

Chapter 1  
“Do as I do”:  
The Global Politics of China’s  
Regionalization

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Can it be justly claimed that a nation which has maintained a regularly administered government over hundreds of millions of human beings for thousands of years... is uncivilized? It must be admitted, I think that the point of civilization is not the one on which the question of international law, in its application to China, should turn.

David Dudley Field (1884, 452–453)

Do as I do! Signal left and turn right.

Deng Xiaoping (quoted in Shenzhen 2004)

**Introduction: Engaging China in international relations**

This volume grapples with the reality of new regionalisms. Usually, the conversation on comparative regionalisms is hijacked by the “exception” of the EU, just as discussions of Asian regionalisms rarely steps outside ASEAN’s lodestone. In this respect, the engagement with different regionalisms remains befuddled because of the expectation of a legible, institutionalized behavior, not *shared practices*. In contrast to such institution-seeking analyses, this volume asserts that the proliferation of different regionalisms reflects the globalizing contestation of the very idea of what the pattern of international politics should look like and how it should be practiced. Thus, if democracy has indeed become “the fundamental standard of political legitimacy in the current era” (Held 1998, 11), it is to be expected that the (con)current “democratization” of international relations would enunciate a cacophony of alternative (and non-Western) voices promoting alternative visions of the “appropriate” forms of legitimation and authority in global life. Moreover, as Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (2007, 288) argue “if we are to improve IRT [International Relations Theory] as a whole, the Western IRT needs to be challenged not just from within, but also from outside the West.” In other words, the study of comparative regionalisms (to paraphrase Hedley Bull’s and Adam Watson’s well-known adage) reveals the expansion of international *societies*.

The pervasiveness of China’s regionalization, therefore, draws attention to that fact that for the first time in a very long time there is a need to engage the politics

of regionalization as a process driven by a non-Western actor and underpinned by a non-Western understanding of international relations. The starting point for this investigation is not what one calls regionalization, but how it is *done*. Such a premise offers the possibility of a nuanced interpretation of “what it is we want to know in world affairs” (Pettman 2000, 10) by focusing on China’s region-building practices. Thus, it would appear that 125 years later, the hunch of the American legal reformer David Dudley Field (in the epigraph) about the conceptualization of China’s position in world affairs still holds true. Thus, the debates on whether China is going to comply with established (Western) standards of international behavior or adopt a conflictual stance reveal that “international law [is still] regarded as a tool owned and used by the West to exploit the rest, including China” (Chan 1999, 175). Although more nuanced than the racialized sensibilities of its Victorian modality, the prism of the current “clash of civilizations” still informs Western perceptions of Beijing’s global agency. In this respect, just like in Field’s day, there are two problematic issues.

The first one relates to the application of Western standards for gauging the international behavior of a non-Western actor. The difficulty in this regard is not so much the unfamiliarity and opaqueness of China’s decision-making, but the recognition of the *sameness* of the *other*. For at least 200 years, the rivalry over structural power in world politics has been “the great game” of Western actors. Thus, the so-called Oriental/Third World/developing nations have been the plaything of Western whims—either as mere observers (at best) or as victims (at worst). In both instances, however, *agency* (especially, global agency) was not a feature of their international identity. Instead they were assumed to be passive recipients of the Western gaze/rule/aid as scripted by the templates of colonialism, Cold War bipolarity, and democratization. Yet, the practices of “rising China” have challenged this perception. Beijing’s increasing economic and political clout demonstrates that a non-Western actor is equally skilled and willing to engage in the global playground.

In this respect, the acknowledgement of the *sameness* of China’s international agency implies reciprocity and a treatment of Beijing as an equal member of (and partner in) the international society. Following Don Puchala (1997, 129) such a recognition would involve going beyond the relevant *cultural* frontiers framing the interaction between “the West” and the “non-West” as

those states and societies culturally outside Europe and its cultural enclaves in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. A more complex, and also a more accurate definition of the non-Western world would include within the non-West the unassimilated immigrant enclaves of Africans, Asians, Middle Easterners, Caribbeans, and Latins found within Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. In the same way, the West by this definition would include the bourgeois strata and other “Westernized” or comprador groups within non-Western societies. Accordingly, interactions between the non-

West and the West may take place between Western and non Western states and societies as well as *within* both Western and non-Western states and societies.

Indicative of such a Western unease about China’s rise to a “peer-status” is Anthony Lane’s quip during the 2008 Beijing Olympics: “What kind of society is it that can afford to make patterns out of its own people?” (Lane 2008, 28). This explicit *othering* of China reflects the difficulties provoked by, what Andre Gunter Frank calls, the need to “reOrient” conventional conceptions of global life. According to him, the difficulty emanates from the “divisive ideological diatribes” that proclaim “the exceptional, indeed exceptionalist, diversity that allegedly distinguishes ‘the West’ from ‘the rest’.” The assertion is that “following the end of ‘the evil empire’,” “Western alarm bells are sounding against the new bogeyman, Islam—and then China... the ‘yellow peril’” (Frank 1998, 358–359). Some have even forecasted that in the climate of the “war on terror,” the strategy would be “Iraq first, Iran, and China next” (Plesch 2002).

