macao.

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