

Ways of Understanding Regions: Rhetorics of Interpretation of Asia-Europe Linkages

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Abstract

In recent years in the matter of regions (and the process of regionalization) has received much political, policy and scholarly attention - the scholarly analyses of regions are now very sophisticated - however, in this paper I want to do something rather different - I want to consider the rhetorics of regions - the ways in which the idea figures in diverse discourses - I am concerned with ways of understanding. I will (i) look at the rhetorics of regions - the diverse ways in which the idea can be developed and the ways in which the ideas can be presented in the public sphere; and (ii) thereafter note three diverse approaches to analysing regions. I will (iii) conclude by sketching one possible agenda for research into Europe-Asia linkages

Introduction

There has been a wealth of political, policy and scholarly debate over recent years around the idea of regions - the debate seems to have a double centre, a key conflict, around the ideas of globalization and regionalization.² In these debates there has been much subtle analysis of the logics of globalization and regionalization - economic, social, cultural and political. However, I do not want to add to this debate about 'underlying structures', nor do I want to comment on the actions of this or that agent, rather I want to turn attention to the 'surface' - to look at how the rhetorics of globalization and regionalization work.

A series of casual experiences have prompted this enquiry - in respect of Europe, the reported question of an American supporter at a recent Ryder Cup golf match - 'what is that blue flag with the yellow stars' - the appearance of that same flag on UK car number plates (and the seemingly counter presentation of the flag of St George on car number plates) - in respect of Asia - watching ChanelNewsAsia in a Bangkok hotel and seeing a filler devoted to the ASEAN region/identity - then at Changi airport finding a gift shop devoted to ASEAN themed gifts - all this calls attention to the matter of identity - the ways in which elites/masses make sense of the ordered political worlds they inhabit - there is a wealth of material available on identity - nationalism, ethnicity and personal subjectivities - one distinction made is between popular and elite official nationalisms (France or the USA versus Czarist Russia or Britain) - official nationalisms proffer symbols of identity to their populations - they

might be accepted/rejected in a variety of ways - it is interesting when elite sponsored indicators of identity find expression in routine patterns of life (a golf match, a car registration plate, a news show or a gift shop).

This paper is a preliminary exploration of this issue of rhetorics - focused on regions (in particular ASEAN and the EU) - I will offer a series of comments: (i) vocabularies and audiences - how are regions construed, how do groups use these ideas in argument; (ii) how have ideas of region figured in recent mainstream political debate; and (iii) what might we say about Europe/Asia linkages?

1. Vocabularies and audiences

One might ask - what is interesting here? One can point to a series of complexes of questions: (i) first, the diverse ways in which the notion of region can be construed (as concept and as substantive instances) ; and (ii) second, the multiplicity of ways in which the idea (or idea set) can be used by various agents to make particular sorts of arguments (implying thereafter certain schedules of actions). One might also ask - how might one justify this sort of enquiry - it is lodged in the European tradition of social theorizing - interpretive and critical. I might add that I have recently been re-reading Peter Winch. Winch asserts:

'Our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world ... there is no way of getting outside the concepts in terms of which we think of the world ... The world is for us what is presented through those concepts. This is not to say our concepts may not change; but when they do our concept of the world has changed too'.³

New ways of thinking about identity imply a new way of construing the world and new ways of acting within it.

Regions - families of concepts and multiple substantive instances

So, first, after Wittgenstein, we can think about the diversity of the notion of region where in ordinary language we use the idea in a multiplicity of ways. In an analogous fashion, we can note the diversity of the substantive territories that are tagged as regions in contemporary political, policy and scholarly debate. The notion of region is used in a multiplicity of ways - noting this multiplicity might help us clarify matters in regard to substantive analyses.

