International Relations
Theory and Regional Transformation

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In this chapter I focus on two questions that are central to a social constructivist understanding of regional orders. The first is whether and how “ideas make regions.” The second is how to conceptualize the diffusion of ideas and norms (used interchangeably here, mindful that ideas do not necessarily make behavioral claims as norms do) across the regional–global divide, that is, between regions and the global system at large, a process that is crucial to the creation and maintenance of regional orders. Until recently, international relations scholars paid scant attention to these questions. The advent of constructivism as a distinct perspective on international relations has changed that. I will argue, however, that constructivism, despite its claims to be an “ideas first” (as opposed to “ideas only”) theory, is yet to fully address these two questions. Constructivism’s position on the relationship between ideas and power remains ambiguous at best. And constructivism is especially weak when it comes to exploring the global–regional nexus in the diffusion of ideas and norms, focusing almost exclusively on how universal norms trump local or regional ones.

How do ideas make regional orders? Regions as imagined communities

At the outset an important question needs addressing. What does it take to be an “ideational” view of regions and regional orders? In international relations theories, the use of “ideational” has exploded with the growing popularity of constructivism. But “ideational” can mean a whole range of things, such as values, principles, ideology, culture, and identity, among others. In writings on regions, especially when it comes to defining regionness, it is not uncommon to find references to such variables as sociocultural similarity, shared values, and a common

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identity. And the inclusion of these elements in the literature on regions long predates constructivism.

For example, both regional “integration” and regional “subsystem” (also known as “subordinate international system”) theories acknowledged their importance. Even Russett’s behavioral study, *International Regions and the International System*, begins by noting the “degree of cultural similarity or at least compatibility for the major politically relevant values” as one of the conditions of regional integration, alongside economic interdependence, and the existence of formal institutions with substantial “spillover” or “consensus-building effects” as well as geographic proximity. While he did not think any of these to be a sufficient or even necessary condition for integration, together they could be operationalized and subjected to factor analysis to identify five sets of regions in the world: Afro-Asia, Western Community, Latin America, Semi-Developed Latins, and Eastern Europe. Geographic proximity was the main casualty of this method: it put the Philippines in Latin America, and Argentina, Japan and Israel in the Western Community, attesting perhaps to the importance of culture and values but eliciting much controversy. Karl Deutsch and his associates found that “compatibility of the main values held by the politically relevant strata of all participating units” was an important characteristic of amalgamated security communities. Louis Cantori and Stephen Spiegel listed four “pattern variables” that determine the “international relations of regions”: namely, nature and level of cohesion, nature of communications, level of power, and structure of relations. The first of these, nature and level of cohesion, did include social cohesiveness, including ethnicity, race, language, religion, history, and consciousness of a common heritage. Yet power, defined primarily in material terms — GNP, military strength, scientific and technological developments — merited special attention. And while the authors might be excused for not having foreseen it, the experience of subsequent decades would negate the causal importance of cohesion. The Middle East, which was found to have a “high degree of social cohesion,” and Southeast Asia, with its “extremely low degree of social cohesion,” turned out to be at the opposite ends in developing regional institutions and orders, considering the contrasting tales of the League of Arab States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). A survey of the work of twenty-two scholars on regions by William Thompson found three clusters of necessary and sufficient attributes of “regional subsystems”: general geographic proximity, regularity and intensity of interactions, and shared perceptions of the regional subsystem as a distinctive theatre of operations. Michael Brecher, who adopted the “subordinate international system” perspective, included “common and conflicting ideologies and values” in his descriptive framework of a subordinate system. And Haas referred to “ideological patterns” and “homogeneity” as a background factor conducive to integration.