In this respect, the second problematic issue prompted by China’s rise is *the lack of language* to both articulate and engage the novelty of such a development. Thus, the contemporary positioning of China in the analysis of world politics confirms the observation that there is “no non-Western International Relations theory” (Acharya and Buzan 2007). As Inayatullah and Blaney demonstrate, the Eurocentric language of the discipline has led the study of global affairs into the rut of “crude and caricatured understanding of... the varying forms of life of ‘non-Western peoples’.” Consequently, difference is “almost preconsciously treated as simultaneous with disorder, fear, suspicion, and condescension” (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 123). It is in this respect, that the “fog-of-change” (Ramo 2004, 8) befuddles the language of explanation and understanding of international politics—i.e., “students of world politics have not been socialized into being curious about the “non-West” but have been encouraged to explain away non-Western dynamics by superimposing Western categories” (Bilgin 2008, 11).

Many commentators have thus asserted that the “IR conversation” is in a desperate need of democratization—i.e., it needs to abandon not only the “hegemony of its singular worldview,” but also acknowledge the ““multiple worlds’ that crowd our lives [through] the various, *entwined* legacies of worldviews, traditions, practices, institutions, and norms that have interwoven peoples, societies, and civilizations for millennia, making world politics what it is” (Chen et al. 2009, 744). Failing short, might make the West increasingly irrelevant to a “world-in-the-making of hegemony without a hegemon” (Beeson 2009, 111). Some have even argued that this is already happening in the “world without the West:”

The disagreements among China hawks, China doves, and China “realists” are not really about logic, they are about how much hedging is enough and how much is too much... Rising powers are not bound to this set of strategic choices. The wishful mythology of a single and flattening world is convenient for Americans to believe, but wrongheaded. The technologies of globalization

empower connectivity, but do not indicate equal terms of connection. The post-Cold War period is not a story of gradual modernization and progressive integration that connects the world uniformly to the benefit of all. Instead, it enables a distinct alternative to conflict and assimilation, whereby rising powers are increasingly “routing around” the West. By preferentially deepening their own ties amongst themselves, and in so doing loosening relatively the ties that bind them to the international system centered in the West, rising powers are building an alternative system of international politics whose endpoint is neither conflict, nor assimilation with the West. It is to make the West... increasingly irrelevant. (Barma et al. 2007, 23).

The claim then is that it is not too far-fetched to conceive of the knowledge economy of the non-West—India’s IT sector, Brazil’s rocket delivery systems, and China’s space, software, and hardware technology—as constituting an independent universe of intellectual exchange (Ying 2002, 116). Furthermore, the China-Russia relationship within the SCO-framework represents one of the most visible financial and trade relations “outside the sphere of the dollar” (Campbell 2008, 96). Recognizing the need to “reOrient” the study and language of international relations so that they can account for the distinct agency of non-Western actors, this volume’s investigation of the global politics of China’s regionalization intends to develop nuanced contexts for the “more flexible, more dynamics, and more evolutionary” understanding of “a new world” marked by “ambiguities, ambivalence, and uncertainty” (Chen 1998, xiv). The focus in particular is whether China’s regionalization instances the dynamics of “routing around” the West in a bid to project an “alternative system of international politics.” In other words, the query is whether (and to what extent) China’s regionalization strategies demonstrate the patterns of global politics of a “world without the West.”

The claim here is that what is distinct about the “new physics of power and development” (Ramo 2004, 2) reshaping the understanding and explanation of international order is China’s distinct predilection towards organizing its rhetorical and policy engagement with other states on a regional basis. Hence while China continues to maintain an “omni-directional (*zhoubian*)” set of foreign policy approaches (Lanteigne 2005, 2), it is the regionalizing aspect of its international agency that indicates China’s transformative potential in international life. The dynamics of regionalization, thereby, reveal the enhanced inclusivity, flexibility and political pluralism of Beijing’s foreign policy formulation. This research focus acknowledges that while it is the dynamics of globalization that tend to render legible the pervasive complexity of global life to popular, policy, and scholarly imaginations, contemporary international politics “just as easily [can] be described as the ‘era of regionalism’” (Wunderlich 2008, 1). As some commentators ascertain “globalization is a multi-layered process and the ‘new regionalism’ is a prism through which local and global forces interact” (Hentz and Boas 2003, 12).

This volume investigates whether there is an emerging pattern in global politics which is distinguished by the matrix of China’s regionalization. The query

then is whether China’s nascent practices of regionalization suggest a foreign policy outreach, whereby Beijing’s agency initiates idiosyncratic discourses and practices through which global neighborhoods begin to perceive themselves as distinct regional actors (Acharya 2007; Beeson 2005; Shaw and Söderbaum 2003). For instance, the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Central Asia, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum, the China-Pacific Islands Forum, etc. have become the more prominent confirmation of this tendency. Such regional arrangements have both bolstered China’s political, commercial, and military profile in those areas. At the same time, Beijing’s proclamation of “new strategic partnerships” in Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Asia-Pacific further validate the centrality of *regionalization* to China’s global outreach.