The idea of families of concepts comes from Wittgenstein - forms of life and language games are inter-twined (social life is a subtle process, so too are ways of conceptualizing these patterns) - we can open up a little space in respect of the notion of region - we can sketch out a series of meanings -

- > as geography - delineate some area or other on some criteria or other -
 - climate
 - geology
 - topography

- > as human geography - delineate some area or other on some criteria or other -

- livelihood (agricultural, pastoral, urban and etceteras)
 - as racial type (Caucasian, Mongoloid, Negroid, Melanesian and etceteras)
 - as language family (Indo-European, Chinese and etceteras)
- > as patterns of social organisation - delineate some area or other on some criteria or other -
- an economic region (networks of investment, production and trade and etceteras)
 - a social region (networks of social interaction, family, work, leisure and etceteras)
 - a cultural region (ideas/practices)
 - a political region (agents and projects) (pursued below).

Having noted the readily available diversity of the concept we can continue and note the diversity of real world circumstances that are swept up in the term region - for example, the frontmaterial of Amitav Acharaya's book⁴ offers a long list of acronyms all designating regional organisations.

In this paper I am interested in two regions in particular - ASEAN and the European Union - here, one might note that both areas have long histories and awkward contemporary situations (their economic, social, cultural and political dynamics are complex) - we might also note that in both areas political elites are fostering a sense of identity (this is both quite obvious and well developed in the case of the EU, but one can also find it in respect of ASEAN - Acharaya⁵ analyses ASEAN as a self-conscious attempt to create a regional identity.

In brief (simply), in respect of regions we might note that both concepts and substantive claims are complex.

Rhetorics - arguments and audiences (official/popular)

A political region is not a natural given, it is a construct - it is the out-turn of the interacting projects of diverse national agents - one aspect of all this will be the ways in which these agents tell the story of the region - If we look at the rhetorics of region, we can find a multiplicity of arguments addressed to a multiplicity of audiences.

One might speak of a discourse of region - the substantive projects pursued by agents - the focus here is on the elite - but we can draw some distinctions - there are several ways in which the story of a region might be told - different arguments for different audiences - for example:

(i) planning talk (projects/rhetorics)

- maps (lines on maps - sketching out areas - see Nancy Chen⁶)
- plans (schemes for what can be done in sketched areas - for example, 'growth triangles' - see Gipoloux⁷)

(ii) political talk (projects/rhetorics)

- constructing the idea of a region (Acharaya on ASEAN, after Anderson⁸, regions as imagined communities)
- institutional vehicles (the organisations that embody and carry the project/rhetoric)
- popular dissemination (for example, the ASEAN gift shop at Changi, or the ASEAN filler on ChanelNewsAsia - plus the ASEAN reports on news broadcasts (the photo ops)).

(iii) popular talk (rhetorics/prejudices)

- picking out large areas - on some criteria or other - adding in simplified judgements
 - for example, the Muslim or Christian world (one might recall S P Huntington for an upmarket version of this style of stereotyping)

(iv) corporate talk (instrumental/project)

- picking out an area - for example, the European or American market

In general, if we consider the rhetorics of regions then a series of issues could be pursued:

- > the role of official truths (official discourses)
- > the nature of these truths (the metaphors etc)
- > the manner of the construction of these truths (by whom, with what resources and over what sort of time period)
- > how the truths are sustained (institutions etc)
- > the reach of these truths (who listens?)
- > the nature of alternatively located truths (whose, and how promulgated)
- > the extent of the possibility of rationally debating various truths⁹

What might one conclude from these reflections that the familiar claim that regions are social constructs is both true and rather innocent - the whole business looks much more complicated (and interesting).

2. Recent substantive approaches (theories): globalization, regionalization and the idea of complex change

It can be argued that the recent concern for globalization and regionalization is in large measure a reaction, an attempt to find an official truth¹⁰ in the wake of the end of the cold war.¹¹ We can consider these three - cold war, globalization and regionalization as rhetorics.

The rhetoric of cold war

The political apparatus of the cold war was in place - roughly - from 1947 through to 1989/91 (Kolko¹² notes its origins in domestic US party politics) - the cold war can be read as integral to the post-Second World War US political project, the elite drive to construct a global liberal trading regime - the cold war found different expression in Europe, East Asia and the Third World - the cold war came to have an elaborate apparatus - diplomatic, military and political, where, crucially, it functioned as the overarching frame within which global politics were understood - it was an official truth - an agree discourse - a way of ordering activity - a way of seeing a deeper sense in local actions/decisions - in brief, a mix of prospective road map plus ideological comfort blanket¹³ - the end of the cold war in 1989/91 rendered the manichean simplicities of the cold war discourse redundant - they no longer made any sense - the road map and comfort blanket were gone - there were a series of attempts to respond to the new situation - claims to victory, claims to the end of history, claims to a new world (dis)order - claims to a clash of civilizations - claims to the end of the long war¹⁴ - and also, in time, claims to globalization and regionalization.