Yet, these writings did not amount to an idealational perspective. To be regarded as idealational, a theory of region-building must possess two features. First, ideas must be shown to have a significant causal and constitutive influence. This is not to say that ideas must be shown to be the only causal variable, but the theorist, to borrow Wendt’s words, should “begin ... theorizing ... with the distribution of ideas ... and then bring in material forces, rather than the other way around.” None of the theories of regional integration or regional subsystem took an ideas-first view, not to mention an ideas-only perspective. None gave any significant causality to ideas, ideology, culture, or identity (whether as a cause or effect of regional integration). Moreover, there was no sense that ideas could have a constitutive impact, redefining the interests and identities of actors. Nowhere is there any sense that the prior idea of region or an imagined concept of regionness is what drove integration. Yet, idealational perspectives must demonstrate how a prior set of beliefs or a prior idea of a region acted as a trigger for regional institutions and order. As a constructivist work on Europe argues, a “causal process of the institutionalization of ideas ... is at the heart of the EU story.”

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2 Oran R. Young, “Professor Russett: Industrious Tailor to a Naked Emperor,” *World Politics* 21, no. 3 (April 1969), 486–511.
5 Ibid., 342.

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10 Craig J. Smith, *A Certain Idea of Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 2. I would add that in addition to causality, ideas should also be shown to have a constitutive effect on regional integration processes, actors, and outcomes.
An ideational view of regional orders is also different from studying the normative approaches to regions or regional organizations, like the “regionalist doctrines of peace” that Nye outlined in his classic *Peace in Parts.* Although this work might be considered as an important precursor of normative perspectives on regional order that are the staple of contemporary constructivism, it is unclear whether these doctrines can be said to have independent and prior causal effect or are simply used as analytic devices for identifying and exploring the functions of formal regional organizations. One suspects that the latter was the case; hence the regionalist doctrines by themselves do not amount to taking ideas seriously in the study of regional orders.

Second, and closely related to the above, a nonrationalist epistemology is a key requirement of an ideational perspective on regions. Region-building must not be seen to be purely or mainly the product of instrumental action. But neofunctionalism and transactionalism, the two most influential regional integration theories, fail far short on this score. As Haas summed up, “Neo-functionalism stresses the instrumental motives of actors; ... [it] takes self-interest for granted and relies on it for delineating actor perceptions.” Deutsch’s transactional theory, especially its idea of security communities, which is now appropriated by constructivists, came closer to taking ideational and non-instrumental elements seriously, but mainly as the dependent variable. Its idea of community encompassed such elements as “mutual sympathy and loyalties, of ‘we-feeling,’ trust, and mutual consideration ... partial identification in terms of self-images and interests ... mutual attention, communication, perception of needs.” But insofar as the independent variable was concerned, it was focused too much on measuring material transactions: tourism, mail flows, and so forth — “measure whatever the statistics permits to be measured,” to use Haas’s mildly sarcastic words. In other words, although the Deutschian concept of “we-feeling” that develops out of transactions might seem to be amenable to social and ideational influence, that feeling emerges out of the growth of material transactions rather than from ideas and norms. It is fair to say that it incorporated perceptual, rather than ideational, elements.

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13 Deutsch et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area,* 17.
14 Haas, “Study of Regional Integration,” 118.
19 Moravcsik, *Constructivism and European Integration,* 179.
But certain shared elements among constructivist treatments of regions stand out. Regional coherence and identity are not givens, but result primarily from socialization among the leaders and peoples of a region. Adler and Crawford argue that regions are no longer conceptualized "in terms of geographic contiguity, but rather in terms of purposeful social, political, cultural, and economic interaction among states which often (but not always) inhabit the same geographic space." Beyond interactions, regions are built around shared identities. What Adler calls "cognitive regions" are those "whose people imagine that ... borders run, more or less, where shared understandings and common identities end." For Jayasurya "the critical point of difference between" perspectives that hold regions to be "socially constructed" and those who regard them as "natural entities" is that the former "demands greater sensitivity to the contingent nature of regional projects." In the case of the "Asia-Pacific" idea, Dirlik contends that regionness may depend as much on "representation" as on "reality." The work of Benedict Anderson has been particularly inspiring for the constructivist view on regions. As with nation-states, regions may be "imagined," constructed, and defended. Territorial proximity and functional interactions are inadequate to constitute a region in the absence of an "idea of the region," conceived more from inside than imposed from the outside.

