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## International Morality of Regionalism: Supranationalism vs. Supernationalism in the Cases of Europe and East Asia

[Abstract] There is an international morality issue in regionalism. Peace is the highest value in this aspect. In the project of regional building, it means transcending the limitation of national sovereignty. The European experience shows this aim has reached in some extent within the region, but it goes to shaping a super sovereignty which is mistakenly understood as supranational entity. It is supernational rather than supranational. Regionalism can be classified as supernationalism and supranationalism. Supranationalism is more coincident with the meaning of sovereignty-transcending than supernationalism. European integration is moving to a regional super state. In contrast regional cooperation in East Asia is going more or less in the supranational way.

[Key words] Regionalism, International morality, Supernationalism, Supranationalism

Region has been an important unit or analysis level of world politics. There are a lot of arguments about why region matters in the study of International Relations (IR). (Fawn, 2009) However, it seems fewer and fewer works remind people why region originally came into the scope of IR. (Hettne, 2003; Allen, Massey and Cochrane, 1998) There are a lot of works of comparative studies among various regions. (Acharya and Johnston, 2007; Fort and Webber, 2006; Beeson, 2005; Fawcett, 2004; Breslin, Higgott and Rosamond, 2002; Hettne, 2001; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995) However, most of the comparative works intentionally or unintentionally set the European architecture as the model because of its developed institutional system and internal free movement. Meanwhile very few works would like to remind the original intention of European integration and also the eventual aim of regional integration.

This paper would like to point out the original intention of regional integration has to come back to our minds while regionalism is so prosperous today. There is a kind of tendency of supernationlism which means more internal integration is better in general. It might be better for regional building, but might be not better for world politics. In contrary, a kind of danger hides there.

### **International morality of regionalism**

Some scholars argue a regionalized world has always featured in human history. Empires were its ancient forms. (Fawn: 6-7, 2009) However, if we study regions in the subject of IR, it is not true to regard ancient empires as the forms of regions. IR is a subject about the relations

among modern states, and a modern region usually means there are at least two modern states. Just as Fawn pointed out “Usually, however, the advent of regions as cooperation among states is taken to be a phenomenon of a multi-numerical states-system, that which arose after the First World War and expanded after the Second.” (Fawn:7, 2009) It is the main objective of regional building to reshape the relations among the states in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The basic aim of IR studies is about the issue of war and peace. (Deutsch, 1992) Peace is the basic and most important value of international morality which establishes the base for other values. The second aim of IR studies could be welfare that means better international relations could produce more welfare for people. Peace and welfare constitute the basic two issues for IR studies which a lot of other issues are subordinated. Nation-state is the major unit and actor of modern international relations. Its core element is sovereignty which rules the basic order of modern international relationship and also brings anarchy to international society. Although Bull argues anarchy is also a kind of order, (Bull, 1977) a lot of scholars and thinkers claim anarchy is the main source of international conflict. Thus the issue of peace becomes the issue of overcoming the problem of sovereignty.

This is the main thoughts kept in the mind of founders of regional integration theory. Functionalism is the earliest theory of European integration. “In its initial form it was primarily concerned with the creation of a more peaceful and stable world order.” Dissatisfied by international conflicts, David Mitrany, the founder of functionalism argued “a function-specific approach was meant to provide better services in an increasingly globalized economy, while taking many policy decisions away from institutions that were controlled by national interests.” (Long and Ashworth: 1-2, 1999) Functionalism emerged as a design for the post-war system building in the interwar period. It is understandable to regard nation-state as the main problem which mess the world politics.

Haas applied functionalism to explain regional integration. He disagreed politics is irrelevant in the new order building meanwhile he succeeded the idea that the power of nation-state should be restrained and even outflanked. (Haas, 1964) Thus there is no difference between neo-functionalism and functionalism about the aim of integration. However, hit by the empty chair crisis ignited by General Charles De Gaulle, Haas felt very frustrated and claimed the obsolescence of theories of regional integration. (Haas, 1975) The main problem is the return of nation-state which was regarded as the main impediment to the peace of the world.