The rhetoric of globalization

The idea of globalization is deeply unpersuasive - after Hirst and Thompson¹⁵ one might want to speak of a measure of recent internationalization (financial links, trade and travel).

The enthusiastic talk of globalization recalls the arguments of the fifties about 'global convergence' - this 1950s and 1960s package ran together claims about (i) a logic of industrialism (an alternative to talking about capitalism/socialism; (ii) convergence (of first and second worlds upon a model somewhere between the two, that is, mixing market and plan); (iii) modernization (the package extended to the newly decolonized territories); and (iv) the end of ideology - an implausible confection, it disappeared in the context of the chaotic politics of the USA late sixties.

The arguments of the theorists of globalization cannot be read as characterizations of real world process (scholarly analysis), rather they are ordering/legitimizing theorems of a political programme (the (re)assertion of the US drive for a liberal trading sphere¹⁶). The arguments can be read as an attempt to make sense of the post-cold war situation - the production of a new discourse.¹⁷

The rhetoric of regionalization

The idea of regionalization is more plausible - it is possible to run historical structural process centred analyses which illuminate the development of regions¹⁸ - however ideas of regionalization often seem to be understood as alternatives to globalization - the idea of regionalization is also presented as a critique of globalization.

The EU has been characterized in terms of a distinction between open and closed regionalism - the later read negatively, whilst the former is taken to flag a region moving on towards global integration - again, the two ideas (globalization and regionalization) seem to be linked, they appear as a pair within debate.

One might speculate that if talk about globalization fell away talk about regions would continue but in a rather different form (more tentative, less urgent?). In which context we might note that it can be argued that the current interest in the idea of regions has been generated not merely by the collapse of the cold war (which created the demand for a new discourse), but by the practical advances secured by the European Union (definite, ambiguous and open to much interpretive debate - indeed, one might argue that the European Union is not a region, rather it is a polity (or polity-in-aspiration).

The idea of complex change

If the talk about globalization/regionalization is in large measure a reaction to the loss of the comfortable certainties of the discourse of cold war, then one might ask - noting the sometimes frenetic concern with globalization/regionalization - so what else is going on?

We might note that as familiar discourses fall away it is not merely new configurations that can be described - one can also find a clearer appreciation of received intellectual traditions - I would argue that one can speak of a European tradition of social theorizing - the central preoccupation of this tradition is with the

elucidation of the dynamics of complex change - it is here, it seems to me, that we can find a new vocabulary to analyse present circumstances - what we could speak about is complex change.

(i) Complex change as an alternate substantive analysis

A substantive argument would look like this - in the wake of the end of the cold war and its associated discourse political actors, policy makers and scholars were able to look at the contemporary global situation rather more directly than had been the case in recent years (or, indeed, since 1947) - a series of matters caught their attention:

- the collapse of the project of state-socialism in the old Soviet block
- the economic rise of a series of countries in East Asia, including China
- the economic, institutional and (hesitant) political rise of the countries of the European Union (the most obvious experience for Europeans themselves - when the dust of the cold war settled, the project of a united Europe was clearly visible and equally clearly underway - it was equally clearly not a simple copy of the US liberal-market project - in general what was apparent were regions, varieties of capitalism - the debate about regionalization/globalization quickly gathered pace¹⁹).

A formal characterization would look like this - the 1980s and 1990s have seen an episode of relatively rapid complex change - this episode is itself to be lodged within the longer process of ongoing complex change, the ongoing shift to the modern world.

(ii) Complex change - an available idea

The idea of complex change gives us an alternate starting point for analysis - European tradition - preoccupation with change (structures, agents and projects; phases, breaks and configurations; historical development trajectories) - change is given - agents are always reading and reacting - we can track trajectories of territories/countries - we can note the phases in their development - we can note their present patterns (domestic and international) - the approach gives us a tale of intermingled discrete trajectories - a region grows out of this mix.