In this respect, this volume maps the shifting perspectives on China’s international agency. Such an investigation disrupts the perception of a singular and uniform (new) regionalism through a parallel assessment of the international political economy of China’s interactions with different parts of the world. The following sections contextualize China’s experience within the broader field on regionalization. The case of China instances the peculiar “fragmentation and division” in the literature on new regionalism (Fawn 2009, 10; Shaw and Söderbaum 2003, 3). In an attempt to suture this fissure, this volume’s investigation of China’s impact on the regionalization of global politics is premised on a novel methodological synergy between two complementary analytical approaches—the literature on *communities of practice* and the framework of *international socialization*.

In other words, rather than being “shanghaied” by force or trickery, the contention is that states are gradually being socialized into Beijing’s worldview by *doing things together* with China. China’s regionalization, thereby, is conceptualized as premised on practices rather than explicit norms of appropriateness. As would be explained, this does not mean that Beijing does have a “normative power” in global life, but that this power is premised on engaging other states in the practice of doing together—i.e., *they do as China does*. This pattern is distinct from the regionalization practiced by Western actors, which is premised on the conditionality of “*do as I say, not as I do*.” The following section outlines the main features of this proposition. Then the chapter proceeds with an outline of the structure of the volume and the central claims of the individual contributions.

### **Contextualizing China’s regionalization**

Thinking about the contexts of international relations in Asia gravitates easily towards the realms of fiction and fantasy. This seems to be particularly the case when grappling with the nascent international agency of China—an actor, whose conceptualization in world politics often straddles the invention/reality divide.

Beijing's enhanced confidence and (arguably) ability to fashion international relations has been most pronounced in its regionalization strategies.

In the literature on the topic, regionalism is starting to be perceived as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Laursen 2003; Wunderlich 2008). After World War II, the inevitability of absorbing states and regions into the American model of neoliberal capitalism seemed triumphantly vindicated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ensuing "end of history," however, began to unsettle such a perception. Regionalism, in particular, appeared to encourage and sustain regional variations (if not outright contestations) of the dominant model. More importantly—regionalism has provided a framework for extending alternative models of order. This need not necessarily be non-Western. For instance, the EU has probably provided the most conspicuous alternative to the US-template (Kavalski 2008a).

The study of regionalism, therefore, draws attention to the increased prominence of the *actorness* of regional organizations. As Teló (2007, 3) points out, the rise of new regionalism both reflects and attests to the emergence of a "'post-hegemonic' international system." Thus, ever since the beginning of decolonization, the regional level has been gaining enhanced autonomy and prominence in global politics (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 3). It is the condition of post-hegemony, which has provided the facilitating environment for the proliferation of regional agency in global life. Such dynamics define regionalism as "the urge for a regionalist order, either in a particular geographic area or as a type of world order" (Fawn 2009, 13). From a Western point of view (and experience), the region-building implicit in this process can contribute to the political liberalization and even democratization of a region (Harders and Legrenzi 2008).

Regionalization in this regard is represented as an "empirical trend depicting a multidimensional process of intra-regional change that occurs simultaneously at several levels of social, political, and economic interaction," which is motivated by a desire for "more formal regulatory mechanism and regional governance" (Wunderlich 2008, 3). More specifically, the notion of regionalization identifies "the growth of economic interdependence within a given geographical area" (Ravenhill 2007, 174). The mutually reinforcing dynamics of regionalism and regionalization are expected to escalate into a path-dependent trend of regional integration that pools the sovereignty of participating states (Kavalski 2008a).

The practices of China's regionalization, however, challenge such perceptions. As a result, many commentators have begun to acknowledge that regionalism in non-Western locales is used as an instrument for establishing, augmenting, and reinforcing the Westphalian parameters of regional politics (Wunderlich 2008, 160). Thus, rather than an intermediary level between domestic and international politics, China's regionalization can be interpreted as a tool in the government's foreign policy kit, which is not intent on creating an arrangement or an environment for sharing sovereignty, but rescuing national authority from the stress of multiple globalizations. Consequently, China's regionalization "proposes to manage international politics through a neo-Westphalian synthesis comprised of hard-shell

states that bargain with each other about the terms of their external relationships, but staunchly respect the rights of each other to order its own society, politics, and culture without external interference” (Barma et al. 2007, 25).

The investigative issue, therefore, remains whether such regionalization contributes to the transformation/solidification of state functions and practices. The contributions included in this volume offer contextual responses to this inquiry with vivid illustrations from China’s diverse regional initiatives. Prior to that, however, the following section offers a brief elaboration of the templates of China’s regionalization.

### *China’s regionalization*

In the beginning of the 1990s, commentators were noting down with puzzlement that China is a “regional power without a regional policy” (Yu 2005, 228). Merely a decade later, however, Beijing’s entanglement in different regional arrangements across the globe were provoking similar dismay. Some have interpreted this as an indication of “the global triumph of Western values and methods” (McKay 2009, 123); others, on the contrary, are convinced that this is going to produce an unwelcome change of international relations—one that is akin to the 1930s and 1940s patterns of “malevolent regionalism” (Mearsheimer 2001, 402; Teló 2007, 2).

