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ARTICLE

Regionalism in Africa and the Middle East: Implications for EU Studies

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ABSTRACT This article analyses and contrasts the growth and development of regionalism in Africa and the Middle East and considers what lessons can be drawn from these regions for studies of the European Union. Rather than asking why regionalism has failed in certain parts of the world, while succeeding in Europe, it takes a more nuanced view of the processes associated with regionalism, regionalization and regional integration. It identifies the particular conditions which have led to the rise of regional organizations in Africa and the Middle East and then singles out four factors of importance in understanding the relative success or failure of different schemes, namely external influence; hegemony and leadership; regime type and identity. This discussion then forms the backdrop to a comparative consideration of the European Union. In highlighting those factors which account for the different trajectories of regional institutions, the article aims to widen the scope of EU and comparative regionalism studies.

KEY WORDS: Regionalism, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Third World, hegemony

The study of regionalism often lacks a broader picture with generalisable hypotheses and comparative regionalism is still in its early days (Breslin *et al.* 2002). While regionalism is a global phenomenon with most countries around the world, regardless of size, economic prosperity or political regime, participating in a regional project and regional institutions increasingly cooperating, the study of regionalism is still highly compartmentalised — some would say 'regionalised' — with a focus on the European core and limited attention paid to peripheral regions. While this has started to change, it is especially true of scholars studying 'Third World' regionalisms

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versus those studying the European Union (EU). The study of Third World regionalisms[1] and their underpinnings is helpful in opening up a wider perspective on the phenomenon of regionalism in general and challenges the hegemony of EU studies on regionalism.

Third World regions, like the states that comprise them, share a set of common characteristics and challenges. Often including states that are highly unequal, they also incorporate weak states and/or fragile democracies, if not authoritarian regimes and/or struggling economies. These characteristics, though far from uniform across cases, shed light on the rationale, motivations and limitations of individual member states in the launch of a regional project; they also inform the evolution of the regional institutions composed of developing states and their dynamism or lack thereof.

This article contributes to the study of comparative regionalism by exploring what we can learn from the (non-)development of regionalism in Africa and the Middle East and how this might help to bring an enriched perspective to EU studies and studies of regionalism generally. The rationale behind comparing Africa and the Middle East is based first on their similarities: their 'Third Worldness' and somewhat parallel political and development trajectories; and secondly on their differences, notably the relative dynamism of regionalism in Africa and its relative stagnation in the Middle East. Some argue that, on certain criteria, regionalism in Africa has 'taken off'[2] (Shaw and Nyang'oro 2000; Engel and Gomes Porto 2010); Middle East scholars mostly make the opposite argument that regionalism lacks direction and substance, even calling it a region 'without regionalism' (Aarts 1999). Clearly the temptation to paint Third World regionalisms with broad brushstrokes should be avoided: there are significant contrasts between the geographically overlapping regions of Africa and the Middle East. This article addresses this question of difference, using the history and development of regionalism in the two regions as a base to explore their current institutional frameworks, in turn providing a contrast with the European experience and indeed lessons for Europe, particularly in the context of its own inter-regional projects. It will also explore how, in opening up the box of Third World regionalisms, and in particular examining the background conditions facilitating such regionalisms, existing theories like neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism or the New Regionalism Approach (NRA) may need re-evaluation.

After clarifying the concepts employed, the article first presents a comparative historical analysis of regionalism, highlighting the dominant trends that shaped each region and the principal policies adopted. This, in itself, is important in providing a contrast with the EU. It then outlines four core factors explaining the differences in the trajectory of the two regions: external influence, hegemony, regime type and identity. While none of these are new to scholars of regionalism, the aim is to bring them together and highlight them as plausible explanations for comparison and assessment. Finally, the article contrasts these factors and findings with some widely held assumptions about the European experience.

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Region, Regionalism, Regionalisation and Regional Integration

Definitions of region abound, each focusing on one or more predominant factors, whether geographical proximity, security interdependence, or cultural identity (Cantori and Spiegel 1970; Buzan and Wæver 2003). Some invoke alternative concepts such as regionness (Hettne and Söderbaum 2006) or regionhood (Van Langenhove 2003). This article will focus on state-based macro-regions (three or more states), as opposed to micro-regions, or territorial areas smaller than states. It will also consider geography and interdependence as the dominant factors identifying a region. Geographic 'proximity' should allow for a certain degree of flexibility however. The 'regionness' of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is not just geographically defined; it is also based on around a common identity and culture.

Though regionalism and regionalisation are often used interchangeably, this article considers them as separate, though linked, concepts and focuses on the former. Regionalisation refers to a process that encompasses an increase in region-based interaction and activity; regionalism, to a political project. The key here is the differentiation between the bottom-up approach of regionalisation characterised by undirected economic and social interactions between non-state actors, whether individual, companies or non-governmental organisations (the focus of much of the new regionalism literature), and the top-down approach of regionalism that occurs at a political decision-making level in different areas of cooperation, be it economic cooperation, but also in the areas of peace and security, among others. It is important to emphasise the deeply political process of regionalism, since politics in both regions, but especially the contemporary Middle East, are highly contested, in contrast to the more consensual style of politics that prevails in most European countries.

