

**REGIONAL DIVISION OF ORIENS (ASIA AND AFRICA) AND
ITS INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (IR)
PROBLEMATIQUE**

VOSKRESSENSKI, Alexei D.*
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One of the most pointed questions in today's debate in Political Science and International Relations is the correlation between globalization, regionalization and the transformation of sovereignty as the main concept of the national-state. We need to address the following pointed questions:

1. Does globalization comprise of regionalization and fragmentation of the world? What is the correspondence between these phenomena?
2. Does Globalization mean the loss or the transformation of sovereignty?
3. If there is the process of transformation of sovereignty (and not of the loss of it) does that mean the strengthening of the process of globalization or of the regionalization?
4. How do these processes correspond to the problem of the influence of the space on global politics?
5. What are the practical considerations out of all these theoretical questions?

In connection to this debate it is necessary to mention that what is called area, region, place [ground], territory, space, landscape – i.e. 'locus', is important for Social Science because it helps to set boundaries within which commonalities can be investigated with manageable loss of competence in practical knowledge that can influence, refine or change the very concepts used by the disciplines. Macro- and, to a certain extent, Meso-Regions corresponds to civilizations defined in Humanities and sometimes also in Social Science. This 'new' Area Studies is now called 'Comprehensive Regional Studies', 'Global Regional Studies', 'World Regional Studies', 'International Regional Studies', 'Civilizational Area Studies' depending on which disciplinary field it originates from, or simply 'Regional Studies' as an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary

* D. Pol. Sc., Ph. D. in History (Institute of the Far Eastern Studies), Ph. D. in Government Studies (U. of Manchester), Professor and Head, Department of Asian and African Studies, MGIMO-University.

field, marking the necessity of the new program of research, characterised by deep knowledge of area and region with the fusion of theory and models derived from disciplinary studies (Voskressenski, 2005). As Norman Palmer conveniently wrote “the emerging new regionalism ...embraces linkages between as well as within states as within regions, and with both a revived nationalism and a growing transnationalism” (Palmer, 1991: 3). That corresponds to the arguments of Arif Dirlik, according to whom: The very conceptualisation of globalism is revealed upon closer examination to be a kind of spaceless and timeless operation, which rather than render it vacuous as a concept, ironically bolsters its pretensions to a new kind of universalism, rendering it a point of departure for all other spatialisations. It is not very surprising that anything less than the global should be mobilised in juxtaposition to it as its other, confounding the possibility of profound differences among the spatial, the local and the place-based. Thus it becomes possible to speak of the spatial, the local and the space-based in the same breath, forgetting that while the local derives its meaning from the global, spatial itself derives its meaning from the parallel from globality, and stands in the same oppositional relationship to the place-based as the global does to the local. (**Globalisation**, 1999: 41)

In this connection, the necessity of analysing regional and subregional subsystems of international relations is connected with the new trends of modern international relations-globalisation, regionalization and fragmentation connected to the uneven transformation of the world because of globalisation and, thus, to the necessity of the dialogue among civilizations that can harmonize our turbulent and fragile world (Voskressenski, 2002).

When the world was analysed in the categories of bipolar interaction or in Wallersteinian categories of interaction of two centres and two types of peripheries, the presence of regional and subregional subsystems did not cause doubts and discussions, as it was subordinated to the logic of a global problematique and the global division into two worlds (two hemispheres: East\West, of which the East was not the Orient [Asia] but former Soviet Union and its satellite states). The regional and civilizational problematique was suppressed by the bipolar partitioning of the world. After the disintegration of the bipolar structure of relations the situation became more complex and many pointed questions were raised by researchers, to which there are no unequivocal or quite certain answers (Voskressenski 2002, among others).

These questions are: if the bipolar system has disappeared, what has come instead of it? If we yet can not definitely tell what has come instead of the bipolar system, maybe it will be correct to assert, that the world has broken up into compact territories (‘locuses’) – economic/political regions and subregions (mega and meso-areas or regional security complexes in another terminology), and so there are no universal\general laws of functioning of the international system, and there is only a combination of mega-regional and subregional levels

of civilizational interaction? More concrete and specific questions have arisen in this connection: is Southern Asia, and also Central Asia to some extent, a region (i.e. whether it makes a distinct regional subsystem or not) or maybe it is a subregion (subregional subsystem)? Do these regions have Civilizational meanings? What are the relations between Asia Pacific as a region and East, South, Northeast and Southeast Asia, not in a geographical sense, but from the point of view of the formation of a regional and subregional subsystem (supercomplex and subcomplex) of international relations? How do they correspond to other regional subsystems and Civilizations (world-systems) (Sanderson 1995)? What are the relationship and the ratio between globalisation and regionalization and whether the process of regionalization reflects the fact that the planetary international system has broken up into regional (subregional) subsystems, each of which actually forms an independent system? Or are all these are only subsystems, i.e. we need 'simply' update certain universal/general laws to political/geographical, historical/economic and cultural/civilizational specifics/particularities?