As already indicated such a bifurcation reflects the “one worldview” of traditional International Relations theory. This volume, thereby, points to the need to acknowledge a wide variety of new regionalisms. In particular, it critiques mainstream theories of regionalism for their unwillingness to account for nonrepresentational practices, which remain “desituated” and “disembedded” from the epistemological roots of Western thinking in the Enlightenment and the concomitant scientific revolution (Pouliot 2008, 260; Kavalski 2007a, 435). In its own way, therefore, this volume assesses the relevance of the existing literature on regionalization for explaining and understanding China’s (non-Western) international interactions with different areas of the world. This is an important endeavor even only because China conceptualizes itself as “a rapidly developing *non-Western* power” (Wang 2005, 673).

Thus, before delving into the roots of China’s regionalization, it is important to qualify that the contributions to this volume demonstrate that there is little conceptual tension between the notions of regionalism and multilateralism in China’s foreign policy thinking. Instead, both terms are used interchangeably—as stylistic variations. As Zhang Xinhua (2000, 63) explains, in the purview of Chinese commentators regional organizations represent “the most substantial manifestation of multilateralism.” For instance, the Foreign Minister Li Zhoxing (2005) insisted that China’s regional initiatives are in response to a “call for globalized cooperation.” Such caveat is important for understanding China’s regionalization through communities of practice.

*Roots of China's regionalization* In 1993, the then Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng proclaimed that the “active development of beneficial and friendly relations with neighboring states, in striving for a peaceful and tranquil surrounding environment is an important aspect of our country’s foreign affairs work” (cited in Chung 2009, 111). This statement outlines the underpinnings of China’s current regionalization strategies. The emphasis on building “prosperous neighborhoods” is a key feature of China’s positioning as a good [global] neighbor” (Ramo 2004, 52).

Such propositions do not detract from conventional understandings of regionalism, according to which its prominence derives from the analytical and normative commitment to development (Fawn 2009, 9). Yet, commentators note that in China such emphasis on development has acquired a particular significance due to the idiosyncrasies of its own experience of state-building. On the one hand, the “Good Neighbor Policy (*mulin youhao zhengce*)” has always been part of China’s foreign policy—initially, towards the communist-leaning countries of the Third World and—post-Mao—to non-communist developing nations as well (Chung 2009, 107–108). This experience appears to have provoked a realization that “for a single country it is difficult to resist the control and domination by big powers” (Xinhua 2000, 63). In this respect, regionalization has been promulgated as a strategy for countering the attempts to restrain China’s rise through demands for “westernization” and “transformation” (Wang 2005, 672; Foot 2006, 77).

On the other hand, the end of the Cold War seems to have convinced China that the UN (despite its achievements) is no longer capable of safeguarding peace and security. Instead, it is regional organizations that are increasingly more likely to offer relevant responses to “complex and intricate contradictions” (Xinhua 2000, 63). Regionalization then offers viable ways for ensuring China’s development through “chaos-management” (Ramo 2004, 12). In other words, regional arrangements offer frameworks through which Beijing does not impose control over particular issues, but through the practice of regional interactions it adapts to their complexity (and in the process develops resilience). As it would be explained shortly, defining regions through the practices of participating actors allows for the unprejudiced encounter and engagement with the unpredictability of regionalization in different contexts. That is, “if we accept that diplomatic and multilateral practices *evolve* over time for reasons other than those designed intentionally, then it follows that some aspects of the continuity of practice are *not* designed” (Borrie 2005, 16). Contingency, in other words, is an integral part of the *practices* of regionalization.

Thirdly, regionalization appears to have offered China a convincing platform for allaying the fears of other actors about its proactive international behavior. In this respect, China’s increasing willingness to get enmeshed in multilateral arrangements indicates Beijing’s readiness to “make friends in every quarter, trade goods, learn from each others and enjoy respectful interactions (*guang jiao pengyou, hutong youwu, bici xuexi, li shang wanglai*)” (Barmé 2009, 81). The contention is that bilateral relations are no longer sufficient for ensuring China’s

influence and interests (Chung 2009, 113). Regionalization, thereby, can be interpreted as a strategy for acquiring “the power to avoid conflict,” which in the words of Jiang Zemin helps to “build trust, decrease trouble, develop cooperation, and avoid confrontation (*zengjia xinren, jianshao mafan, fazhan hezuo, bu gao duikang*)” (Ramo 2004, 39). Furthermore, Beijing’s emphasis on “peaceful coexistence” reveals an inkling that “various civilizations and social institutions” in the world should “co-exist” and “co-develop” (Yin 2003, 7).