Finally, regionalism differs from regional integration that refers to 'processes of complex social transformations characterised by the intensification of relations between independent sovereign states' (De Lombaerde 2006, 9). The idea behind regional integration is that of a whole greater than the sum of its parts, or a 'process in which units move from a condition of total or partial isolation towards a complete or partial unification' (Van Langenhove 2005, 5). While it may be argued that, according to certain criteria, integration is a state that neither the Middle East nor Africa have reached, it is important to keep the integration yardstick in mind, since it is on this basis that regionalism is often evaluated (Gavin and De Lombaerde 2005).

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The Historical Development of Regionalism in Africa and the Middle East

In this article, we emphasise historical processes, sharing some of the broader arguments of the historical institutionalists (Steinmo *et al.* 1992; on the Middle East, see Halliday 2005). Indeed, it is regions' very histories that determine their boundaries and understandings (Postel-Vinay 2007). Both

regions share the experience of colonialism and the persistence of informal hierarchy in their international relations and this has coloured different regionalist attempts since independence, at once demonstrating some possible limits of existing approaches which focus on Europe's example. Beyond functional or economic motivations, both regions have been tempted by mirages of unity, with pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism providing powerful early incentives. However, while Africa and the Middle East share such features and experienced similar early trends in the development of regionalism, their paths diverged sharply after the end of the Cold War.

Africa

The history of regionalism in Africa, as in other world regions, was marked in its early years by a multiplication of often unsuccessful regionalist attempts and by relative success in renewing itself in the changed environment after the end of the Cold War. The 1960s are considered by some as 'the halcyon years of African integration' (Asante 1997, 35) with a proliferation of regionalist efforts. This early enthusiasm was dampened in the 1970s by the lack of success and decline of several regional groupings. In Africa, besides the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that became the African Union (AU), two regional organisations stand out: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The creation of the OAU is rooted in pan-Africanism as a rejection of the colonial fragmentation of the continent (Murithi 2005). At the time of its creation in 1963, African states were divided into two camps: the Casablanca group advocating immediate political unification within a federalist framework and the opposing Monrovia group favouring an incremental and functional cooperation that avoided any immediate transfer of sovereignty. As in Europe with the debate of Monnet vs. the federalists, the incremental approach prevailed and the OAU was created around the principles of functional economic cooperation and integration, of national sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity. Contrary to the debate in Europe, the political teleology of African regionalism remained very much at a rhetorical level as concerns about national sovereignty for these newly independent nations framed the debate differently than in Europe. Nevertheless, pan-Africanism and the idea that 'Africa must unite' remain a dominant narrative of African politics even today.

Identity, and more specifically pan-Africanism, but also economics were behind the creation of ECOWAS and SADC. Within the context of the Cold War, West Africa was not considered of particular strategic importance and only Europe, mainly under French leadership, maintained a keen interest in the region. The timing of the creation of ECOWAS is striking as the Lomé Convention with the ACP countries was signed in February 1975 and the ECOWAS founding treaty in May 1975. The creation of ECOWAS was overall predominantly the result of regional dynamics, with negotiations with Europe as a stimulus and Nigeria taking the leading role, both intellectually

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and diplomatically (Adedeji 1970; Ojo 1980). The establishment of SADC first created as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1979 was spurred by the independence of Zimbabwe under majority rule and the South African proposal to create a regional grouping centred around the apartheid state (Thompson 1985, 261) that precipitated the establishment of SADCC as the economic pillar of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle of the region.

Soon after their creation, both regional organisations lost momentum. From an economic perspective, the West African Economic Community with its common currency, the CFA Franc, proved to be far more integrated that ECOWAS; and SADC, despite efforts aimed at countering the economic power of South Africa, proved to have very limited clout. Such failure and limitations were not unique to Africa.

The 1990s was a decade of change, with old regional organisations being revitalised by the broadening of institutional agendas with a new emphasis on security and on the globalisation of the world economy (Bach 2004). These changes were part of a global phenomenon that included the EU with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (Fawcett and Hurrell 1995). Contrary to the European Union, due to their dependent status on the global stage and their domestic weakness, the onus was put on peace and security issues. This expansion of their activities beyond economics was caused by three dominant factors: the withdrawal of the Cold War adversaries, the existence of security crises that served as a catalyst and the presence of a regional hegemon and/or several strong states that spearheaded the transformation of the regional organisation.