A series of claims are made here (formal) - social theorists are inhabitants of cultures/traditions - (social science is not like natural science) - these traditions provide the intellectual and moral ground/resources for theorizing - there is nowhere outside tradition to stand (appeals to the received model of natural science are self-deluding) - the classical European tradition of social theorizing is concerned with the critical elucidation of the dynamics of complex change - the strategy is an interpretive-critical approach to grasping those patterns of structural change that enfold the routine patterns of life of social agents (communities, groups and individuals) - the central argument machineries are political-economic, social-institutional and culture-critical analysis - the arguments are deployed within the public sphere - the audience for these analyses is humankind-in-general (more broadly, the central core of the tradition is political analysis, thereafter policy - with scholarship off to one side, so to say).

The approach generates a characteristic way of reading change (substantive preoccupation) - it is preoccupied with complex change - the idea of complex change points to inter-linked change within economies, societies and cultures - the idea points to the necessity of reading these changes from the inside - the idea points to the

uncertainty of outcomes (analyses and destinations) - the idea points to the contingent nature of social arrangements - the approach is centred on a concern for social processes.

(iii) Complex change - the vocabulary unpacked

The approach has a characteristic set of lines of analysis (core vocabulary) - a concern for the detail of social processes (the ineluctable core of social life) - a concern which finds (schematic) practical expression in the analysis of the dialectic of structures, agents and projects - this generates a concern for historical-structural analysis - tracing out the development trajectories of particular territories (countries) - it generates a concern for conjunctures (the ways in which a given territory (country) is located within wider patterns of power) - it generates a concern for phases in development trajectories (the periods of relative stability in structural patterns and agent response) - it generates a concern for disjunctures (breaks in development trajectories, the episodes of complex change - generated either internally - novel political projects - or generated externally - changing circumstances demanding responses) - it generates a concern for the political-projects of elite agents - it generates a concern for the institutional vehicles of such projects - it generates a concern for the business of popular mobilization and the legitimation of elite projects.

The European tradition centered on complex change offers, it seems to me, first, a better substantive analysis (a more complex tale), and second, a more ambiguous practical import - change as comprising matters to be deciphered and ordered (to the extent that they can be).

The key elements of the vocabulary can be unpacked schematically.

(a) Change is given

- > structures are always changing
- > agents are always adjusting
- > projects are always re-balancing (ascendant, stable or failing)

(b) The trajectory of a territory can be tracked - its development trajectory

- > long term, the ongoing shift to the modern world
- > short term, phases (of relative stability) interspersed with breaks (episodes of complex change)
- > contextually - changing configurations

(c) The trajectory will be fluid (full of change)

- > the trajectory of a territory will reveal a series of ways in which it has been located with encompassing patterns of structures
- > the sets of circumstances within which agents necessarily work

(d) Agents must read, react and formulate projects - from the inside

- > agents read and react to enfolding structural circumstances
- > agents read, react and formulate projects
- > agents mobilize their populations in pursuit of projects

> agents legitimize their projects

We can claim that the routine pattern of political life which we can see - its day to day make up - is the out-turn of these processes - we could think of it as talk, institution and understanding: (i) the out-turns find expression in the policy stances of state-regimes, the ideological statements of political groups (talk); (ii) the out-turn finds expression in institutional machineries (institution), and (iii) the out-turn finds expression in routine patterns of understanding (elite and popular) (understanding).

It is with reference to these materials that one can speak of complex change - episodes of complex change are unsettling - actors need a new way of understanding - public actors need a new discourse post-cold war - what we have are two competing discourses - two competing official truths - globalization and (its critique) regionalization.

So, what might one conclude from these remarks on strategies of substantive analysis - that the debate is awkward and ongoing - that the notion of complex change gives us another way of thinking about these matters.