Fourthly, the practices of Beijing’s regionalization reflect a specific relation between domestic and international affairs in China. Thus, while the huge spillover effects of China’s economic growth have enhanced its international stature, Beijing “still [feels] uncomfortable internationally” (Lampton 2007, 8). Such characterizations convey China’s self-identification as an “excluded” or “isolated” state (Deng 2005, 55). This perception reflects that in the post-Cold War world, China is a “deviant” state, representing one of “the last bastions of communism” (Zhang 2001b, 247). The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests appear to have increased Beijing’s preoccupation with regime security. Hence, like its now defunct comrades in the former Soviet Bloc (Kavalski and Zolkos 2008), the CCP took the road of *national communism*. As a phrase which described certain phenomena in what used to be the communist world, the term “national communism” denoted “a reaction against the national communism of the Soviet Union” (Hammond 1955). More broadly, it indicates the legitimization of communist practices through an amalgamation of the language of Marxism with the discourses of nationalism (Kavalski 2009a).

Initiated by Deng Xiaoping’s call for socialism “with Chinese characteristics,” the PRC’s brand of national communism “apparently confers some kind of authority or legitimacy within China and serves to protect users from personal attacks that may arise during political campaigns or struggles” (Chan 1999, 140). Thus, by stoking up nationalist fervor, the CCP now “carries the burden of living up to people’s demands” (Roy 2009, 28). In this context, China’s regionalization strategies respond to this “peculiar sense of insecurity”—“Beijing’s quest for regime preservation and stability has transformed the CCP’s political predicament to a peculiar but national sense of insecurity and frustration in the economically rapidly growing China” (Wang 2005, 674). The preoccupation with “international status,” therefore, reflects a situation in which the “Party must gain face for China before international society to earn the support of nationalist audiences at home” (Gries 2005, 112). In this respect—just like in (Eastern) Europe—nationalistic discourses have provided a powerful platform for popular mobilization, which competes with the government-provided explanations of reality and, equally importantly, reinterprets an individual’s position *vis-à-vis* the existing institutions of state and party (see Chapter 5).

These four dynamics underpin the current practices of China’s regionalization. As a foreign policy approach, it emerges out of idiosyncratic push-and-pull factors that shape Beijing’s attempt to position itself as a responsible and reliable international actor. At the same time, Chinese policy-makers are increasingly

forced to reckon with strong national feelings at home as their legitimacy (and grip on power) appears intimately connected to nationalist sentiments. In this respect, the global politics of China's regionalization present an intriguing intersection of the discursive memory of the past with the contexts and tasks of the present. From this perspective, Beijing's outreach to different regions around the world illustrates the attempt to "complete the painful search for a coherent national identity" (Gries 2005, 106). Such a failure to elicit "a set of values that unites the Chinese population domestically" (Li 2008, 305) is crucial to understanding not only the roots of China's regionalization, but also its "logic of practicality" (Pouliot 2008).

*Chinese communities of practice* Both Western and Chinese forms of regionalism are underpinned by a desire for stability and security. Regionalization in this regard reflects the dynamics of such "chaos-management." However, what distinguishes Western and Chinese regionalization strategies is the former's territorial ramification of regions and the latter's emphasis on practices. Chih-yu Shih (1996, 107) maintains that the "Chinese could easily give up territory they had taken during victory and refuse to surrender even having lost a great deal of land. Security in territorial terms is an intrinsically Western notion." Such a distinction further compounds the issues associated with defining the borders of a region. The complexity involved appears to reiterate the utility of the term *regionness* as a signifier of particular regionalizing dynamics (Fawn 2009, 13). In particular, the relationship between *regionness* and *actorness* (Hettne 2005, 556) reveals that regions are defined by the practices of a regional community.

In this respect, regionalization identifies a pattern of relations indicative of a *community of practice*. The term designates a group of actors who over a period of time share in some set of either formal or informal social practices geared toward some common purpose (Borrie 2005, 15). The claim then is that regardless of however loose or amorphous they are, communities of practice fashion negotiated outcomes in the process of doing things together. Consequently, the boundaries of regions are determined by the practices that constitute them (Adler and Greve 2009, 59). Within such a dynamic interactive environment, socialization takes place in the context of dispositions constituted within a community of practice (Adler 2008, 204). The practices of international socialization indicate an actor's ability to "shape what can be 'normal' in international life" (Manners 2002). The contention here is that the regionalizing aspect of China's international outreach reveals not only Beijing's socializing propensity, but also its practice by a non-Western actor. In this respect, China's foreign policy practices aim not only at educating states about what Beijing perceives as appropriate behavior, but also at their adoption of the Chinese "perspectives toward themselves." It is in this setting that China has promoted itself as a model of a state that "'behaves' in a certain way domestically, and in some particular way internationally" (Shih 1990, 21–25).

As suggested, communities of practice are not about good or bad practices, but about what actors happen to do together. Not surprisingly, then, the practices

of China’s regionalization are framed in the discourses of “harmony in diversity” (Yan 2006). Pouliot (2008, 269) observes that the problem for conventional international relations discourses posed by practical logics emanates from the fact that they “cannot readily be verbalized or explicated by the agents themselves because practice does not account for its own production and reproduction.” Brantly Womack, however, indicates that China’s regionalization is premised on the perception that “all actors, international or individual, are located actors. They move within a framework of possible actions that is given meaning by their history, their resources and their judgment of those with whom they are interacting.” Beijing’s region-building attitude suggests that in an “asymmetric world, reciprocity requires respect.”