The removal of superpower overlay contributed to a succession of crises on the African continent in the 1990s. As in Europe, the end of the Cold War triggered unexpected shocks that had major effects on the integration process. African regional organisations were forced to react in order to prevent them worsening and possibly engulfing the whole region in the turmoil. In West Africa, the Liberian crisis that soon spilled over into Sierra Leone forced the West African states into action under the leadership of Nigeria. In Southern Africa, the end of apartheid in South Africa obliged SADCC to reinvent itself as SADC. Finally, the genocide in Rwanda proved to be a wake-up call for the whole continent and motivated the transformation of the OAU into the AU, under the leadership of Libya, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt (Haggis 2009). What triggered the AU's approach to security can be compared to that of the EU. The best way to understand the AU's approach is to imagine a multiplication of Bosnia-like scenarios in Europe. In this hypothetical case, the reaction of the EU would have most likely been closer to that of the AU with the adoption of a much stronger peace and security role.

Indeed, the transformation African regionalism underwent in the 1990s entailed not only the adoption of new protocols, but also real implementation activities on the ground, be they peacekeeping activities in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Sudan or Somalia, or election monitoring. This evolution stands in sharp contrast to the case of the Middle East.

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The Middle East

Like African post-independence efforts, regionalism in the Middle East may be crudely divided into the pre- and post-Cold War periods, with the former characterised by 'pan' projects and attempts at federation. Where they differ quite markedly is in the failure of Middle Eastern institutions to evolve significantly beyond the Cold War, reaching a 'plateau' from which they have failed to advance and improve institutional capacity (Deutsch 1957). Conflict has had a role to play, as has regime type and external intervention as explored below. Notable, however, are the proliferation of initiatives by external actors, mainly the EU and the US, to promote regional security initiatives, indeed even to redefine the region itself.

A consideration of Middle East regionalism must start with the pan-Arab question providing a useful point of comparison with Africa and of contrast with Europe. The pan idea, as the explicit rejection of the colonial legacy,[3] was important in early discussions about the design of the League of Arab States. Amid a diverse and numerous group, it was the sovereignty-first formula that triumphed, and the League emerged as a highly state-centric institution, though pan-Arabism never entirely lost its salience at the popular, state or regional level (Gomaa 1977). Although the League enjoyed some modest successes in conflict mediation, and, for a long time sustained a common position of non-recognition of Israel for instance, it is widely regarded as a weak institution (Barnett and Solingen 2007). For example, its effort to imitate the EC model resulting in the signature, in 1964, of a treaty to create an Arab Common Market (Owen 1999) produced few lasting results. Such early failure however was unremarkable in a Third World context.

Beyond the League, other attempts at inter-state cooperation and federation, as in Africa, were related to the colonial legacy, the Cold War and Arab attempts to distance themselves from both. The Baghdad Pact (later CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation)), was an undisguised instrument of colonial influence and US containment and won the odium of all but the most pro-Western powers, notably Turkey. In response there were unions and coalitions of Arab nationalist states led by Egypt's President Nasser and others. However, such unions, the most important example of which was the United Arab Republic (1958–61), or alliances constructed for the purpose of wars between 1956 and 1973 were short-lived, subject to external influences, high levels of defection, and did not survive in any institutionalised form.

By the 1970s, some different dynamics came into play with the creation of the Islamic Conference Organization (1969), reflecting the attempt to craft an Islamic version of the Arab League, embodying a pan idea but again with a strictly statist orientation; and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (1981), a response to Gulf insecurity after Britain's departure and the Iranian revolution of 1979. Iran, in turn, was instrumental in founding the Economic Conference Organization (1985), placing its own economic and security interests on a different axis following the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

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Neither the wider pan formulas, nor the narrower versions of regional cooperation, nor the Western-brokered pacts enjoyed significant success however. Wars, regime insecurity, external interference and the intervening factor of oil rents acted to block any moves towards integration. With the end of the Cold War, however, this picture started to change as the multiple studies of new regionalism attest (Robson 1993; Hettne and Inotai 1994; Bøås *et al.* 1999; Söderbaum and Shaw 2003). However, few significant changes occurred in the Middle East; its most important tensions and rivalries were not of the Cold War type; superpower overlay was not removed, regional states did not enjoy greater autonomy, nor did the incentive for regime change — arguably a push factor for regionalist efforts — significantly materialise.

There were some trickle-down effects: 1989 saw the setting up of the Arab Maghreb Union and the Arab Cooperation Council, the latter an infamous failure as one member, Iraq, invaded a fellow member, Kuwait, just one year after its founding; the unification of Yemen was a reflection of the Cold War's ending, as was the ambitious attempt to broker a new peace settlement for the region in the wake of the Gulf War. However the first post-Cold War decade ended without significant institutional change and the Middle East figures little in early studies of new regionalism. More remarkable was the high level of continuing external involvement in efforts to remake Middle East politics, economics and society. Even the very boundaries of the Middle East were the subject of continuing Western attempts at refashioning, as suggested by concepts like 'the Euro-Mediterranean' or the 'Greater Middle East'.

The contemporary scene is extraordinary in demonstrating the relative absence of internal and predominance of external initiatives, the GCC grouping, a serious economic actor on the regional and global stage, being an exception (Legrenzi 2009; Gause 2010). Overall, regional leadership and institution building are decidedly lacking. In one indicative area, peace operations, and in marked contrast to Africa, the absence of Middle Eastern regional peacekeepers is noteworthy (Center on International Cooperation 2009). Instead it is the Western powers, notably the EU and the US, that continue to promote their visions of regional order.