3. Asia Europe Linkages - a sketch of an historical/structural agenda²⁰

In the years following the end of the cold war - with its institutions and official truths - the global situation has been considered anew - matters which had been obscured by events and taken for granted ideas became clear - in particular the project of unification in Europe - so too did the nascent regional integration of East Asia - a series of debates have followed as to the nature of the two areas and their interlinkages - we can contribute by looking to the intermingled historical trajectories of the two regions - and note how the issue of rhetorics finds expression in this particular context.

In schematic terms the interlinkages between these two regions can be grasped in terms of practical economic, social and political links, the links afforded by received sets of ideas and the set of formal mechanisms that presently order the relationship.

(i) Practical links

The practical links of the two regions embrace both patterns of ancient trade (the old Silk Road), the more recent episode of colonial rule (with its characteristic admixture of development and exploitation), and the contemporary pattern of economic, social, cultural and political exchanges.

The depth of the historical interchange between the two regions of Europe and Asia is very significant. A G Frank²¹ has offered a recent persuasive analysis of the displacement of Asia by Europe in the period of the start of the shift to the modern world. The subsequent intermingling of the European and Asian worlds in the long process of the establishment the modern world with which we are familiar (an ongoing business, of course) - the business of the remaking of economies, societies and polities in Europe and Asia in line with the demands of the mercantile and later industrial capitalist systems - reached an apogee in the establishment of the formal colonial systems. At the turn of the twentieth century the Asian world was subject to an externally determined process of extensive systemic change. The route to the

modern world²² for the bulk of the peoples of East Asia has been through the experience of colonialism or quasi-colonialism. The legacies of this period continue down to the present day. In Asia, the patterns of economic development and trade, patterns of law, language and political institutions, and in Europe, in similar ways these links are maintained (commonwealths, sports, languages, arts etc). It is this deep historical experience that provides the background to contemporary exchanges; the further business of cultural exchange, learning and the creation of memory.

The contemporary linkages embrace the economic (trade, investment and financial flows), the social (migration, including labour, and tourism), the cultural (law, language custom and memory) and the political (patterns of informal linkages and loyalties).

The Second World War caused great damage to both Europe and East Asia. In both regions there were extensive military campaigns, large numbers of casualties, enormous social dislocation and severe economic damage. These circumstances did not obtain in the USA, which emerged from the wartime episode as the largest single economy in the global system.²³ However, over the last fifty years or so both regions have engineered economic reconstruction, recovery and success. The global pattern now embraces three macro-regions, North America (essentially the USA), the European Union and East Asia.

It can be argued that each region is economically autonomous, which is to say that economic activity is largely internal to the region and can be sustained on the basis of domestic resources of capital, people and knowledge. Nonetheless, the regions are not autarchic zones and the interlinkages are extensive. Over much of the early post-war period the USA figured as the key economic partner of the market-oriented economies of East Asia. However, as the European and East Asian economies advanced, the interregional linkages also began to develop (or, in historical perspective, recover), and the economic interchange between Europe and East Asia is now large and growing. The patterns of exchange spill over into social, cultural and political linkages, as not merely goods and services move back and forth but also people, whose presence not merely expresses contemporary preoccupations but also recalls and reanimates the cultural residues of those longer historical exchanges.²⁴

(ii) Sets of ideas

Bauman²⁵ speaks of culture as praxis, the realm of practical activity and routine understandings. In the case of Europe-Asia linkages, such practical activity embraces an economic exchange that is drawing in ever greater numbers of people. As Europe-Asia linkages develop and deepen, received images/ideas might be expected to change. The practical interlinkages of the two regions have been read into the ordinary life of both groups; that is, understandings of the other become routine elements of definition of self. The constructs are subtle and pervasive. In the case of Europe/Asia we can point to contemporary links in three areas of social activity: memory (the collective recollection of selective aspects of the past); ignorance (the cognitively demobilizing effects for Europe-Asia discursive links of the long period of US hegemony); and consumption (the realm of material goods, cultural goods and travel/tourism).

The central arena of these discursive constructs is memory, understood as an active social process of the creation of meaning. It is no simple recollection of times past. In

the social world, memory is a subtle and powerful force: it shapes the ways in which individuals and groups understand their everyday routines, and the present which they happen to inhabit. It has been made clear in recent years that memory is not the simple accretion of facts, one piled on top of another; rather it is a fluid contested social construct. This being so, we can speak of the memories carried informally amongst social groups (folk memory), the more explicitly articulated sets of ideas that constitute an agreed national past, and most formally one might speak of the official ideologies of states. The counterpart to memory, of course, is ignorance, the process of collective forgetting (either engineered or merely adventitious, a matter of how things turn out).