Because of the increasingly interdependence and globalization which leads to a more competitive world, people gradually forgot the initial role of region in the efforts to a peaceful world. Peace might have been achieved inside some regions particularly in Europe, but there is few spill-over of the regional achievement to the world. Region is increasingly regarded as a buttress to meet the challenge of globalization.

In general we can identify two kinds of regionalism today. They are supranationalism and supranationalism. Supranationalism is the early regional integration theory. Although it has been competed by other big theories such as realism and federalism, it still attracts a lot of scholars of regional study. However, there is a common misperception about supranationalism which means

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-national and cross-border regions became part of regional study recently, (Paasi, 2009) but in my view its meaning is more economic and cultural. It might imply the death of nation-state or reducing the central power of states, but we don't agree with the claim of the end of nation-state and the rise of regional state. (Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nations-State*, New York: Free Press 1995) In the subject of international relations supra-state regions are more meaningful.

the power transfer from member states to the integrated entity. That's why federalism is often categorized as a kind of supranationalism. If the most of national powers is transferred to the integrated entity from member states, the new polity becomes a new state. It has nothing different with other states but its scale much larger than previous ones. It is a superstate. With the building of regional identity, the superstate develops into a new super nation-state. It is not real supranational. Real supranationalism focuses on settling the problem caused by national boundaries. It is a movement which tries to surpass the Westphalian system of world politics. In the process moving to a post-Westphalian system, region matters as an intermediate step. It is unrealistic to make the transformation finished overnight in the whole world at the same time. Some regions as Europe with much mature conditions can move first. Other regions will catch up late. This is what supranationalism imagines to reform the world politics.

Supernationalism sets regional unification as the highest objective for regional building. The unified regional entity is hoped to work as a single state which can have a single voice and act as a unitary player. When Kissinger mocked "when I want to call Europe, who can pick up the phone", he raised the question whether European integration can develop into a new single state. This is also the dream of a lot of Europeans. It will make Europe much stronger and compete in the world stage with other big or super powers. The recall of ancient regional empire testifies the legitimacy of supernationalism.

However, is supernationalism really along with the trend of development of international relations? Can history really back to the ancient times? The answer is certainly negative. No one like empire revives. One problem of modern world politics is that nation-state holds too much power which makes the conflict between nation-states too much destructive. That means more power concentration is immoral in international relations. It is totally imaginable a possible conflict between Europe and other big powers will be devastating given the condition that Europe is completely united. With the concentration of the powers 27 or more member states Europe will become a dictatorial power in the world politics.

This article argues there is a moral issue in regionalism. "In assessing intentions and outcomes of regional formation, we should not presume that regional activities are always necessarily 'good'." "Robert Gilpin classified regionalism in 1975 into benevolent and malevolent forms, the latter contributing to economic downturns and even conflict." (Fawn:17-18, 2009) Our classification of supranationalism and supernationalism is in a similar way. In Gilpin's words supernationalism is more malevolent than supranationalism. Although there hasn't been a concrete model of supranational politics, supranationalism represents the international morality of regionalism. There is a danger with supernationalism for the improvement of world politics. "From his examination of supra-state regions Hettne argues that the region is not of interest as such but rather in its specific roles, for instance, as a supranational or 'world' region in the process of wider transformation." (Paasi:128, 2009)

Professor Jayasuriya pointed out, the main problem of international relations in the previous centuries was national boundaries were entrenched and consolidated. Thus the discussion of regionalism is trapped in the old debates. "The prevailing approaches to regional integration suffer from a major drawback: they are premised on a methodological nationalism, and an analytical dualism between regional institutions and the nation state." (Jayasuriya:103, 2010) "A particular aim of regionalism, other than in its occasionally malevolent forms, that deserves distinct attention is as conflict prevent and management, either between and among its members or as a mechanism

to moderate conflict among neighbours of the grouping.” (Fawn:22-23, 2009)

Here the problem is not just conflict prevention and management but national sovereignty according to the argument of functionalism. Regionalism can prevent conflict within a region in certain extent or facilitate mediation between its member and its neighbor. Conflict management remains integral to the study of regions. (Fawn:23, 2009) However, functionalism thinks the problem will only resolve thoroughly through the transcending of sovereignty. And, regions also embolden its member states to take action against outsiders sometime. Georgia was evidently emboldened by misleading commitment from NATO which led up to a conflict with Russia in 2008.