In summary, the regionalist experiments in Africa and the Middle East followed somewhat parallel paths during the Cold War with newly independent states trying to fulfil the competing claims of economic development, state, nation and region building and other priorities against a backdrop of continuing dependence, conflict and superpower pressures. But whereas the end of the Cold War and the eruption of crises on the African continent led to the revival of regionalism at the level of the African Union and within certain sub-regions, Middle East states, despite the moment of promise in the mid-1990s facilitated by the Middle East Peace Process (Korany and Hillal Dessouki 2009), proved unable to adopt and sustain a united stand on economic, political or security issues, notably when confronted with the crises in the Gulf or the broader Arab–Israeli conflict and its repercussions. How can we then account for the differences in the development of these two regions and with what broader lessons?

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Explaining the Diverging Trajectories of Regionalism in Africa and the Middle East

As with any complex political phenomenon, isolating specific factors can be an overly reductive way of simplifying a multifaceted reality, it is nevertheless possible to highlight four factors emerging from the comparative history above which will form the basis for comparison and assessment. These are: external influence, hegemony or regional leadership, regime type, and identity. Taken together these offer a distinctive framework for assessing non-EU regionalisms and suggest the need to step back from integration theories and reconsider establishment conditions.

External Influence

External influence quickly emerges as a prominent factor in explaining the variable stages of development in the two regions. The relationship between external actors and regionalism is complex. Such actors may be important in the start-up of regionalism whether in Africa, Europe or elsewhere, but in consolidating regionalism their role changes. Notably, external influence is an insufficient condition for sustaining regionalism in the absence of favourable conditions: other internal conditions must also be satisfied. Over time its negative effects can multiply as regional states become more resistant to external hegemony and seek local ownership.

Contrasting the experience of Europe and Africa to that of the Middle East provides an insight into how high levels of external influence or interference seem unhelpful in maintaining regionalism in the absence of appropriate conditions and legitimacy. In Europe, Cold War overlay and the protection provided by NATO enabled the EC to develop as a regional organisation that was not overwhelmingly beset by security concerns. In this respect, the United States, both independently and via NATO, played a key facilitating role, but the US was not directly involved in the long term development of the EC — this direction was supplied and maintained by internal actors. In Africa, though external influences were certainly present in the post-colonial/early independence and Cold War period as illustrated, after the end of the Cold War not only did Russia withdraw, but the United States and the two former colonial powers that maintained an interest in the region adopted a policy of 'constructive disengagement' (Berman and Sams 1998) with each country reaching independently the conclusion that they would refrain from unilateral intervention in African conflicts without Security Council authorisation and should, as an alternative, refocus their efforts on peacekeeping training for African troops (Bagayoko-Penone 2003). This disengagement, coupled with the multiplication of crises during the 1990s that fuelled the internal demand for regionalism, provided fertile ground for the revival of regional organisations in Africa. The difference in dynamism between the sub-regions of the continent can be further explained, as discussed below, by the presence or absence of a regional hegemon that spearheaded the transformation of the regional organisation (Gandois 2009). Africa, like Europe, was

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able to consolidate and sustain regionalism because the demand for regionalism came from the member states and no external great power was directly involved.

In the Middle East, while in the Cold War, as in Africa, regionalist attempts were often predicated on or around colonial/superpower influence, this did not help to embed regionalism since the condition of states and the region did not encourage take-off. Indeed an episode like the Baghdad Pact merely encouraged local resistance. After the end of the Cold War, unlike Africa, direct and continuing Western involvement proved divisive regionally, impeding the conditions for regime change, regional leadership and institutional growth and generating confused and contradictory reactions to Western-inspired projects. In this sense, the Middle East, perhaps more than any other, is a region trapped within the 'American imperium' (Katzenstein 2005).

Regionalism in the Middle East has thus been impeded because the deleterious effects of wars and the region's resource significance have prolonged superpower overlay, encouraged intervention and held back the kind of regime change that would encourage cooperation. Internal initiatives at policy coordination are subordinate to external ones, particularly where the regional economy, nuclear proliferation or Arab–Israeli relations are concerned. Given the competing visions of regional order subscribed to by regional actors, external intervention has had the effect of blocking or radicalising local initiatives. US/EU policies on Israel/Palestine, on Iraq and Iran are generally not the policies of choice for most Arab (or indeed non-Arab states beyond Israel): this encourages division and dissent and hampers internal agency.

In contrast to Africa, where the Liberian or Rwandan crises triggered calls for African solutions to African problems and influenced the transformation of ECOWAS and of the OAU, the crises in the Middle East, still subject to superpower overlay, have failed to have a similar rallying effect: there is little talk of Middle Eastern solutions to Middle Eastern problems.