Despite some differences and varying points of entry, constructivist international relations scholars studying regions would generally find themselves in agreement with geographer Alexander Murphy's contention that, "As social constructions, regions are necessarily ideological and no explanation of their individuality or character can be complete without explicit consideration of the types of ideas that are developed and sustained in connection with the regionalization process." Regions and regional orders can coalesce around different kinds of ideas: political, security, economic, and sociocultural. Political-security ideas include collective security, common security, cooperative security, human security, democracy, and human rights. Examples of economic ideas for region-building are free trade, neoliberalism, and the so-called (now obsolescent) Washington Consensus. Sociocultural ideas are ethnic group conceptions, or ideologies such as Pan-Africanism, or the more recent notion of Asian values. These ideas do not enjoy fixed meaning and are contested, but they do matter in regional definition and speak to different conceptions of regional orders. I do not argue that ideas make regions, any more than material forces do. But I do think that ideas are a major part of what makes regions, they shape the boundaries and membership of regions, and decide the question of their permanence and transience.

Like the term "region" in general, "regional order" is no longer associated exclusively with material determinants such as economic interdependence or distribution of power. Theories of regional integration, such as neofunctionalism and transactionalism, while not specifically speaking of regional orders, did identify institutional constructs such as political community (Haas) or security community (Deutsch) that can be seen as ideal types of regional orders. Recent perspectives on regional orders have focused on institutions as key elements. Buzan and Waever's list of regional security complexes, which are in essence descriptions of various possible types of regional orders, include some that are institutionally defined or even institutionally centered. The idea of a regional economic community also has strong institutional elements. Beyond formal institutions, regional orders can be based more or less around shared norms. As Alagappa notes, order can simply mean "rule governed interaction," i.e. "whether interstate interactions conform to accepted rules."
Traditional perspectives of regions assigned a central causal role to power. Hence, some of the most familiar “names” of the world’s regions, such as Middle East, Southeast Asia, or Asia-Pacific, are credited to the political and strategic interests of the leading powers of the past two centuries: Britain or the United States, or both, and their close allies (as with Australia in the case of Asia-Pacific). But ideas and socialization can create regions in the absence of power (the deliberate effort by a hegemonic power to create a region). Southeast Asia, although initially “named” by Allied Command during World War II and given prominence by the US intervention in Vietnam, became viable only through the institution-building efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Moreover, while both power and ideas can build regions, when regions are built purely on the basis of material power to reflect or serve the geopolitical needs of great powers, without an ideational core or consensus, they do not last. In other words, power alone does not guarantee regional identity and order. Categories such as Southwest Asia, Near East, Afpak, Middle East (increasingly delegitimized in favor of the “Arab world”), Far East, and Asia-Pacific (giving way to East Asia) are examples not only of the fluidity of regional concepts in general, but also of the fragility of region-naming by great powers sans regional normative structure and identity. Ideational regions tend to last longer than regions built on material hegemony.

