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Editor's abstract

In his keynote speech delivered at the 3rd GARNET Annual Conference (Bordeaux, 17-20 September 2008), Amitav Acharya starts by clarifying what he means by the term 'regional worlds'. Regional world subsumes regional order and regional institutions, as well as economic regionalization. Moreover, regional worlds offer sites for ideational and normative contestations, resistance and compromises, involving both states and civil societies which transcend regional boundaries and overlap into other regional and global spaces. A fresh look at the changing forms of regionalism and regional order is warranted. In addressing the above issues, the paper covers three areas. First, it offers a brief analysis of the relationship between hegemony and regional orders. Next, it looks at the main consequences of the emerging post-unipolar era for regional worlds. Finally, the keynote ends with some thoughts on the shape of post-hegemonic regional worlds in Asia and Europe.

Résumé (établi par la rédaction)

Amitav Acharya débute son allocution introductive prononcée à la 3^e conférence annuelle du réseau GARNET (Bordeaux, 17-20 septembre 2008) en se positionnant quant à sa définition des « mondes régionaux ». Les mondes régionaux subsument les ordres régionaux et les institutions régionales, ainsi que la régionalisation économique. Les mondes régionaux offrent de nouveaux espaces pour les contestations idéologiques et normatives et les logiques de résistance et d'engagement impliquant autant les États que les sociétés civiles, et qui transcendent les frontières régionales et débordent sur d'autres espaces régionaux et globaux. Le regard sur les formes changeantes du régionalisme et de l'ordre régional doit être renouvelé. Ces enjeux sont traités ici en trois temps. A. Acharya revient d'abord sur les relations entre hégémonie et ordres régionaux, avant de se pencher sur les principales conséquences de l'émergence d'une ère post-unipolaire. Enfin, l'allocution débouche sur quelques réflexions quant à la configuration des mondes régionaux post-hégémoniques en Asie et en Europe.

Keywords | Mots clés

*International relations, regional worlds, post-hegemonic era, regionalism, Asia, Europe
Relations internationales, mondes régionaux, ère post-hégémonique, régionalisme, Asie, Europe*

1 Keynote Speech, 3rd GARNET Annual Conference, Bordeaux, 17-20 September 2008.

"Allow me to begin by thanking GARNET, its Chief Scientist Richard Higgott, and the visibly and I should say justifiably, proud leader of the local organising committee Professor Daniel Bach for inviting me to deliver this keynote at GARNET's 3rd Annual Conference in the lovely city of Bordeaux. During its brief existence, GARNET has scored many successes, but none more impressive than in ability transform itself into a truly global network of scholars interested in regionalism, regional integration, regional orders and I should add, regional worlds. If in doubt, just look at the conference program, where the European Union and its affairs are only a tiny percentage of the panels, and where Africa rules the waves.

Let me at the outset clarify what I mean by the term 'regional worlds'. This is a term coined by the now defunct Regional World project at the University of Chicago. In that project, regional world was a somewhat post-modern formulation that directed attention to regions that not only self-organize their economic, political and cultural interactions and identity, but also produce their own mental image of other regions and the global space in general. In other words, it was an inside-out, as opposed to an outside-in view of the role of regions in world politics.

While accepting this view of regions, I also use the term regional world to cast a broader net than either regional order, which is largely security-oriented, or regionalization, which has a heavy economic undertone, or regionalism, which carries a serious political and institutionalist bias. Regional world subsumes regional order and regional institutions, as well as economic regionalization. Moreover, regional worlds are not just material constructs. They offer sites for ideational and normative contestations, resistance and compromises, involving both states and civil societies which transcend regional boundaries and overlap into other regional and global spaces. Regional worlds are not autonomous entities, nor purely subsets of global dynamics. They create, absorb and repatriate ideational and material forces that make world politics and order.

This is an opportune time to rethink regional worlds. American hegemony is in decline. The extent of this decline may be debated, and what comes in its place is at yet not clear, as I will comment on later. But what is less contestable is that the end of the so-called 'unipolar moment' is happening and is a likely catalyst of major shifts in the purpose and role of international institutions and order.

The question I am most concerned in this talk is how does it affect regional worlds?