In the case of Europe-Asia, the material taken variously into memory looks to the long experience of colonialism, decolonization, and to a lesser extent, cold war. It is these patterns of events that provide the materials to be read into a series of national pasts. The deepening linkages between Europe and Asia will see these pasts interrogated, not merely trans-regionally but, more immediately, intra-regionally, where one immediate concern is likely to be with the legacies of the Second World War and Pacific War. The national past is a subtle construction that serves to link individuals to the ordered political realm. As such, it is a matter of intense concern to state-regimes, and any revisions to a given national past are likely to have not merely domestic but also intraregional and transregional ramifications. It might be noted that there are strong signs of such debates and discussions taking place within Europe alongside the project of the European Union but in East Asia there are various domestic and intra-regional difficulties. Nonetheless, the continuing development of linkages within the regions and between Europe and Asia, with the concomitant movement of peoples and ideas is likely to keep these matters in view within the official, public and private realms.

To this one might add the impact of the long period of US hegemony - in Europe and parts of East Asia - the period saw the promulgation of the cold war doctrines of the free world - and memories of Europe/Asia interlinkages were occluded - finally, one might add the new exchange around consumption - John Clammer has pointed out that Japan is exporting popular culture throughout East Asia and Europe - the process of intermingling is thoroughly tangled.²⁶

(iii) Formal mechanisms

The final area of concern relates to those formal linkages which embrace interstate relations, treaty organisations and consultative fora. These links are extensive (one illustration, the proliferation of organisations - the ever lengthening lists of acronyms). These mechanisms play a significant role not merely in generating interregional linkages but also in establishing regional identities - one such has been ASEM - read by Julie Gilson²⁷ as a vehicle for mutual definition, that is, the construction of identities.

Rhetorics again - the issue of identities

As noted, one aspect of the construction of a region will be the matter of identity - it is clearly one way in which elites can come to understand themselves - and one way in which elites can mobilize their populations and legitimate projects

The notion of political-cultural identity²⁸ points to the ways in which agents locate themselves with reference to the ordered collectivities within which they take themselves to be lodged. One aspect of this matter is the exchanges of individuals with the formal political system - it is here that we find the arena of official truths, delimited-formal ideologies and the like - plus all the apparatus which carries these truths (once a new official truth is in place the elites order their activity in appropriate terms²⁹).

One might note that in the official sphere the identities affirmed are much simpler than in the sphere of routine personal life. Thus cold war thinking revolved around a simplistic manichean distinction between good/bad. The end of the cold war surprised elites in Europe and the USA - US celebration followed - then the dawning realization that the world seen clear of that rhetorical indulgence looked distinctly regional - then the debates began - however, we can forget the deep structures and look at the surface - the claims to regional identities - ASEAN and EU.

(i) ASEAN - a regional identity?

Amitav Acharya makes this argument. He argues that 'region-ness' can be a part of identity: (i) beginning with pre-contact Southeast Asia (mandala, galactic and theatre state forms) - region-ness looks implausible but then came commerce and colonialism, where the former did act to integrate the region and the later cut-through these patterns linking parts of area to metropolitan cores; (ii) the period of decolonization saw an intermingling of continuing links to colonial cores, region-ness understood in terms of pan-Asianism or Third Worldism and the impact of cold war; and (iii) it is only with ASEAN that a local project to build a region begins and it turns out to be successful with most recent expansion presented as 'completing the project'. Acharya comments that the ASEAN identity is in place (but the organisation faces problems in the future as it adjusts to post-cold war situation).

(ii) European Union - a common political identity?