The claim of some constructivist literature that ideas and norms can spread without the backing of powerful actors is important here. Realists argue that the powerful has an advantage in spreading certain ideas and norms through propaganda, forced emulation, coercive adaptation, coercive socialization, and so on. One can find examples good as well as bad, from the way British military operations were crucial to the antislavery movement, and the way the British forced a lot of ideas on India – some stuck – others did not. Also the religious of the powerful often spread through both coercion and persuasion, for example the Catholic Church in Latin America or Islam in Northern India. In contrast, constructivists argue that ideas can spread without coercive power, for example the spread of the norm against apartheid, chemical weapons, or land mines. Indeed, one of the best illustrations of the “power of ideas” over the “idea of power” can be seen from the classical regional worlds of the eastern Mediterranean and the eastern Indian Ocean (Southeast Asia). The two powers which shaped the regional world of the Mediterranean were Greece and Rome (Persia was clearly a third great power, but its role was less enduring), while that of classical Southeast Asia was shaped by India and China. Of these, the influence of Greece and India was mainly ideational, whereas that of Rome and China was mainly geopolitical. There were significant differences. What historians call the Indianization of Southeast Asia during the first millennium AD was different from the Hellenization of the Mediterranean before the advent of full-fledged Roman imperialism in the first century AD. The expansion of Greek ideational influence, although it preceded the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, was nonetheless significantly aided by it. By contrast, military force was not a factor aiding the Indianization of Southeast Asia. A military campaign by South Indian ruler Rajendra Chola in 1025 AD constituted an important exception to this but it did not lead to lasting occupation of the Malay kingdom of Srivijaya. By then, Indianization had been pretty extensive and in the end, the Chola raids helped actually end it by destroying Srivijaya, then the most powerful regional maritime empire which protected the sea lanes. The roles of China in Southeast Asia and Rome in the Mediterranean also differed in the sense that the former only sought suzerainty over parts of Southeast Asia for the sake of tributary trade, while Rome turned the Mediterranean into a Roman lake through direct conquest of its entire littoral.

But three points emerging from a comparison of the flow of ideas in the classical Mediterranean and Southeast Asia are especially noteworthy. First, the fact that India and Greece (before Alexander) could exert such a profound influence on neighboring societies despite not conquering them is significant. In pre-Alexander Greece, and for India more generally, migration rather than conquest was the chief means of the diffusion of ideas, taking the form of Greek settlements around the Mediterranean and Indian settlements in Southeast Asia (sometimes mistakenly called Indian colonization). Second, in one sense at least, the Indianization of Southeast Asia, without the backing of military conquest, had a more profound legacy than the Hellenization of the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond that followed Alexander's conquests. This has to do with the fact that Hellenization weakened after the death of Alexander and the subsequent Roman overthrow of the two Hellenistic empires founded by his generals, the Seleucids in Antioch (in present-day Syria), and the Ptolemies in Alexandria, Egypt. Indian ideas remained influential in Southeast Asia right up to the fifteenth century AD. Third and perhaps most important, in both regional worlds the materially more powerful actor did not turn out to be the most powerful ideational influence. Comparing Greece and Rome in the Mediterranean and India and China in Southeast Asia will underscore this point. In the Mediterranean

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32 Although constructivism has emphasized the diffusion of good norms, it can and should also explain how “bad” ideas spread.
littoral itself, Greek ideas remained quite influential relative to Roman ideas, even after the total eclipse of Greek authority in the hands of Rome. While Rome ruled over much of the Hellenistic areas, including Athens and the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt, Roman emperors (such as Hadrian) and the Roman elite came to rely extensively on Greek ideas and culture to secure their legitimacy. (One might compare this with Alexander’s own embracing of Egyptian concepts of universal monarchy, anointing himself as pharaoh in Memphis near Alexandria on November 14, 332 BC, and thus becoming the first universal ruler in western history. Alexander also had no difficulty worshipping the Egyptian deities, such as the Egyptian Amun, whom he regarded as a form of Zeus.) In fact, Rome emerged as the biggest promoter of Greek ideas, far eclipsing the overall ideational resources of the Romans themselves. In Southeast Asia the ideational influence of India, including Hindu-Buddhist political and strategic concepts (including Kautilya’s Arthasastra) had a profound influence in state-making and intraregional interactions, far eclipsing the ideational influence of China (except in the deltas of Tongking and North Vietnam), the materially and geopolitically more powerful actor. This variance could be attributed to radically different modes of interaction. To quote George Coedès, a major figure in classical Southeast Asian scholarship,