The hypothesis proposed, that external influence or interference constrain regionalism in the absence of internal demand and legitimacy, would require confirmation by looking closely at regionalist experiments elsewhere. A pattern seems to emerge, however, showing that direct and continuing involvement by an external power, in the absence of other favourable conditions, particularly where it runs counter to regional norms, holds back the development of regional organisation. There are lessons here for both EU–Middle East and EU–US relations in terms of how and where regional policies should be directed. Above all, these contrasting cases show that while external actors may play start-up and supporting roles, regional *ownership*, as demonstrated in the EC/EU, ASEAN or MERCOSUR for example is important in institutional success and consolidation. In the Middle East, there is no single organisation that can generate regional solidarity and external powers have been a factor in making this so. A related factor is the absence of regional leadership.

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Hegemony and Regional Leadership

The second significant factor explaining the differences between the two regions is the role of the regional hegemon. Here we need to distinguish between an external actor/hegemon (like the US) and a regional hegemon: a state with regional leadership qualities and aspirations. Although the two may overlap in a case like Latin America, where the US clearly occupies both categories as an external and as a regional hegemon, there is a distinction between its role as a superpower in the Middle East and hegemon in the Americas — and here both geography and culture have a role to play.

Regional hegemons have become increasingly associated with regional governance and institutions in the post-Cold War era. They provide important linkages between regional and global order (Taylor 1993; Falk 2003; Farrell *et al.* 2005; Flemes 2010). Though the ordering properties of global hegemons have long been recognised, as theories of hegemony attest, the properties of regional hegemons have been neglected (Byers and Nolte 2003; Hurrell 2006; Nabers 2010). We argue that regional hegemons are important in the promotion of regional order and institutions and their absence acts as an impediment. Regional leaders provide important public goods and act as standard bearers for regional order, both within and outside the region. There is a demonstrable link between strong regional powers and effective institutions (Mattli 1999; Lemke 2010). Their hegemony is tolerated, but also legitimised and restrained within institutional frameworks.

In the African and Middle East cases, alongside external influence, the absence/presence of a regional hegemon is probably the most significant factor in explaining the different trajectories of regionalism. In Africa, at the sub-regional and continental level, hegemons such as Nigeria or South Africa played crucial roles in the revival of regionalism.[4] The relative stagnation of regionalist initiatives in other sub-regions, such as Central Africa, can be attributed, among other factors, to the absence of such a hegemon. In the Middle East, a quick glance at the shifting landscape of regional politics and international relations shows how inhospitable it is to the emergence of regional powers and leaders (Lustick 1997). Part of the problem is the high level of external interference already alluded to which inhibits regional hegemons and their ability to independently promote regionalist projects. Different states have certainly held such aspirations: Egypt was once regarded as the 'natural' leader of the Arab world, at times displaying the characteristics of a hegemon, particularly under the charismatic presidency of Nasser, but its economic and military power were not robust enough, particularly given the opposition of Western powers. Saudi Arabia has displayed similar qualities based on its religious legitimacy or oil wealth and there are signs that, within the sub-regional context of the GCC, or the trans-regional context of the OIC, Saudi Arabia has played such a role (Wilson 2006). Both Iraq and Syria have made different bids for regional dominance, using military and nationalist tools; so has both pre- and post-revolutionary Iran. However, if power is about the ability to influence outcomes and

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critically to provide institutional leadership, it is clear that most Middle Eastern states have failed to acquire it (Nye 2003, 67).

One country in the Middle East strong enough, at least militarily, to influence outcomes is Israel. Yet Israel is not a regional hegemon in the sense of providing leadership, public goods or institutions. Israel's support base is extra-regional, linked to the very external influences that other regional powers challenge. The absence of great powers thus is a useful explanatory variable: the region is characterised by weak hegemons and weak institutions.

Elsewhere, even without a single regional hegemon, regionalist projects have prospered and succeeded if two or more 'core' countries within the region have spearheaded the project. This was the case in Europe with France and Germany setting their differences aside in order to launch the European Community. ASEAN lacks an obvious hegemon, operating a low threshold consensus policy among core states with a moderate degree of success, yet treading carefully in an environment where two external hegemons (China and the US) also operate. In the Middle East, however, not only is an obvious hegemon lacking, but the competitive relations between states are such that no core group has emerged to promote a coherent regional agenda. The problem is further exacerbated by the interference of external actors that do not wish to see any unfriendly regional hegemon or core group emerge. The cases of Egypt in the Cold War, or post-revolutionary Iran are illustrative.

Beyond hegemony per se, what is needed for a regionalist project to take root and grow is a state or group of states that are willing to lead it and make some sacrifices to get the other countries on board.[5] The degree of their success depends, in turn, on the legitimacy of their claim to leadership at home and abroad, and here domestic politics enter the picture (Gandois 2009).