### **European regionalism towards supranationalism**

The study of comparative politics joins the debate of theories of European integration. (Pierson, 1996) The central issue is the character of the polity of European integration. Is it a super state or something between state and super state? This is also the question Thomas J. Biersteker wants to answer. (Biersteker, 1999)

His conclusion is that “The polity emerging within the European Union (EU) resides somewhere between a simple aggregation of separate states and the ideal of a single confederated Westphalian state. It is not an integrated entity or a system of states but occupies the ambiguous space located between or possibly beyond them.” (Biersteker: 21, 1999)

However, a lot of people don't obviously satisfy with the ambiguity. It is particularly true in the development of European integration in the past decade. Here I won't entangle myself in the theoretical debate. Instead, I would like to identify the trends that show Europe moving to a super state. Supranationalism has become appealing in Europe.

The most remarkable recent development is the change brought by the enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty. Although the supranationalism suffered a set-back by the fail of European constitution-making, the treaty provides a better form of state to the EU. It has a “European president” and a “European foreign minister”. The meaning of the change is more political and legal. It is not clear yet about the relationship among the president, foreign minister and the Commission, but it is already certain that the European integration has been moved much further. More integration means more concentrated power. It is more particular the case in the external affairs by which Europe gains more Say in world affairs.

Coinciding with the integrated polity building, Europe is regarded as a united region. In the other hand, cooperation initiatives among some member states such as the Baltic Sea or post-communist Central and Eastern Europe are characterized as sub-region. (Fawn:11, 2009)

The institutional change gives the form to a super state. The building of European identity gives the feeling of unification to the super state. The concept of European identity has constituting characters of originality, constructiveness and reflectiveness, but its reflectiveness is getting weaker under the pressure of supranationalism. (Breakwell and Lyons, 1996; Cederman, 2001) Wendt argues as a collective identity among member states, European identity will lead the Union to a world state or international state. (Wendt, 2003) However, we have to realize that identity is not pure cultural or ideal. The construction of identity also links to the realization that their interests are same. More feelings of “We” are nurtured by more common interests. This feeling beware of strong tides when the quarrel broke out between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean during the Iraq War crisis. The difference no matter it is de facto or socially constructed lies

between “us” and “them”. A shaped regional identity obscures boundaries among member states, but it erects new border with non-member states. “The production and reproduction of this distinction, at times accentuating cultural difference, at times suggesting enemy images, has historically accentuated the importance of such institutions as literature, newspapers and other media, as well as education.” (Paasi:141, 2009)

There are other symbols that boost the feeling of supranationalism such as Euro and an European army. Some of them are certainly very weak, but its meaning of symbol is great. And some are already part of people’s daily life like Euro.

Supranationalism per se is also a part of or a strong force to push the shaping of regional identity. It realizes more integration is the base of the power of the region and a strong regional identity is the base for more integration.

It is paradoxical that supranationalism is not only existed in the EU level, but also in the member states level. The institutions in the Union level have been regarded as power grabbers in member states. Thus it is not proper for the politicians of the Union to express supranationalism. It is better to be expressed in the member states level. We can find several aspects as evidence although they might conflict each other.

First, it is very common that heads of member state governments or ministers of foreign affairs often speak in the name of Europe. This might add more powers to their expressions, but they haven’t been authorized by the relative decision-making system. They are not real European policies. However, there are no complains about this ambiguity, or this kind of ambiguity is intentionally allowed.