The Chinese proceeded by conquest and annexation; soldiers occupied the country, and officials spread Chinese civilization. Indian penetration or infiltration seems almost always to have been peaceful; nowhere was it accompanied by the destruction that brought dishonor to the Mongol expansion or the Spanish conquest of America. Far from being destroyed by the conquerors, the native peoples of Southeast Asia found in Indian society, transplanted and modified, a framework within which their own society could be integrated and developed.35

One might ask: do ideas always precede material factors in all regions? Not necessarily. The sequence may vary from region to region, and be time and context-specific. Some regions are transformed by powerful ideas. This happened in the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s with Nasserite pan-Arabism. Even though the notion of a Middle East existed earlier on the basis of the British military organization of the world (as did pan-Arabism, but Nasser’s idea was more intensely political), the regional order of the Middle East was redefined and much more polarized with Nasser’s ideas. Much the same can be said about the impact of Bolivar’s pan-Americanism on South America, and Nkrumah’s pan-Africanism on African regional order. In other instances, ideational

34 Katzenstein, World of Regions.
perhaps for the sake of scientific rigor, made scant references to the ideas of individual visionaries, such as Monnet, Schuman, or Churchill. Neither did they seriously investigate the "idea of Europe," itself a constructed and variable notion with its historical basis on the "culture and civilization" of the "Orient," and which once shared space with chunks of the historical notion of "Asia." But any serious writing on Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa would not begin without a nod to Bolivar, Nehru, Nasser, or Nkrumah. Similarly, historical and cultural matrices, such as Christianity or the Roman Empire, played little part in the development of earlier accounts of European institutions, whereas the past (cultural and political) is always present in nonwestern accounts of regionness.

Regional orders emerging from the worldviews and cognitive priors of individuals and societies might be called, using a modified conceptual vocabulary of social psychology, the first order (or primary) conditioning effect of ideas. The second order (or secondary) conditioning effect, or the second way ideas/norms influence regional orders, is the subsequent redefinition and broadening of initially present and accepted normative structures leading to the development of new norms. Here, ideas that have been made meaningful or consequential for a social group through an initial step of learning are used as the basis for developing and learning about some new ideas, whether indigenous or foreign. The stimulus here is not preexisting worldviews endogenous to the region, but ideas resulting of an initial process of socialization and bargaining, and which respond to the changing circumstances and needs of a social group. They may redefine the initial set of ideational elements or create entirely new ones. This causal diffusion of ideas usually occurs through institution-building, where regional institutions provide the crucial site for such normative contestation and selection. Examples of such ideational construction of regional institutions can be found in the contemporary Asia-Pacific region, especially in the diffusion of the norms of ASEAN (the "ASEAN Way") to the wider Asia-Pacific and East Asian regions, leading to constructs such as the Asia-Pacific community or East Asian community. Another example can be found in Africa, where the initial norms of OAU, which included pan-Africanism and nonintervention, gradually morphed into a more complex notion of "responsible sovereignty" that underpins the African Union, which replaced the OAU. Similarly, regional order in Latin America has been

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of communism under the US strategic umbrella. These circumstances cannot be replicated in other parts of the world, especially in recently independent countries where nationalism and sovereignty have been the basis of anticolonial struggles. As Haas had correctly noted, the gap between the European and non-European processes of regional integration cannot be easily bridged because of the absence in the latter of some of the key background conditions: “situations controlled by social groupings representing the rational interests of urban-industrial society, groups seeking to maximize their economic benefits and driving along regional homogenous ideological-political lines.”

The lesson here is not that Europe represents the only pathway to regional integration and order, this is hardly the case (although Haas was more pessimistic about prospects for any genuine regional integration outside of Western Europe), but that the European model of regional integration is not easily replicated in other parts of the world, which must therefore develop their own different pathways. Hence the European experience is rarely adopted: it is more likely to be adapted or localized. And the credibility of European ideas cannot be separated from European material assistance and self-promotion. But this has not prevented regional groups in the nonwestern world from borrowing or at least being inspired by certain ideas and institutions of the EU (hence the cliché that the EU is best regarded as an inspiration, not a model). Among contemporary regional groups, the African Union is self-consciously pursuing the EU’s ideas and institutions.