There has been a long debate about the nature of the European Union. The contemporary debate begins in the intellectual territory of international relations - is the EU inter-governmental or supra-national but it is today neither, and many would now regard it as a polity (or polity-in-aspiration); that is, a political community, necessarily with an identity. And in recent years texts have appeared discussing all aspects of the European Union - including identity, thus, for example: Gerard Delanty,³⁰ who argues that the European Union is a phase in the ongoing historical (re)invention of Europe; or Richard Kearney³¹ who finds Europe both in conversation with his contributors and in the distinctive routines of life (two particularly pleasing symbols for Europe - from Jaques Darras, the central square in Brussels with its mix of princely, church and commercial power - from George Steiner, the image of the coffee house - conversation, the public sphere).

We might note one element of this - the notion of region offers a space into which ideas might be projected - the notion of region is forward looking - it is interesting to note that the talk of regions has blossomed in the wake of the end of the cold war - in the case of Europe one element of this project is the business of re-negotiating the continent's relationship with the USA. One could run a series of arguments which revolve around the depth of penetration of US over the fifty odd years of its primacy in Europe.

The USA joined in a European civil war - it occupied the western areas for fifty years - its influence has been extensive - economic, social, cultural and political - but the presence of the USA flows from this specific historical situation - war - that is now over and the simple business of relations of structural power imply US withdrawal (economics are the key - the EU is at least as powerful as the USA) - and in the wake of the end of the cold war the great legitimating political discourse of 'the western alliance' has no purchase).³²

The influence of the USA over the fifty odd years of its occupation ran deep - the anti-communism, the nominal expressive individualism, the consumerism and so on - one element of the re-negotiation seems to be a sloughing-off of these sorts of cultural influences (visible for example, in the wealth of newly produced scholarly literature on Europe - all a reassertion of identities subsumed within the US legitimating project of the Western alliance). We might note that this last noted is the prospective part of the re-negotiation of the relationship with the USA - a rediscovery of what it is to inhabit a particular national frame - to be German, or French or whatever - and a rediscovery of what it is to be European (one might note that the traffic is not all one way - it would seem that redefinition is going on in the USA - the Bush administration has pursued a unilateralist agenda - allies of the Bush administration have attacked the Europeans directly - as for example, disorganised, inward looking, and - more recently - as residually/latently anti-Semitic).

In brief, simply, structural change entails agent response - in the matter of the episode of complex change within the global system following the end of the cold war, the rhetorics of regions have been a part of that elite response - it carries over into identity - a matter for elites and masses (and an issue now debated).

Conclusion

The issue of rhetorics is a small part of the analysis of complex change - it throws some light on the business of the construction identities - an aspect of the process of agent groups locating themselves within the shifting political world - the particular concern has been with regions - here it is clear that vocabularies and audiences are complex - it is also clear that the ways in which the idea of regions has figured in mainstream debate is fluid and contested - finally, in the light of these reflections we can offer the comment that the developing links between the EU and East Asia will form one element of the wider debate about the shape of the global system in the wake of the end of the cold war.

The central preoccupation of the European tradition of social theorizing is with the elucidation of the dynamics of complex change - it is here, it seems to me, that we can find a new vocabulary to analyse present circumstances. We can speak of a diversity of territories - each with its own development trajectory - overall a shift to the modern world - the system is fluid - agents are always reading and reacting to shifting patterns of circumstances - the present pattern is just that, the present pattern - in Europe, a polity in process of formation - in East Asia, a nascent region. - the matter of their interlinkages is not urgent but it does point to a rich and established exchange - within this context we can look at the rhetorics of East Asia and EU regions.

¹ This text is a draft - clearly - comments are welcome (PW Preston, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham, UK email <prestonpw@hotmail.com> Web <www.bham.ac.uk/POLISIS>).

² The former discourse seems to be one key to US policy in the post-cold war period - a way of reaffirming and continuing the long established project of a liberal trading regime - whereas the latter seems to encompass both dissent from that goal and reports on what various agent groups have achieved in recent years (in particular in Europe and East Asia).