Regime Type

A third variable, if not a sufficient condition for successful regionalism, is the regime type of member states of any regional organisation. Rarely mentioned in the regionalist literature on the Middle East or on Africa, the predominance of democracies in a specific regional grouping appears to have a link to successful regionalism (Fawcett 1995, 27–30), just as there is a link between robust regionalism and democracy consolidation, as the cases of Europe and Latin America show (Pevehouse 2005).

The *acquis communautaire* that all candidate countries have to absorb to become part of the European Union includes chapters designed to ensure that the rule of law is guaranteed: any country wanting to join the EU has to meet its democratic criteria. No such criteria exist in African or Middle Eastern regional organisations, though African regional organisations have taken some steps in this direction. In 1999 the African Union adopted the Algiers Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government and has condemned countries that have been victims of a coup by suspending their voting rights in the Assembly of the AU. This was notably the case for Madagascar in 2002, Togo in 2005, Mauritania in 2005 and again in 2008 and 2010, and

for Guinea in 2008, among others. The AU, albeit the most vocal actor, is not the only regional organisation to have taken a pro-democracy stance. ECOWAS adopted the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and SADC adopted in 2004 Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. Recently, regional organisations have undertaken election observation missions and established parliamentary bodies. This shows that democracy permeated the revival of regionalism in Africa. In many instances, development of regionalism and democracy consolidation seem to go hand in hand, with the regional organisation playing an active role in democracy promotion. This trend however needs to be contrasted with the idea of 'normative power Europe' (Nicolaïdis and Lacroix 2002) as the interest in democracy promotion by African regional organisations stems more from a desire to cater to the dominant message of the international community or from security concerns drawing on the idea that democracy is one of the necessary elements for long term peace.[6]

If one looks at Africa as a whole, according to the latest 2009 Freedom House report, 20 African countries are not free, 25 are partly free and 10 are considered free. This just shows that the picture in Africa is not as clear-cut as in Europe.[7] What is most striking however is the majority of partly free states on the continent. There seems to be a correlation between the most successful regionalist experiments, ECOWAS and SADC, and the regions where a majority of states are free or partly free. This argument should be moderated by the fact that there are wide variations between the two regional hegemons, with South Africa a fully-fledged democracy and Nigeria still a very fragile one. The 2010 constitutional crisis in Nigeria is a case in point. However, the relationship between regime type and regionalism is still more complex as authoritarian leaders can raise their profile by promoting regionalism (Söderbaum 2004), as playing the regionalist game is seen as legitimising for authoritarian regimes.

While it is difficult fully to operationalise the regime-type factor in the African case, the Middle East provides more compelling evidence. The Middle East is predominantly composed of states that are not free, with Israel being the only country rated as free in the region (Turkey is partly free). Democratisation's 'Third Wave' (Huntington 1992) has scarcely touched the Middle East and the correlation between (non-)democracy and (non-)regionalism appears a close one. However, it is also the link between external agency and regime type that makes for a particularly stubborn authoritarianism (Schlumberger 2007). Here the Turkish case is an interesting one. While Turkey's own democratisation process has been influenced by its aspiration to EU membership, it has not, so far, sought to use its democratic credentials as a force for institution building in the Middle East.

The broader question of *how* regime type is linked to successful regionalism remains open. One argument might be that regimes that are unaccountable at home are likely also to be unaccountable abroad (Tripp 1995, 302). While regionalism may be popular, regimes are not bound to satisfy popular demand, particularly where it might compromise their power. Put simply, there is no desire to pool sovereignty where regimes regard institutions as

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sovereignty promoting (Barnett and Solingen 2007).[8] In the Middle East, regime security trumps regional initiatives and states are more interested in their survival than in long term absolute gains from cooperation. Non-democracy, particularly where conflict levels remain high, reinforces the rhetoric of regionalism, or its instrumental use, but weakens its scope and practical application.

Regime survival has also traditionally been a concern for many African states. However, here one could argue that it is the extreme frailty of these regimes — with numerous coups and sometimes collapses into civil war — that partly explains the revival of regionalism in Africa. Regime survival, or at least peace and the absence of civil war (often guaranteed by the regional hegemon) can for instance be perceived by small West African states as a long term absolute gain from regional cooperation.

While the effect of democracy and regime type on regionalism and integration remains under-theorised, it appears as an important variable; and one worth exploring comparatively, particularly with the European case in mind. It is also important, from an EU perspective, in terms of both inter-regionalism and democracy promotion. If a link, as suggested, can be established between robust regionalism and democracy consolidation, this would have important policy implications.

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Identity

The final factor to consider in explaining the difference in history of the two regions is that of identity. While the implications of this variable are complex, there is no doubt that identity has played a part in the development of regionalism in Africa and the Middle East. Its role is somewhat easier to define in the African case where identity is less contested.

The constructivist turn in IR theory has highlighted issues of identity and culture in the formation of preferences and state behaviour. While identity is widely acknowledged to inform the norms and practices that govern states' external policies, the question posed by Ray Hinnebush for the case of the Middle East as to 'how much identity matters' is highly relevant (Hinnebusch 2005). How is regional identity related to institutional design and capacity?