Drawing from the above, one might identify different (although interrelated) strands of recent constructivist writings on region-building. In the first are works that examine how ideas and identities create regions and underpin regional institutions. For example, the emergence of Southeast Asia as a distinctive region can be traced to the beliefs and interactions, including a conscious process of identity-building, of the leaders of a group of states emerging from western colonialism and living in the shadows of larger and more powerful neighbours, India and China.

Borrowing heavily from the work of historians and historiographical debates about Southeast Asian regional identity, this view challenges the traditionalist argument that Southeast Asia was largely the product of western colonialism, named after a Second World War Allied Command and further developed by western political scientists as a convenient label. Parsons shows how contestation and selection involving two “particular sets of ideas that appeared in Western Europe after the Second World War,” namely, the community (supranational) model and the traditional (confederal) model, led its elites “beyond the political framework of the nation-state.”

Delanty investigates the “invention of Europe” as a regional concept, which emerged from the break-up of the Mediterranean civilization, significantly conditioned as a Christian concept by its competition with Islam, and which “evolved from a mere geographical expression to a cultural idea which had political uses.”

Europe, particularly the EU, remains the focal point of constructivist perspectives on regional ideas and identity, although other regions are catching up.

A second category of work centers on socialization and norm diffusion. These are more explicitly concerned with regional orders and explore the possibility of their regulation and transformation. A good example can be found in the special issue of International Organization, which examines mechanisms, conditions, and outcomes of socialization (featuring norms and microprocesses such as persuasion) through European regional institutions. Although work on norm diffusion in regional orders is heavily Eurocentric, there have been important such perspectives on other regions, including the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It is also important to note that work on regional norms predates the constructivist focus on normative Europe; for example, a conceptually significant body of work on regional norms concerned Africa.

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41 Acharya, Quest for Identity.
Finally, a particularly influential body of constructivist work relates to regional security communities. This literature resurrects the older Deutschian notion, but the latter's fetish for transactions is replaced by a heavy emphasis on social construction. The security community framework has been used to investigate the quality of cooperation in different regions of the world, both individually and comparatively. Usually, the condition of a security community (whether amalgamated or pluralistic) implies a very high degree of cooperation and integration. In such communities actors develop strong mutual interdependence, responsiveness, sensitivity, and empathy; borders are demilitarized; and common institutions for the provision and governance of regional public goods emerge. Not only does war become "unthinkable," but actors also develop a collective identity or "we-feeling." Again, examples of such a terminal condition are rarer to find in the nonwestern world, although the Southern Cone of South America and Southeast Asia may qualify as "nascent" security communities.

Localization and subsidiarity: two pathways to norm diffusion

As argued above, initial theories of regional orders, including regional integration theories, did not develop an adequate understanding of the causal role of ideas or offer a pathway for ideas travelling from the global to the local and vice versa. Constructivism did develop a generic theory of norm diffusion, but it was not clear how much autonomy it gave to ideas relative to power, and whether the diffusion was a one- or two-way process, with regional level interactions influencing global distribution of ideas instead of simply being shaped by it.

Constructivism has offered the most powerful challenge to date to the shared materialism of neorealism and neoliberalism. Norms can be empowering. The constructivist theory of norms focuses on how "discursive, deliberative and persuasive" mechanisms can compensate for the limitations of material power, and how and where "norms ... might enable actors with limited material power to influence outcomes."