A good deal of recent work on regionalism and regional orders was written against the backdrop of America's post-Cold War ascendancy or assumed a return to multipolarity whose structural consequences could involve heightened regional disorder. But I argue that a fresh look at the changing forms of regionalism and regional order is warranted. One important question is whether the end of US hegemony might open the door to the rise of regional hegemonies such as East Asia under Chinese, South Asia under Indian, the Caucasus and Baltics under Russian, and southern Africa under South African, west Africa under Nigerian and south America under Brazilian, dominance. Would the end of American hegemony be replaced by such distinct or over-lapping regional hegemonies, thereby fulfilling a vision once articulated by the likes of Winston Churchill or Walter Lippmann who thought world order is best attained through regional spheres of influence? Or would the post-American regional orders be essentially non-hegemonic shaped by varying equations between the material and ideational influences among local powers, and the new normative aspirations and institutional arrangements of multilateral actors like the EU and East Asian regional groups? How would such post-hegemonic regional institutions and orders look like and what will be their impact on global order in the coming decades?

In addressing the above issues and questions, I will cover three areas. First, I will offer a brief analysis of the relationship between hegemony and regional orders. Next, I will look at the main consequences

of the emerging post-unipolar era for regional worlds. Finally, I will offer some thoughts on the shape of post-hegemonic regional worlds in Asia and Europe.

Regional worlds have historically a special relationship with the concept and practice of hegemony. Here, I define hegemony as preponderant power, including the ability to shape the economic linkages and foreign and security policy approaches of other nations, with both material (economic and military) and ideational influence. The special relationship between hegemony and regional worlds can be summed up in four dimensions.

First, hegemons define the boundaries of regions and even name them. There is plenty of evidence of this. Consider the term Southeast Asia, a region I am most familiar with. The term Southeast Asia before Lord Louis Mountbatten of Britain, the regional hegemon of East of Suez, was appointed to head a newly formed military cluster called the Southeast Asia Command established by the Allied Powers to fight and defeat the Japanese in the Second World War. John Fairbank and Edwin Reischauer called East Asia the Chinese culture area. European colonialism not only delineated national boundaries, but also, and just as artificially, regional ones.

Second, all the three major dimensions of regional worlds, namely regional institutions, regionalization, and regional order, have been shaped by hegemonic powers, especially American hegemony. In terms of institutions, this was especially true of what some of us have called hegemonic regionalism, comprising Cold War alliances such as NATO, Warsaw Pact, Southeast Asian Treaty Organization and Central Treaty Organization. Admittedly such hegemonic regionalism has been a fragile entity, only NATO survives today, but a heavy political cost to the prospects for stable peace in Europe. More on NATO later. Even more general purpose regional institutions and informal or weakly institutionalised regionalisms have been shaped by hegemonic power, a claim made most recently in Peter Katzens-

tein's recent book *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*. In this book, Katzenstein argues that The Organization of American States, the Commonwealth of Independent (or should I say not so independent) States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are other obvious examples of regionally hegemonic influence, and realist interpretations claim that without the US security umbrella, the European Union would not have achieved the level of integration that it has managed so far.

US hegemony also shaped regionalization, the other element of regional worlds, including regional production structures. Katzenstein's world of regions is made by the twin and complementary processes of internationalization and regionalization. In his framework, Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia figure as 'core states' of the American imperium in advancing regionalization. And Japanese aid and investment as been a major spur for East Asia's economic growth. Similarly, regional order in both East Asia and Europe, is attributed to the availability of regional collective goods provide by American hegemony, such as protection against communist threat during the Cold War and against strategic uncertainty since its end, and development opportunities tied to access to the US market.

It is only in the ideational domain that US hegemony is said to have been less important in shaping regional worlds. Norms and identities that shape regional worlds have been largely local in origin, even though they have been inflected with American popular culture. In many cases, regional identities and regionally conceived norms and values have clashed with American hegemony, resulting in contestations and resistance and offering alternative pathways to regional institution- and order-building. But even there, neoliberal economic ideational clusters such as those associated with the Washington consensus, have characterized regionalization around the world, and it will be especially interesting if they survive the end of the unipolar moment.