Pan-Africanism is a multifaceted concept with a long history and part of a larger movement of African pride. At one level, it is the definition of the African Self against the European Other. At another, it is the reaction against the fragmentation, marginalisation and alienation of Africans, both within their own continent and within the diaspora. Its purpose is to unify Africans across continents and work towards political and economic independence understood as collective self-reliance, social and political equality and economic development (Murithi 2005). Pan-Africanism, like European identity, is a cultural phenomenon. Often a rhetorical tool, it has nevertheless played a legitimising role in the creation of African regional organisations, but also their revival with the slogan 'African solutions to African problems'. One might argue that pan-Africanism is one of the factors explaining the willingness of African countries to send troops for AU or UN peacekeeping

operations in Africa. There is no compelling alternative narrative at the continental level that can draw Africans towards another 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). An uncontested identity is not a sufficient condition to explain the development of regionalism, but it is part of the mortar that holds the regional bricks together.

While Arabism shares some of the above features, the question of identity proves more problematic to unravel in the Middle East since there is no single identity script that is widely shared. Barnett and Solingen (2007), in their study of the Arab League, see this, alongside domestic factors, as the most significant obstacle to cooperation. At one level, Arab/Islamic identity appears as an important push factor for institution building: where trust, common understanding and shared norms are present, states might overcome obstacles to cooperation. However there are evidently different concepts of order based on distinctive normative frameworks supplied by internal and external actors alike giving rise to competition over 'which norms matter' (Acharya 2004). This competition is apparent in the Arab–Israel and Arab–Iran divides, but is also linked to a bigger North–South divide — with Israel classified here as a northern power (Ayoob 2002). The difficulty regarding order, norms and institutions in the Middle East is that not only do different regional players have different expectations of order; so too do extra-regional powers, whether the US or the EU, or even China and Russia.

The four factors mentioned above have all been highlighted in recent literature, particularly that emphasising security regionalism in Africa (Williams 2007; Tavares 2009; Engel and Gomes Porto 2010) and to a lesser extent in the Middle East (Harders and Legrenzi 2008; Fawcett 2009). Excluding, at least directly, a discussion of economic factors does not imply that economic regionalism has no part to play in our story. On the contrary, there has been some interesting work on the economic aspects of regionalism, such as the Maputo Development Corridor (Söderbaum and Taylor 2003) or the GCC (Legrenzi 2009), with scholarship reflecting the latest developments on the ground. But economics, in itself, does not emerge a major driver in recent developments. In the Middle East in particular, the nature of the regional economy itself (oil rent/export oriented) has been a significant block to cooperation, and has helped to embed authoritarianism, and encourage intervention (Luciani 1995).

Lessons for EU Studies

What have we learned from the Africa/Middle East comparison that might be useful to EU studies? First of all it should help broaden the horizon of EU scholarship. The factors outlined above focus on two fundamental questions that have been neglected by EU studies but are important to Third World regionalisms: how to explain the initiation of regionalism and the success or failure of regional projects. This focus can be interpreted as a call for a return to the origins of regional integration theory in the 1960s when scholars were more open to such comparisons and considered the European regional project as one experiment among many (Haas 1961). Indeed, the factors

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outlined here may be considered as preconditions for the creation of regional organisations and their relative success or failure. It is only after such projects have been consolidated that theories called upon in EU studies, whether neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism or NRA, become useful.

The aim throughout this article therefore has been to single out some core features of Third World regionalisms which throw light on variables that may not be at the forefront of European explanations. First, the general importance of systemic factors highlights the interconnectedness of different levels of analysis. EU studies, focusing on middle-range theory, have often neglected the link between regionalism in Europe and the global context. NRA, for its part, highlights the multidimensionality of regionalist projects by studying micro- and trans-regionalisms, but often neglects systemic factors. Yet exogenous forces are key in reassessing regional integration theory where developing countries are concerned. While the Third World cannot be treated as a monolith, the regionalist initiatives undertaken by developing countries that are part of the periphery are often deeply penetrated and states from the 'core' often interfere in their projects. The continuing importance, for example, of US power overlay in a post-Cold War world cannot be overemphasised in the case of the Middle East. Such overlay continues for many developing countries, even if its removal has facilitated regionalism in others, most notably in Africa.

Second, hegemony and leadership are singled out as critical factors in Third World regionalisms where such leadership was hampered in a Cold War context. This argument is already finding its way into new studies of regionalism (Flemes 2010). While regional projects can be initiated from outside by an external hegemon, like the US, regional leadership, under a single hegemon, where power is asymmetrical, or joint leadership, as in the European case, is often a necessary element for the long term success of a regional project. If such elements are increasingly present in Africa, they are largely absent in the Middle East.