Yet constructivists have not entirely eschewed the temptations of power. For some, normative change can occur without the explicit backing of powerful actors. Finnemore and Sikkink show that consent of a materially powerful state is not a necessary condition for norm cascades. For example, both Britain and the US were latecomers to the norm of women's suffrage. Their concept of a "critical state" is not necessarily the most materially powerful state; despite US opposition, the norms against landmines cascaded and the treaty was signed. But other constructivists show a surprising degree of deference to power and the importance of hegemonic leadership. Florini points out that norms held by powerful actors "have many more opportunities to reproduce through the greater number of opportunities afforded to powerful states to persuade others of the rights of their views." Some constructivists merely replace the material power of a hegemon with its ideational influence. While constructivists see ideas and norms as catalysts of change that can counter and overcome material power politics, when power weighs heavily on social interactions they acknowledge the salience of the latter. As Finnemore and Sikkink suggest: "new norms never enter a normative vacuum but instead emerge in a highly contested normative space where they may compete with other norms and perceptions of power." Wendt accepts that power relations do play "a crucial role" in the direction and success of social interactions leading to normative change. To be sure, he defines power in noncoercive terms, as the ability of "each side to get the other to see things its way." This is done by rewarding compliant perspective and behavior and punishing deviancy. "Power is the basis of such rewards and punishments." Although power is context-dependent, in general, "where there is an imbalance in relevant material capability social acts will tend to evolve in the direction favored by the more powerful." For Wendt, therefore, while ideas matter in socialization, social processes that produce structural change are "weighted" by considerations of power and dependence.

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92 This section borrows heavily from my previous work, Acharya, How Ideas Spread; and Acharya, Norm Subsidarity and Regional Order.
96 Ibid., 261.
98 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," 257 (emphasis added).
99 Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, 331.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 341.
The power bias in theoretical explanations of norm diffusion is of course not exclusive to constructivism. Other theories of regional order, structural and eclectic, also show this bias. In their influential (part realist, part constructivist) book, *Regions and Powers*, Buzan and Waever accept that regions can be socially constructed but this is seriously qualified by their emphasis on geopolitics and the distribution of power. Although both accept that regions can be socially constructed, they are similarly qualified by their emphasis on geopolitics and the distribution of power, and in the latter by the central role it assigns to American power in regional construction. Moreover, the power bias in theories of norm diffusion is accentuated by a cultural bias (ethnocentrism) and a system bias ("universalism"). In conceptualizing the process through which such ideas spread, constructivists tend to privilege universal (mostly western) moral entrepreneurship at the expense of local agency and feedback. A good deal of constructivist narrative on norms focuses on what Ethan Nadelmann has called the "moral proselytism" of "transnational moral entrepreneurs." Influenced by sociological institutionalism, constructivists have tended to reproduce its assumptions of a "world social structure" that acts as a wellspring of "good" normative ideas and standards. Norms that make a universalistic claim about what is good are seen as more likely to spread than those that are localized or particularistic. The staple of constructivist writings on norms attests to this; it focuses on the propagation of certain "good" universal norms concerning landmines, the protection of whales, the struggle against racism, intervention against genocide, the promotion of human rights. This strong ethos of "moral cosmopolitanism" predisposes constructivist norm theorists, much like their sociological institutionalism predecessors, against the expansive appeal and feedback potential of regional or localized norms. Yet an understanding of this two-way process of the spread of ideas is important to understanding how ideas shape regional order throughout the world.

66 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," 257.

In short, while constructivist writings on norm diffusion offer plenty of case studies of how universal or global norms espoused by core actors influence and shape regional actors and orders, they scarcely bother themselves with the reverse side of this equation: how locally constructed norms influence global normative structures. Yet, norm diffusion should be understood as a two-way process. While global norms are adopted and adapted by local/regional actors to transform their identities and legitimize their authority, locally constructed norms can feed and infuse into the global level to enrich and empower the global normative structure. In other words, local/regional actors are not only norm-takers, but they are also norm-makers and norm-givers. And when they take outsiders' ideas, they do so not as passive recipients, but as active borrowers, proactively and selectively borrowing foreign norms to legitimize their authority and identity. The two-way relationship can be seen in Figure 8.2.