There are no unequivocal answers to the majority of these questions today. It is clear however, that system analysis (the systems theory) with a combination of space approaches gives the researcher a rich theoretical and methodological toolkit for uncovering adequate answers to many of these uneasy questions. I try here to analyse current different methodological approaches within the general systemic approach in order to attest their analytical capabilities to incorporate the notion of region into social science and IR analysis.

A common procedure in all these approaches is to figure out a planetary system of international relations which corresponds to the idea of global civilization, i.e. some self-sufficient system of integrity allowing us to describe and to analyse international relations and global interaction in general. In the 1990s some theorists, however, started to talk about the necessity of differentiating between general and specific/particular (i.e. regional or area) problems of international relations. Some tried the fusion of regional analysis with civilizational concepts. This idea was connected with the increasing globalisation as a current dominant international trend, on the one hand, and regionalization and regional fragmentation, on the other. Some theorists of international relations have started to point out that a number of international interactions have certain autonomy. They have paid attention to the fact that there are specific laws/rules/norms connected to the particularity/specificity (first of all geographical, territorial-economic, civilizational, cultural) in the process of functioning of different parts of the system, i.e. of subsystems. As conveniently explained by Palmer (1991, 6) the concept of regional systems, or subsystems, supercomplex and subcomplex in Buzan and Wæver's terminology (2003) is particularly useful for political analysis. These more narrow (less universal and less general) laws/rules/norms/settings envision the functioning of the regional and subregional subsystems, i.e. they describe a set of specific

international interactions with the understanding of the universal\general rules, but on another basis – common geographical, cultural, civilizational belongings (i.e. on the basis of the concrete ‘locus’).

It is clear that ‘region’ is an ambiguous term, however it is less ambiguous and more satisfactory when compared to ‘area’ because it implicitly corresponds to the notion of ‘boundaries’. The idea of area goes back to the idea of cultural areas or Kulturkreis put forward by Frobenious, Ratzel, Shurtz and Graebner (Macdonald, 2004). The general idea was to divide the world into ecological zones matching cultural and social traits; however, later the world was subdivided into areas without explicit reference to any rigorously defined cultural areas. Though geographical identity is one essential characteristic of a ‘region’ there are others that are equally important: social and civilizational\cultural homogeneity, shared political attitudes and behaviour, political interdependence in the form of shared institutional membership, economic interdependence (Palmer, 1991: 7), that enable a notion of a ‘region’ to be much more rigorously defined as a social science construction. However, the concrete definition of the regions and subregions (supercomplex and subcomplex) is dependent on the above-mentioned complexities of the region’s characteristics.

The macro-division of the world in regional subsystems (subcomplexes, meso-areas, civilizational areas) and regions proceeds from the definition of international political region as a territorial-economic and national-cultural complex (based on a specific uniformity of geographical, natural, economic, social-historical, national-cultural, civilizational conditions serving as the basis for its allocation) of a regional set of phenomena of international life, incorporated into itself by the general structure of the system and its logic, in such a manner that this logic and the historical-geographical co-ordinates of its existence are cross-pollinated and interdependent.

If to proceed mainly from geographical parameters, it is possible to allocate geographical macro-regions-Asia, Africa, America, Europe, Australia and Oceania; meso-regions (middle regions): Central, Northern, Southern America, Europe, Australia and Oceania, Northeast, Southeast, Southern, Western and Central Asia, Northern (Arabian) Africa and Africa to the south of Sahara, and also – regions (subregions) – with division of America into Central, Northern and Southern, Europe into Northern, East, Western, Central and Southern, and Western, or more precisely – South-western, Asia-into Near and Far East. However, the concept of “Near and Middle East” is wider, than Southwest Asia, as it includes not only sixteen states of Southwest Asia, but also Egypt and Sudan (Voskressenski, 2002), (Belokrenitskii, 1999).

Proceeding from historical-cultural parameters, it is possible to allocate historical-cultural regions: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), and Indian (India, Nepal, Butan, Sri-Lanka), Indo-Iranian (Pakistan,

Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan), Turkic, Arabian, Russian\Slavic (Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia or, in other interpretations twelve countries of the CIS), European (consisting of thirteen countries). North American, Latin American, African regions are united by the appropriate regional integrity of such parameters as geopolitical traditions of belonging to a specific state formation process, current trend to integration (interstate integrational interaction), ethnolinguistic, ethnocultural or ethno-psychological unity. Cultural-religious (civilizational) macroregions usually are: Confucian-Buddhist, Indus, Muslim, Orthodox, Western-Christian, Latin American, African, and Pacific.