In a world of equals, each is in a similar situation, and each can respond in kind to the actions of others. With symmetry, respect for others can be reduced to the Golden Rule, because in fact other can do to you what you do to them. In a world of asymmetric relationships, respect—appreciation for the situation and autonomy of the other—requires special attention. Respect for the weaker side is not simply noblesse oblige or an act of generosity of the stronger. The weaker can only afford to be deferential to the strong when they feel that their identity and boundaries will be respected. (Womack 2008, 294–297)

In this context, China’s regionalization appears structured by the practices of development, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, and respect for their national sovereignty but the particular avatars of those logics in different global locales is not only context-specific, but also “inarticulate” (Pouliot 2008, 269). Strategically then, regionalization is about the practices that become prevalent in a particular region. The contributions to Part II of the volume emphasize China’s diffusion of its practices to global locales in an attempt to construct communities willing to do things together with Beijing. Although implicitly normative (in the sense of purveying certain rules and values of appropriateness), such regionalization is not conditional (i.e., explicitly premised on norms). Such regionalization reflects Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 injunction that “practice is the sole criterion for testing truth” (quoted in Chan 1999, 162). This is one of the distinguishing features of Chinese regionalization. Thus, unlike Western region-building strategies which prioritize compliance with specific, externally-promoted norms (i.e., “*do as I say, not as I do*”), Beijing stresses the practice of doing together (i.e., “*do as I do*”).

China’s regionalizing relations, therefore, reflect a foreign policy premised on “respect for the partner” (Womack 2008, 296). Such logic of regionalization indicates the emergence of “layers of practical regions” (Adler and Greve 2009, 81) extending simultaneously over the same geographic area. What transpires in this context is a “balance-of-practices”—i.e., what and whose practices dominate the institutionalization of a regional system of governance substitutes the traditional balance-of-power (Adler 2008, 203). The appearance of an identifiable Chinese regionalization strategy reflects the *overlap* between “two distinct systems of

rule, two different ways of conceiving power, two sets of practices—which may be distinguished, not only analytically, but also normatively—and two different ways of imagining space” (Adler and Greve 2009, 62). In other words, the overlap between different notions of regionalization—i.e., Western and non-Western—should not be perceived as an analytical impossibility, but as an indication of the empirical reality of global complexity (Kavalski 2007a; 2008b). With this observation in mind, this volume offers a viable articulation of the global politics of China’s regionalization from within the purview of a still predominantly Western International Relations theory.

### **Structure of the book**

As the following chapters demonstrate, the encounter with the politics of China’s regionalization strategies reveals the complex mosaic of global life. Nevertheless, it is necessary to qualify that no volume, not even one as encompassing as this one, can be completely comprehensive in its coverage of China’s outreach to different areas of the world. In fact, the provision of an exhaustive inventory of the international agency of Beijing—even if it were possible—is not the objective of this collection. Instead, the intention is to provide a set of cases, perspectives, challenges, and priorities that offer thoughtful suggestions for the study of China’s external relations.

In this respect, while all contributions are responding to a similar set of probing queries, the methodological makeup of their responses is not constrained by the imposition of any particular paradigmatic perspective for the parallel assessment of comparative regionalisms. Instead the volume is framed by a “consistent” eclectic approach. Its eclecticism is informed by (i) the understanding that the disciplinary paradigms of international relations are commensurate and can be mediated; and (ii) the suggestion that, on the one hand, rationalist theories are more compelling when they are combined with ideational insights into effects of norms and identities, while, on the other hand, the explanatory value of constructivist propositions is expanded by a focus on power (Kavalski 2008a, 5). Such an eclectic approach attempts to overcome the problems emanating from “the inadequate number of interlocutors from the ‘non-West’ who could have informed their ‘Western’ counterparts about ways of thinking and doing world politics in their own locale” (Bilgin 2008, 12). In other words, eclecticism allows for the rigorous study of the endogenous and exogenous factors for regionalism without prejudicing the analytical encounter with its non-Western forms.

The volume is divided into two parts. Part I overviews the historical, analytical and comparative contexts of the global politics of China’s regionalization. The intention here is to sketch the broader framework within which China’s region-building strategy is positioned. In line with the eclectic methodology of the volume, the contributors to Part I do not attempt a homogenizing read of Beijing’s foreign policy making, but rather aim to highlight the diverse contexts that inform

its external strategies. In this respect, the first three chapters of Part I offer distinct historical renditions of China’s regionalization.