³ P Winch 1958 *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*, London, Routledge p.15

⁴ A Acharya 2000 *The Quest for Identity: International Relations of Southeast Asia*, Oxford University Press

⁵ Acharya 2000

⁶ N Chen 2002 'Regionalism in China' in P W Preston and J Haacke eds *Contemporary China: The Dynamics of Change at the Start of the New Millennium*, London, Routledge Curzon

⁷ F Gipouloux ed 1994 *Regional Economic Strategies in Southeast Asia*, Tokyo, Maison Franco-Japonais

⁸ B Anderson 1983 *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso

⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre has written about official ideologies - he had the example of Stalinism in mind - he pointed out that one aspect of an official truth was the extent to which it was amenable to rational criticism - in the case of Stalinism - show trials and executions served to block such rational criticism and once inside the ideology, it all made sense

¹⁰ The idea points to the promulgation by key agents (state machines, governments, policy communities and media) of delimited formal ideological constructs - they are ways of structuring debate - for example, during the cold war we had the notions of 'the West', 'the Free West', or contrariwise, 'totalitarianisms' or 'international communism' - all of these were political rhetorical devices

¹¹ P Hirst and G Thompson 1996 *Globalization in Question*, Cambridge, Polity argue a point similar to this - globalization as a term to bring together a host of otherwise confusing events - they root the occasion of the discourse in the 1980s and 1990s economic changes consequent on the changes in the Bretton Woods system - these arguments I accept, adding only that matters became more acute after 1989/91 when the entire post-Second World war 'free world' package became irrelevant - in other words there was both economic, political and political-cultural confusion

¹² G Kolko 1968 *The Politics of War: US Foreign Policy 1943-45*, New York, Vintage

¹³ This is a soft way of putting it - it points to the public politics - one might also point to the active US project plus the collaboration/acquiescence of 'free world allies' in organising a liberal trading area - recall, Kees van der Pijl or Henk Overbeek or for third world Fred Halliday

¹⁴ A new argument is now available - the idea of the 'long war' - running from 1914 through to 1991 - in this period fascism, communism and parliamentarism competed to seize the political space left by a discredited imperialism - the victor was

parliamentarism - a wonderful confection, compounding it would seem right German historians plus Fukuyama-ish themes - for a student of East Asia it offers an interesting new way of reading America's wars in Asia - (Bobbit/Babbit???)

¹⁵ Hirst and Thompson 1996

¹⁶ In the UK it seems that 'the third way' is the vehicle of political accommodation to this project

¹⁷ The first involved, for example, Clark Kerr or W W Rostow whilst the second involves F Fukuyama plus - on the first Alasdair MacIntyre remarked (in his book *Against the Self Images of the Age*) that the decline in debate did not mean that ideology had gone away rather that the ideologies on offer were not very plausible or interesting - one thinks of the UK and Blair's 'third way'!

¹⁸ For East Asia, see for example, Bernard and also Zysman - in *New Political Economy*

¹⁹ Interestingly, this rather mis-reads the EU - it is not a region, it is a polity in process of formation/institutional articulation (on the nature of the EU see B Rosamund 2000 *Theories of European Integration*, Basingstoke, Palgrave

²⁰ This section is based on P W Preston and J Gilson eds 2001 *The European Union and East Asia*, chapter 12 pp239-241

²¹ A G Frank 1998 *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, University of California Press

²² An idea I derive from from Barrington Moore

²³ One could point to a series of conflicts: 1937-45 Sino-Japanese; 1939-45 European War; 1941-45 Pacific War. Add in the civil wars in China - for East Asia, as for Europe, the period was a catastrophe.

²⁴ One obvious example in the UK - the routine recourse in literature to themes of empire and the lives of its diverse subject populations

²⁵ Z Bauman 1976 *Culture as Praxis*, London, Sage

²⁶ J Clammer 1997 *Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption*, Oxford, Blackwell

²⁷ See chapter in Preston and Gilson eds

²⁸ Idea pursued in P W Preston 1997 *Political/Cultural Identity*, London, Sage

²⁹ See also P W Preston 2002 '9/11: Making Enemies; Some Uncomfortable Lessons for Europe' - ANU 3/4 July

³⁰ G Delanty 1995 *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, London, Macmillan

³¹ R Kearney ed 1992 *Visions of Europe*, Dublin, Wolfhound Press

³² Recall, G Baraclough 1964 *An Introduction to Contemporary History*, Harmondsworth, Penguin - he argued that the withdrawal from European empire was demographically inevitable