With this brief background of the close nexus between American

hegemony and regional worlds, let me now turn to the potential consequences of the end of unipolarity. While the relative decline of the US can no longer be in doubt, what is more debatable is what sort of order is replacing the unipolar moment. Most people had earlier assumed that it would be multipolarity and debated whether multipolarity would prove more or less destabilising.

More recently, think-tankers and public intellectuals from both sides of the Atlantic have come up with some fashionable terms: 'apolar' (Niall Ferguson), 'non-polar' (Richard Haas), 'post-American' (Fareed Zakaria). The Economist magazine proposes 'neo-polar'. I will give you two days to think about it and you may all come up with your own terms of how to describe the emerging or future world order. Maybe GARNET could organise a competition among its members to come up with a term, which I suppose would be far more interesting than the recent formulations public intellectuals have come up with.

This is because the formulations apolar, nonpolar or neopolar all miss a crucial point: the regional context of world politics and security. Despite its recent move in Georgia, Russia is, and likely to remain, essentially a regional hegemon, with its true coercive power confined to the Caucasus, Baltics and perhaps central Asia. The same can be said of China and India, as well as Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria. None of them, nor the EU, will become a true global power in the sense the US and the USSR were during the Cold War, or the European powers such as Spain, Britain and France were (to varying degrees) when they controlled vast colonial empires. The EU is also essentially a regional actor, its influence beyond Europe is marginal except perhaps in a normative/civilian sense. The fact is that no great power in the coming world will have the ability to have its say over distant regions because of the countervailing local influence of the regionally-dominant powers. The United States may be an exception, but even here, it's hard to see the US decisively shaping the strategic and economic future of Asia without cooperation from China, Japan or India, or over the strong objection of any of them.

Hence, if one must stick to the language of polarity, the coming world

is better described as one of 'regiopolarity', rather than multipolarity or non-polarity or neo-polarity. As for me, I have come up with the following: We and our descendants are likely to live (and die) in a polycentric, multiversal, regiopolar world order.

What sort of regional worlds would define the post-unipolar era? Will we see a perceptible decline in the ability of the US to shape regional orders, institutions and production structures around the world? In East Asia, regional production and division-of-labour is increasingly centred around China, which challenges a crucial assumption of Katzenstein's Japanocentric core state formulation. In Europe, the growing demand for an autonomous or semi-autonomous defence identity may be another, albeit limited, example, as I shall explain latter. In East Asia, the US ability to shape regional discourses and institutions, never all that strong, has suffered further blows with the advent of the East Asia community idea that excludes the US. The fault-line that emerged between Germany under Shroeder and France under Chirac on the one had and the Bush White House on the other over Iraq is another example of this above trend, although regime change in these two key European countries has reversed the transatlantic feud to a considerable extent.

But perhaps the most significant questions about regional worlds in the post-unipolar era is this: it will open space for the rise of regional hegemonies. In his *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer argues that great powers, including rising or aspiring great powers seek to achieve regional hegemony, a goal more necessary and attainable than global hegemony. To Mearsheimer, China is the obvious candidate for such regional hegemony in the post-Cold War period. But Mearsheimer, who once warned that post-Cold War multipolar Europe would go 'back to the future', would have been delighted by the obliging aggression committed by Putin's Russia against Georgia. Can we take the Russian attack on Georgia as taken by some as providing a foretaste of the approaching era of regional hegemonies? I should pause here and clarify that I do not imply that the presence

of a dominant power in a region is a negative factor in regional world management. Such powers can play constructive roles. South African mediation in Zimbabwe, although belated and under international pressure, would hopefully contribute to positive change in that country and the region. China is increasingly recognised as a responsible and constructive regional player in Asia. The positives of the role of Japan, India and China in the economic and security affairs of the Asian regional world outweighs the negatives.

But certain types of regional hegemony are bad for regional world management and recent events involving NATO expansion and Russia seem to fit. Certainly, NATO's revival in response to Georgia raises the prospects for competing regional worlds emerging in Europe. It certainly casts shadow over the idea of a non-hegemonic regional world in Europe that some had hoped for. It does so in two ways, by stimulating bandwagoning with Russia by some of its weaker neighbours and thereby cementing a Russian sphere of influence, and more importantly, by reviving US interest and hence power over Europe. The EU is not without influence and I am not writing it off as a shaper of regional order. Sarkozy's energetic if belated diplomacy in getting Russian troops out of Georgia is something East Asian leaders should certainly try to emulate. Present Asian institutions and their leaders are apt to forsake not only preventive diplomacy, but also crisis and conflict management in the manner of the EU presidency.