In Chapter 2, Feng Zhang engages the notion and practices of “Tianxia” in an attempt to illuminate the patterns of Beijing’s international affairs. The investigation probes the relevance of historical comparisons to contemporary world politics. In this respect, Feng Zhang argues that if used with caution, the experience of the past can provide relevant frameworks for uncovering the dynamics of socialization. With a similar intellectual vigor, Sheng Ding, in Chapter 3, queries whether China’s historical traditions impact its current foreign policy practice. Ding’s conclusion is that there is little in the “international” relations of ancient China that would amount to “historical roots of regionalization.” Bearing this in mind, Sheng Ding undertakes a detailed analysis of the weaknesses and limitations of China’s regionalization as presaged by its relations with the Global South. In Chapter 4, therefore, Jeremy Paltiel interrogates “what kind of practices” animate China’s commitment to regionalism. For him, historical parallels offer useful frameworks for understanding the kind of foreign policy practice rather than establishing actual lineages to prior experience. Thus, Paltiel proposes that China’s regionalization can be read as a “neo-Mencian” foreign policy founded on “the capacity to exercise moral leadership.”

The next two chapters enmesh China’s regionalization strategies within the frameworks of its domestic and foreign policy making. On the one hand, in Chapter 5, Jing-dong Yuan makes an innovative investigation of how Chinese nationalism impacts on the country’s region-building strategies. The inside/outside divide has been a central feature of the study of new regionalism. Jing-dong Yuan emphasizes that it has a special relevance to the case of China as well. In particular, the increasing centrality of identity-politics—especially, for popular legitimation—offers provocative insights into Beijing’s regionalism. On the other hand, in Chapter 6, Enyu Zhang positions Beijing’s regionalization within the broad spectrum of the PRC’s foreign policy goals, choices, and tools. Such an account makes a poignant observation on the relationship between Chinese strategic culture and Chinese foreign policy making. According to Enyu Zhang, the practice of regionalization reveals Beijing’s realization that “an inward-looking and self-sealed country is most likely to fall behind the rest of the world, regardless of its previous grandeur.”

The last two chapters of Part I engage in a parallel assessment of China’s regionalization with that of the USA and the EU. Such comparative analyses offer prescient glimpses into the similarities and differences between China’s and the West’s two dominant models of regionalization. In Chapter 7, Greg Anderson points to the peculiar historical reticence with which both the USA and China have approached economic integration with their neighbors and the world. His analysis demonstrates that despite the rhetoric and the politicization, when stripped down to their analytical barebones, both the USA’s and the PRC’s regionalization strategies are strikingly similar. As Anderson aptly puts it, their underlying logic is “just say no to institutions.” In Chapter 8, David Scott compares the regionalization

strategies of the EU and China. He also emphasizes that there are a number of important parallels in the ways in which both Brussels and Beijing engage other regions. However, for Scott, it is the differences that matter—and all of them relate to the distinct (if not contradictory) normative motivations of both actors.

Thus, the historical, analytical, and comparative contextualization of the global politics of China's regionalization provided in Part I corroborates the perception that the "regional momentum has proved unstoppable, constantly extending into new and diverse domains" (Fawcett 2004, 431). What is "new" and "diverse" about Beijing's contribution to the "regional momentum" is the confrontation not only with the agency of non-Western "great powers," but also with the patterns of non-Western international relations and orders (Deng 2008, 294). Part II of this volume elaborates on these dynamics by providing insights from several instances of China's regionalization.

Beijing's enhanced confidence in and ability to fashion international relations reflects the transformations and the transformative potential of China's external agency in Asia (Kavalski forthcoming). Therefore, the first three chapters of Part II examine China's Asian regionalizations. In Chapter 9, Yongjin Zhang traces the frameworks of Beijing's involvement in East Asia. As the analysis points out, a conventional political economy approach offers little conclusive evidence on the conflict/cooperation propensity of new regionalisms. Instead, Yongjin Zhang cogently demarcates that the practical trajectories of East Asian regionalism will be "increasingly subjected to China's policy considerations, strategic choices, and willingness to cooperate." According to him, this dynamic indicates not just a complex array of actors, but also the "path-dependent" nature of the evolving regionalization of East Asia.

Next, in Chapter 9, Ralph Pettman deftly outlines the intricacies of China's regionalization of Southeast Asia. He engages with the dominant analytical perspectives promoted for the explanation and understanding of China's agency in the region. In particular, Pettman's analysis demonstrates the futility of bifurcating "either... or"-type of studies of the PRC's external affairs. In this respect, Chapter 9 reinforces Andrew Hurrell's (2007, 143) proposition that "the most important lessons of the past decade of regionalist debates have been... that it is not helpful to draw an overly sharp distinction between power-based accounts of the region on the one hand and institutional and identity-based accounts on the other."

Chapter 11 brings the discussion of China's regionalization to the experience of Central Asia. Thinking about the patterns of international affairs in the region gravitates easily to the clichéd imagery of a "great game," "land of discord," "pulpit of the world," "global chessboard," etc. (Kavalski 2009b). In this context, Stephen Aris interrogates Beijing's construction of a formal regional institution—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This unique region-building experience has not only constructed an environment "both open to Chinese participation and conducive to Beijing's interests," but also has set the standard for the PRC's other regionalizations.