Second, because member states still hold most powers and resources, big member states are becoming more powerful with more regional integration. Small member states could veto some policies, but they are usually not powerful to pursue a big foreign policy without the support of one or more big member states. The Union’s external policies represent more and more big member states’ interests. What small member states can do at most is to use the cleavages among big ones. This case can be shown in the Union’s neighbor policies. When France forcefully pushed the establishment of the Mediterranean Union, with the support from Germany and Swede the East European member states push the Union’s Eastern neighbor policy. It is of course in the interest of the Union, but it is also obvious France or other Southern European member states is lukewarm in this issue.

Big member states are not only powerful in external policies, but also in regional politics. When Serbia fights to keep its country integrated, it finds it is almost impossible to pursue both policies of maintaining its territorial integration and joining the European Union at same time. Small countries are very difficult to master themselves when big states don’t support them.

The greatness of member states and regional supranationalism are not definitely paradoxical. Every big state realizes it is impossible to accomplish its greatness without the integration to the Union.

### **East Asian regionalism and supranationalism**

Very few people will link the regionalism in East Asia with supranationalism. In terms of institutional building, power transfer and effectiveness, the regional building is still very early and naïve.

However, some scholars in East Asia don’t think so. Ravenhill pointed out that “seldom is

scholarly opinion on the effectiveness of an international institution so divided as it is in the case of ASEAN. At one end of the spectrum are those who, at their most caustic, castigate ASEAN for 'making process, not progress', and assert that it is essentially an 'ersatz' institution whose claims to have established a community are nothing more than an 'illusion'. At the other extreme are those who appear to have uncritically accepted the hyperbole of official statements (in some cases these academics are closely associated with governments in the region or officially supported Track Two institutions), and argue that not only has ASEAN created a diplomatic community but laid strong foundations for a security community, and that it has devised its own unique format for inter-state interactions that provides a superior model for regionalism among less developed economies than is offered by 'Western' rules-based legalism." (Ravenhill:219-220, 2009)

However, if we turn back to the international morality of regionalism and the early meaning of supranationalism which are discussed in the previous part of the article, we can East Asian regionalism do have its superiority. First, it serves the original objective of regional integration which means peace in the region; and second, it also brings welfare to the people and states in the region.

Beyond the ontological and epistemological debate, (Ravenhill:220, 2009) some will use more neutral term to identify the regionalism in East Asia. Professor Jayasuriya argued the emerging Asian regionalism could call regulatory regionalism. There are signs that new shoots of regulatory governance, such as the growing networks of central banks and initiatives to combat infectious diseases, are taking root in the region. This emerging regulatory regionalism is evident in a number of initiatives: the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), new forms of financial surveillance, functional policy networks such as the Executives' Meeting of East Asian and Pacific Central Banks (EMEAP), the enhanced role of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the pivotal activities of private actors such as security companies. It is not only finished here, regulatory regionalism also implies the transformation of the Westphalian system. "Much of the emerging regulatory regionalism transforms the political spaces within, and between, states." (Jayasuriya:103, 2010)

Institutional deficit has been regarded as the main shortage of East Asian regionalism. (Friedberg, 1993) However, a lot of scholars and officials and political elites will argue Asian regionalism is different with Europe which is more structured, institutionalized, legalistic and formal. It is more informal and networked. (Kerr, 1994; Katzenstein, 1997; Breslin, 2002; Pempel, 2004)

And, the further truth is that East Asia is not so lack of regional institutions. At the end of 2007 the APT (ASEAN plus Three) process embraced 48 mechanisms for cooperation across 16 areas including economic, financial and monetary affairs, political and security issues, tourism, agriculture, environment, energy and information technology. Moreover, East Asian countries were actively negotiating bilateral and minilateral preferential trading agreements (PTAs). Whereas at the time of the financial crisis from 1997-1999 only one PTA, the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, was in operation in East Asia, a decade later over 40 such arrangements were being implemented, with a similar number being negotiated or under study. (Ravenhill:219, 2009)

Ravenhill further argued that the primary focus of East Asian regionalism has been on trade but, in the wake of financial crises, governments have also engaged in historically unprecedented collaboration in several areas of finance. Multiple factors have driven this new regional engagement. Although the agreements have been primarily economic in their focus, the primary

motivation for many of them has been to secure diplomatic or strategic gains. (Ravenhill, 2009)

In terms of the dichotomy between supranationalism and supranationalism, what is the most remarkable character of East Asian regionalism? It is its openness.