To be sure, the extent of the Russian challenge to Europe's regional world can be overstated. Russia is ghost of the Soviet Union. It faces a declining population, with some estimates projecting a fall from 141 million today to below 100 million by 2050. (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20268426/>). Its combined GDP is a fraction of that of the West. It has no expansionist ideology, but a narrow nationalism. Some may even argue that if the European Union can have its own 'neighbourhood policy', why not Russia?

Can the EU's growing integration and conscious pursuit of a common foreign and defence policy, counter the return of European security to NATO's hegemonic umbrella? Lately, it has become fashionable to speak of the EU as a normative power, or a normative superpower challenging American hegemony. But this view faces a major contradiction. This has to do with the fact that the vast majority of EU members are also part of NATO, which is nobody's idea of a civilian power. NATO may not be a "European" regional institution in the strict sense of the term, but it's an integral part of Europe's regional security and institutional architecture and hence part of the European regional world. 19 of NATO's 26 members belong to the EU. Only six of EU's 27 member countries are not members of NATO. Speaking the language of normative power while sticking dearly to an expanding NATO allows EU members to have best of both the worlds: speak moralpolitik on certain type of world order issues such as human security and peace-building, while practicing realpolitik on matters of critical national and regional security. The fact that the current EU foreign and defence policy Chief, Javier Solana, is also a former secretary-general of NATO, only compounds this perception, at least in the minds of non-Europeans such as myself. This contradiction and perceptions of double standards, is likely to grow as the EU rethinks its approach to Russia in the wake of Georgia in concert with NATO. Unless there is meaningful separation between the foreign policy and security strategies between EU and NATO, the talk of EU as a moral superpower will lack conviction, at least to outsiders.

Among these outsiders are Asian analysts and policymakers. There is an interesting, and for some people like Kishore Mahbubani, even delicious, irony in recent alarms in the West about Russia in the European regional world. At the dawn of the post-Cold War, Russia seemed much less of a concern to the international community than China was to East Asia and the world. Yet, a decade and half later, China seems to be much better integrated into Asian regional world than Russia is to European regional world. The Russian

attack on Georgia will give boundless pleasure to NATO protagonists. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO had searched for a mission to justify its continued existence: from peace-building to counter-terrorism, but none is likely to revitalise it than a resurgent and imagined Russian threat to democratic Europe.

Let me elaborate. The Russian invasion of Georgia, following conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, shows that peace in Europe can be overstated, while stability in Asia can be under-stated. In Europe, the expansion of NATO's turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, triggering a Soviet threat that liberals and constructivists had banished from their collective mental horizon, but which neo-realists had fervently hoped for. The Georgian crisis also says something about EU and OSCE, which despite the elaborate toolkit of confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, early warning mechanisms, high representatives, etc., failed to prevent what may turn out to be the most serious breach of international order since the US invasion of Iraq, or even the entire post-Cold War period. By contrast, Asia's supposedly weak and ineffectual talk shops, by discouraging an American-led containment of China, by making multilateralism palatable to Beijing and using the resulting Sino-US restraint to soften the region's balance of power geopolitics, have prevented a Georgia in the region.

This suggests, if further evidence was really necessary, the need to rethink our Eurocentric assumptions about what makes for effective regionalism and in what ways do regional institutions contribute to security and wellbeing. Despite being consistently disparaged by Western scholars for their failure to emulate European and Atlantic institutions, Asia's regional institutions have arguably done a better job of dealing with a rising China than Europe's in dealing with Russia. IR scholars and European and American Policy makers who lauded NATO expansion for its role in diffusing liberal-democratic norms and identity to East European states, and legitimised the US's determined effort to deny the alliance the decent burial it

certainly deserved in post-Cold War Europe, forgot George Kennan's warning that its expansion would be "a policy error of historic importance". Asia, which had long eschewed the NATO option by rejecting all forms of multilateral collective defense, avoided any similar provocation to China. NATO expansion directly contradicted OSCE's doctrine of common security, or security with, rather than against, the adversary. Asians regionalists, whose doctrine of cooperative was borrowed from OSCE, actually imbibed it and followed it in spirit, if not in its legalistic form (CBMs, high representatives for minorities, etc) by offering a genuine hand of engagement to China. The provocation of NATO expansion aside, the OSCE's military and political intrusiveness might have aggravated Russian regime insecurity to an extent that ARF or other ASEAN-based regional institutions could not do to Chinese regime insecurity.