Third, regime type has crept into various accounts of regionalism, but has hitherto not been effectively isolated as a factor in EU and comparative studies. Within Third World regionalisms, regime type emerges as a crucial factor. Authoritarian regimes use regionalism instrumentally to promote their interests and remain in power and will not commit to integration beyond rhetoric since they are not held accountable for their actions. This has been aptly highlighted by the new regionalism literature and its focus on 'summitry regionalism' (Söderbaum 2010). Contemporary focus on the 'democratic deficit' of European institutions starts from an assumption of democracy as a precondition among member states. However, this focus on institutional design only resonates when the regional organisation is itself composed of democracies. The implications of regime type among EU member states need first to be drawn out before effective cross-comparisons can be made. However, bringing regime type to the forefront of studies of regionalism could have important implications for explaining success and failure and filling in gaps in the integration story.

Fourth, the importance of identity highlighted by constructivism and NRA and presented here both under the guise of the pan movements and as part

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of a broader North–South culture provides an interesting contrast with Europe's experience of identity building. In Europe, a common identity and culture progressed alongside the functions and forms of integration, as underscored by the contemporary debates about the nature of European identity. In Third World regionalism, ownership of the identity of a regional project is crucial, arguably a pre-condition for successful integration, whether or not the functions and forms of integration are developed. Identity seen in this way provides both opportunities and challenges. One of the weaknesses of pan-regionalisms was the large number of diverse states involved in such shared projects, a point of relevance to Europe as the EU expands. With the multiple accessions of recent years and the possible membership of Turkey, the EU looks more like a 'pan-European' project than ever, but what will this mean for integration? The current EU's struggle to define its boundaries and identity through enlargement has been mirrored in similar processes elsewhere. So has the issue of overlapping memberships and competencies of regional organisations — a question as relevant to the EU as it is to Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Rather than focusing solely on the EU experience, scholars interested in regionalism might compare the web of regionalist experiments on the European continent (EU, EEA, NATO, OSCE, Eurozone, etc.) with other similar complex and overlapping regional projects.

Awareness of regional specificities does not of course entail a dismissal of the mainstream approaches. Intergovernmentalism acknowledges the larger global context but relies on large assumptions about the nature and ability of governments to act rationally in pursuit of national interests. Neofunctionalism accepts the complexity of the state and the plurality of actors involved in the integration process, but as in its earlier versions, needs to remain aware of the existence of disintegrative as well as integrative dynamics (Schmitter 1971), requiring a more careful and less systematic approach to the mix of factors that make for the success of any given project. The study of regionalism is not necessarily that of 'ever closer union' (Preamble of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community), but also entails the study of regional fragmentation: of centripetal and centrifugal forces in a given region. Finally, new regionalism, while rightfully questioning the primacy of the EU model and bringing to the fore alternative versions of regionalism, lacks a convincing narrative that acknowledges sufficiently the dominant and problematic nature of the state that is still at the core of Third World regionalism.

From a policy perspective, the EU should not try to substitute European for superpower overlay. The EU's attempt to model other regionalist experiments 'in its image' runs the risk of creating institutions that are not based on any genuine regional support. It needs to understand how Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America also want to distance themselves from all Western initiatives and promote regional ownership. This desire has very deep roots. Indeed, leadership and inspiration must be to some degree internal to any regional grouping, as the 'Asian Way' suggests. The existence of democratically governed countries sharing a regional identity, so crucial in the European case, will also be essential to the success of Third World

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regionalisms. But these preconditions need to be achieved from the bottom up and cannot be imposed from the outside. Indeed, the link between regionalism and democracy should not inspire the promotion of crude 'democratisation' programmes that often have had contrary effects in the Middle East and elsewhere (Ladiki 2009, 272–3). EU policy seems more useful in instances where it takes a step back and plays a supporting role designed to complement and not compete with regional efforts.

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Notes

1. Third World literature critiques the applicability of international relations theory to developing countries arguing that certain core IR concepts — anarchy, rational choice, the state or sovereignty — 'do not fit' Third World reality. Linked to dependency theory, it challenges the great power capture of international relations theory with its inbuilt Eurocentric or Western cultural bias (Neuman 1998; Ayoob 2002; Tickner 2003; Brown 2006).
2. Others disagree, arguing that most African regional organisations are still struggling to go beyond declaration of intent to fully implement their protocols and programmes.
3. Arabs aspired, in broad terms, to maintaining unity among the Arab territories of the former Ottoman Empire; the colonial powers introduced a more fragmented state system.
4. This appears to be true of other global sub-regions: in Latin America, Brazil has been an important motor of institutional consolidation in Mercosur.
5. Despite claims to the contrary by NRA scholars, states are still the predominant actors within regional organisations providing the legal environment within which non-state actors can pursue their regional ambitions.
6. The link between democracy and peace was for instance outlined in the preamble of the 2001 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. ECOWAS Member States are 'concerned also about increasing incidence of conflicts caused by religious intolerance, political marginalisation and non-transparent elections'.'
7. By contrast, the 27 members of the European Union are considered free by the same survey.
8. Also known as 'sovereignty-boosing' (Söderbaum 2004), political leaders engage in intense regional political games to raise their profile and status and confirm the appearance and power of sovereignty.

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