It is clear, that the separate countries can be divided into different regions within two or even three different regional clusters according to various parameters. Besides, other regions are constructed in view of cultural-geographical parameters of the states, which can be under construction on the basis of a principle of economic cooperation and joint system of security/common geopolitical considerations, and/or “fastened” by historical conflicts, some disputable problems, traditional enmity, i.e. there are some other parameters besides geographical, geopolitical, civilizational and economic that can ensure the possible division of the world into geoeconomic and geopolitical regions. In addition some ‘historical’ regions recently acquired new ‘geoeconomic’ features.

According to all these reasons, today it is possible to speak about Pan-American (Interamerican), European, African, Asian regional subsystems of the international relations which have also macro-civilizational meaning and about international political regions divided appropriate to these subsystems of international relations, together with some more or less precisely determined subregional subsystems – Western/Central-European (as a part of European), North-American and South-American (or Latin American) as parts of Pan-American (Inter-American), Near (Arabic and North African) East, Middle East (integrating into the Greater Middle East), East Asia, Southern Asia, Northeast and Southeast Asia (integrating into the Greater Eastern Asia) and Asian-Pacific region (as parts of Asian [sub]systems of the international relations), in which Near and Middle East and Asia-Pacific Region are grouped into subregional subsystems. These principles of division of the world also have formed the basis for appropriate allocation of the most important international political and also, to some extent, to civilizational regions with their own regional norms and settings.

In explaining the process of interactions in the Oriental (Asian and also African) world a complex analytical model is needed to avoid an interpretivist bias because no ‘professional convention’ exists in the world on how to interpret the history. Three types of new regional approaches within the structuralist regional paradigm were elaborated during the last ten years that can address the enormous changes in the world. These three types of approaches analyse from three different disciplinary angles (cultural, that of the

international relations and that of international political economy) the same set of regional and civilizational problems. The culturalist-structuralist model is elaborated but was applied only to Western Eurasian regional and inter-regional interaction (Strezhneva, 1999). The multi-factor equilibrium approach is an attempt to elaborate a political science (international relations) model and to explain (or recreate) the history of interaction and current relationships using this model as a framework for analysis (Voskressenski, 2003; 2004). There are several explanations of Eastern Eurasian trends based on this approach that have already appeared in the literature (Voskressenski, 2003; 2005; 2006 among others). The Meso-mega area dynamics approach is an attempt to create a model based on the analysis primarily of the international political economy phenomena with the incorporation of other (primarily, regional-political) phenomena (Ieda, 2004). The interpretation of historical developments based on this model will probably appear in the future.

All these new structuralist approaches are within both regional and disciplinary studies and the new program of research, which is characterised by deep knowledge of area and region with the fusion of theory and complex models derived from disciplinary studies. All of them, thought structural and thus belonging to political science and IR by their nature can incorporate the notion of region and give explanations including civilizational interacting. The multi-factor equilibrium approach (already) and the meso-mega area dynamics approach (not yet) can be tested using an historical mode of analysis. However, an historical type of analysis also predisposes the appearance of the interpretivist bias. To what extent that type of testing will be prone to ideological colourings will become apparent in the future work in the field.

What could be the influence of regionalization problematique on the international relations and political Science and what are the intellectual consequences of such a division of the world? It is the following:

1. Principles of division of the world have formed the basis for allocation of the appropriate most important international political regions with their own regional norms and laws.
2. Within this theoretical system of coordinate there is a rational answer to the question of regional/cultural/civilizational specifics.
3. There is a powerful challenge to existing IR theories.
4. The meaning of these regional theories is underestimated in non-Western as well as in the Western world.
5. It is underestimated in traditional Asian Studies.
6. This theoretical framework is not necessarily anti-Western but it is not currently a mainstream.
7. It is very difficult to work within this new field because of the lack of

financing because it is not mainstream and because it is considered anti-Western in the West.

8. There could be very interesting theoretical outcomes of this approach:
- Theory of regional level international relations.
 - Regional studies as multidisciplinary field.

I think that the system of arguments elaborated here can help address unilateralism and pro-Western as well as anti-Western bias within rational system of arguments, it is extremely important for Asian Studies as giving them new/modernised theoretical bases which consists of the fusion of the IR, political science and sociology methodology based on system approach with space (geographic), civilizational (religious, cultural, philosophical, linguistic), political, economic specifics, that could help address such pointed questions as ethnic and religious conflicts and interactions within and between macroregions, models of political systems and macroregional models of democracy, regionalization and regionalism, interactions between macroregions, including regional and inter-regional balance of power, regional models of leadership and a lot of other pointed questions that are without adequate attention because they do not fit within current IR which are set without attention to theories of region and region-level relations.

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