Inward integration and entrenched boundary with outside world is the main accomplishment of supranationalism. It is not existed in East Asia. There are no common boundaries against outside world in the region. It is also not the objective of regional building in East Asia.

Multilayered regionalism is the second character. "In Asia a multitextured and multilayered regional system is emerging that shares four essential elements: the U.S.-led alliance system, an institutionalized normative community, unprecedented U.S.-China cooperation, and complex regional interdependence." (Shambaugh:95, 2004/05) To be more specific you can find ASEAN resides the core of the region. The upper level is three ASEAN Plus One. The number of ASEAN Plus One could increase. Then you have the club of ASEAN Plus Three. The further possibility is ASEAN Plus Six or even more. Further eastern and western you have APEC and ASEM.

The third character could be many concrete functional cooperative mechanisms. They could be found in the most of transnational areas from transportation to endemic diseases.

The last one is consensus. Because there is no decision-making power transferring from states to regional institutions, states in the region don't have to worry about the dictation from big states. Every cooperation or common regulation is in their own interest.

It is still early to argue that the transformation of international relations has been already taken its momentum. However, between two sides of the spectrum East Asia is obviously close to the supranational one instead of supranational one.

Fawn argues scope and identity is necessary for a region. (Fawn:18, 2009) It might be for supranationalism, but not definitely for supranationalism. Scope and identity is good for internal cohesion, but it will enlarge the distance with outsiders. In the case of East Asia, if it constitutes a region, scope is multi-layered meanwhile identity is mostly absent although Asian values have been once talked in 1980s and 1990s. Taking the whole East Asia into consideration, multi-identities exist rather than a common one. So from the perspective of scope and identity, East Asia will only be an open region.

### **Conclusion: Back to the real initial intention**

The article is not intended to argue that European Union has been a super state, neither the regionalism in East Asia or other regions which we don't have space to investigate here is real supranational. The real intention is to remind we shouldn't forget the initial aim of regional building while the world is regionalizing. From the perspective of international morality, a regional super state shouldn't be the eventual or highest aim of regional integration.

However, the recent development in Europe shows supranationalism is getting attractive. The trend can be identified in all aspects in institutional construction, European identity building and foreign policies in both the Union level and member states level. This kind of impulse is also common for other regions. After the end of the Cold War, regions appear to arise as protection against the hegemony of capitalist globalization and great-power politics. (Väyrynen, 2003)

And, when we do comparative regional studies, supranationalization becomes the main indicator to prove the superiority of European integration against other regions. This encourages the trend of supranationalization in Europe and boosts the ambition of other regions to model

European Union. Scholars such as Katzenstein has pointed out the incorrectness of being Eurocentric, but very few make the point from the perspective of international morality.

International morality requires us to transform the Westphalian system which has brewed numerous wars in the past centuries. Supranationalism fits more in this requirement than supernationalism.

Katzenstein argues a world of regions has been and continues to be influenced by globalization and internationalization. However, the prerequisite here is American hegemony power. The U.S. has the power and willing to push regions keeping open. (Katzenstein, 2005) If it declines or becomes inward-looking, a world of closed regional blocs and big powers competing each other is not completely unimaginable. The most integrated regional blocs will develop into a super state which pushes other regions to follow. The slow-down or set-back of globalization is also the force to enhance internal cohesion of regions. (Aggarwal and Koo, 2007b) In the case of East Asia, Katzenstein emphasized the focus role of the U.S.-Japan connections, but the recent development demonstrated Japan is estranging itself with the U.S. and showing more willingness back to East Asian regionalism.

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