What about regional hegemony in Asia itself? Some may argue that East Asia may turn out to be more of a hegemonic regional world than Europe. This is in keeping with the conventional historical view of East Asia as a region where hegemony is more 'normal' than Europe, which invented Westphalian decentralisation and where balance of power politics is a more natural tendency. Recent writings suggest that the end of the Cold War in Europe would mean the continent going 'back to a future' of multipolar rivalry and competitive balancing, while the rise of China would mean East Asia going back to its own future in the form of a return to Sinocentrism. A closer examination of the two scenarios is worthwhile.

Two scenarios of a regional hegemony in Asia have emerged. The first comes from Mearsheimer, a structural realist. Mearsheimer believes that China, as great powers more generally, is likely to pursue a regional hegemony, and seek to establish a sphere of influence over its immediate neighbours, which might conceivably include Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Some Western analysts already see evidence of China seeking such hegemony, arguing that only a thin line separates China's recent charm offensive and a Chinese Monroe Doctrine.

In contrast to the neorealist scenario of a coercive Asian hegemony under China, the other scenario of hegemonic Asia is a benign one. This perspective assumes that East Asia is a region where Confucian hierarchy in the domestic sphere and regional hierarchy in the manner of the Chinese tributary system go hand in hand. David Kang has argued that historically, when China was powerful and wealthy, Asia was stable and prosperous. Now that China is rising again, Asia as a region will also attain greater peace and prosperity by bandwagoning with China. This will create a hierarchical regional order, a milder and more benign form of hegemony, that once prevailed in East Asia under the tributary system.

It is hard to find evidence to support either view. There is little evidence that Chinese is pursuing regional hegemony, a sphere of influence of coercive or benign kind. There is no evidence of a Chinese Monroe Doctrine in Asia that seeks to exclude the United States. On the contrary, China accepts US military presence in the region as a fact of life. Chinese power projection beyond its immediate South China Sea zone is limited. Unlike the United States in the heydays of the Monroe Doctrine, China not only accept non-intervention, but may well be its single biggest exponent in the contemporary international system. This also negates the benign hierarchy scenario proposed by Kang. The classical hierarchy with China as the Middle Kingdom occurred in an era when Westphalian sovereignty with its emphasis on non-interference and sovereign equality of states had not been invented. Many Asian states, whether larger players like Japan and India or middle powers such as Vietnam and South Korea, are not bandwagoning with China, as David Kang contends. Moreover, in the classical tributary system, there was no United States of America.

To sum up, Asia will not take the path of Europe in either having an expanding hegemonic alliance like NATO, nor would it necessarily fulfil Mearsheimer's projections about Chinese expansionism and its pursuit of an Asian Monroe Doctrine. This adds further com-

plexity to the growing debate and literature on comparing Europe and Asia as two regional worlds. It not only challenges those who use Europe's past instability as a guide for Asia's future, but also those who see Europe's institutions as a model of Asia and other parts of the world. Hordes of European scholars and millions, if not billions of EU funding notwithstanding, it is increasingly clear that this is never going to be the true. The EU is too distinctive in its own history and arguably too successful in its project of supranational integration to be a model for anyone but for its own future generations who stand to lose the historical memory of past national rivalries. In other parts of the world, where neo-Westphalianism trumps post-Westphalianism, the EU can at best serve as an inspiration, rather than a model. Recognizing and critically such variations in geopolitical destinies and institutional trajectories and practices in regional worlds in the non-European world may be the best message that GARNET's annual conferences and other events can pass to the international community and scholars and policymakers as we make the uncertain transition to a post-unipolar world. And I wish GARNET all success in this effort. Thank you very for your time."