

Chapter 23: regionalism in international affairs

- Regional cooperation is not an isolated, but rather a global phenomenon, though with a high degree of diversity regarding the drivers, modes, and outcomes of such cooperation.
- Regionalism has various dimensions—economic, social, political, and security—and takes different forms across the world.
- Some regional integration processes are more state-led, while others are more market-led.
- There is a basic difference between cooperation arrangements and integration processes, but both approaches may coexist within a regional system.
- Regionalism in the Americas has developed at multiple levels, with some tension between Inter-Americanism and Latin American integration reflecting mixed attitudes towards the role of the United States.
- An African Union has been established, based on eight Regional Economic Communities that have achieved significant results in functional cooperation, but deep integration remains elusive.
- Asian regionalism has been shaped by security concerns as well as market forces, but it has also been limited by rivalries between Asian powers, and it is now being cut across by trans-continental agreements respectively led by the United States and China.
- The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to new regional arrangements in Eurasia as post-Soviet states evolved in zones of competing influence between Russia and the EU, or between Russia and China.
- The process of integration in post-war Europe was launched in the context of long debates about the creation of a federal system, but ultimately the choice was made in favour of a gradual path towards an 'ever closer union'.
- Integration has proceeded by conferring competence for many economic sectors to supranational institutions that can take decisions that are binding on the member states.
- Over time, more politically sensitive areas, such as monetary policy and internal and external security, have also become the domain of the European Union.
- Successive reforms of the EU treaties have sought to maintain and enhance the legitimacy and efficiency of a Union that has grown to 28 member states, the latest being the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty at the end of 2009.
- Since 2009, the EU has confronted a number of existential crises that have challenged the viability of existing institutional arrangements and raised questions about the limited popular support for further integration.