This explicitly Asian experience of China’s regionalization informs Beijing’s interactions with other areas of the world. As Carrie Liu Currier and Manoj Dorraj demonstrate, China’s expanding regional influence in the Middle East requires “contextual understanding of the complex dynamics of global politics.” Thus, it is through the attentive and careful observation of the patterns of world affairs that Chapter 12 illuminates Beijing’s adept positioning in the Middle East. Similar logic informs Emilian Kavalski’s overview of China’s regionalization of Africa. Chapter 13 demonstrates that while China’s meteoric rise provokes anxiety, fear, and suspicion in the West, in the non-West, Beijing is increasingly starting to be perceived as an appealing alternative (if not an outright model).

Likewise, in Chapter 14, Julie M. Bunck uncovers the evolving military dynamic of China’s regionalization initiatives in Latin America. The repertoire of Beijing’s practices in the region reveals that the PRC’s growing presence in Latin America is perceived as “establishing more balance, less dependency, and alternative model of community.” Chapter 15 takes this conceptualization to the experience of China’s nascent agency in the South Pacific. Jian Yang emphasizes that while of recent provenance, Beijing’s influence in the region has grown exponentially. Yang’s erudite analysis draws the conclusion that the PRC’s involvement in the South Pacific regionalism can be “an opportunity not only for the Pacific Islands’ countries, but also for Australia and New Zealand.”

Thus, the analyses of Part II confirm that regionalization is framed not so much by the “*environmental fitness*” of its institutional arrangements, but by its “*meaning investment*”—i.e., “the endowment of meanings of identity and interests with authority and naturalness of the kind that may only come with practice” (Adler 2008, 203). In this respect, the claim here is that regions are not merely geographic locales, “politically made” (Katzenstein 2005, 9), “geopsychological arrangements” (Pempel 2005, 3), or “spoken into existence” (Neumann 2001, 60); they are constituted by practices. The contention then is that regions are not so much the creation of “political power and purpose” (Katzenstein 2005, 21), but of practices (this does not mean that political intentionality is irrelevant, but that practices form their own contingent patterns). In this respect, the focus on the practices of China’s international relations buttresses the challenge to the conventional matrix of assumptions on regionalization posed by the contributions included in this collection. At the same time they also query the impact that Beijing’s region-building can have on the patterns of global life.

## **Conclusion**

After the Cold War, commentators began pondering how far Western ideas can/would spread. Today, the debate seems to be how far Chinese ideas will spread. Such a shift in observation has been significantly impacted by the nascent practices of China’s regionalization. The global politics of their dynamics appears to present a viable alternative to Western models—“the first promising formula for state-led,

third-world development” (Puchala 2003, 71). As the contributors to this volume indicate, the uncovering illuminating such a “move beyond the West” requires not merely its denunciation, but its “rediscovery and reimagination” (Shani 2008, 724). In this respect, by zooming-in on the practices of China’s regionalization this volume suggests that the social context of its dynamics reveals the emergence of “a world of relational process, a world which must be studied in relational terms” (Barkawi and Laffey 2006, 349). Furthermore, the focus on the patterns of regionalization reveals that while the “security” of Western International Relations theory is still intact, the Western practice of international relations is not (Chan 1999, 6).

The question that is on everyone’s lips is: how is the current global economic crisis in combination with a deepening climate chaos going to affect China’s regionalization dynamics? In this respect, are parallels with the 1997/1998 Asian financial meltdown still viable to the current context? These are posers whose responses are contingent upon the random combinations between the different particles of the unpredictable concoction of world affairs, Chinese domestic politics, and biospheric dynamism. Such a complexity suggests that regardless of the “merits various theories of hegemonic transition may have had in the past, they may all need to be rapidly rethought” (Beeson 2009, 96). What the contributions to this volume seem to agree on though, is that the jury is still out on whether the sum of the parts of China’s regional arrangements is suggestive of a *new* global governance mechanism. Instead, however, the chapters of this collection point out that China’s outreach to different global locales offers alternative practices of regionalization. However, unlike Western forms of region-building (Teló 2007, 13), China’s template does not appear to reduce the number of actors involved in the process of negotiation within the international arena. If anything, Beijing’s outreach appears to multiply (if not complexify) the layers of practices and interactions in a region (Kavalski 2007b).

This volume should not be misunderstood as an attempt to suggest that there is a singular non-Western regionalization (just as there is no single Western regionalization). It is not an exercise of ordering or classification; instead, it aims to draw attention to the “many different kinds of IR theories in the world” (Song 2001, 64)—hence, the diversity of perspectives presented in the following pages. What it, however, draws attention to is that there are distinct modes of region-building appearing that lend themselves to the broad generalizing labels of “Western” and “non-Western.” The claim then is that the literature on regionalization needs to pay attention to the varieties of new regionalisms permeating global life. Accounting for their proliferation would require an acknowledgement not only of their reality, but also of their validity and legitimacy. Equally importantly, such a confrontation with non-Western forms of regionalization would require an alteration of the language of International Relations theory. The cacophony of global voices requires an open source medium for their conversation. It is hoped that the translation of the global politics of China’s regionalization offered in the following chapters makes a constructive first-cut in such an endeavor.