To understand the importance of the local in norm diffusion and the two-way nexus between regional and global normative structures, I have proposed the concepts of localization and subsidiarity. Localization is "active construction (through discourse, framing, drafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas by local actors, which results in the former developing significant congruence with local beliefs and practices." Subsidiarity is a process whereby local actors develop new rules with a view to regulate their relationships and legitimize common global norms that are at risk of neglect, violation, or abuse by powerful and central actors. Both concepts stress the primacy of local agency, but localization is about importing norms created and diffused from outside, whereas subsidiarity is mainly about exporting norms made locally. Whereas localization is inward-looking and involves making foreign ideas and norms consistent with a local cognitive prior, subsidiarity...
with great-power hypocrisy, that is, when they see the violation of their cherished global norms by powerful actors and when higher-level institutions tasked with their defense seem unwilling or incapable of preventing their violation. Hence, localization is a tendency that is generic to all actors, big or small, powerful or weak (even the mighty Roman Empire accepted the ideas of a much weaker Greek civilization), whereas subsidiarity is applicable mainly to smaller and/or weaker actors, because it is their representation and autonomy in global norm-making processes that is more likely to be challenged.

Localization and subsidiarity can be complimentary, however, rather two sides of the same coin, and can run in tandem. Their motivators may occasionally overlap. In fact, the creation of a single norm may involve both processes, whereby a global norm is redefined while a local norm is infused into a global common. But taken together they offer a comprehensive framework for understanding and explaining norm dynamics and diffusion in world politics.

There are many examples of norm localization and subsidiarity which serve to illustrate the theoretical arguments. Again, classical regional worlds are useful starting points. Throughout the Roman regional world, non-Roman local elites adopted Roman political and legal ideas and institutions to legitimize and enhance their position. In Roman provinces such as Judæa, there occurred a process of twinning whereby "local gods ... were twinned with a Graeco-Roman divinity and simply given a double name (Mercurius Dumias)." This has its parallels in Southeast Asia, where the advent of Indian Buddhist ideas into Thailand did not lead Thais to abandon the worship of local spirits. Rather, Thai shrines placed Buddhist deities alongside local spirits. This transformed the status of both religious practices, resulting in the simultaneous "Parochialization" of Indian Buddhism and "Universalization" of indigenous and preexisting animism.

Drawing upon these ideas of localization from Southeast Asian historiography, I have specified the conditions under which localization works as a universal dynamic found in all cultures and societies, including regional orders and transformations in contemporary Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In Southeast Asia localization of the key Westphalian norm of nonintervention led to the delegitimation of collective defense pacts in the early postwar period, while that of the
European idea of common security led to the creation of Asia's first multilateral security organization. In Latin America the localization of the democracy promotion norm led to the establishment of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, whereas in Africa the neobalral norms of New Partnership for Africa's Development failed to diffuse due to the absence of the conditions of localization.73

Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa offer plenty of examples of norm subsidiarity.74 In each of these regions, local actors have sought to develop subsidiary norms to challenge great power dominance and hypocrisy and secure regional autonomy. In so doing, they also supported existing global norms such as territorial integrity, self-determination, non-intervention, racial equality, and regional autonomy.

In Asia an injunction against participating in superpower-sponsored military pacts, developed at the 1955 Asia--Africa Conference in Bandung, became a key normative foundation for regional order in Southeast Asia. The idea of noninvolvement also morphed into the concept of nonalignment, which influenced the foreign policy of Third World countries across regions, providing a powerful example of how locally developed rules may diffuse globally. Latin American countries, the first to obtain independence from colonial rule, have been "international rule innovators." Among their normative innovations is the doctrine of uti possidetis juris, or honoring inherited boundaries, and the principle of non-intervention.75 The former was developed as a response to imperial collapse (especially of the Spanish Empire) and the consequent inability of European great powers to maintain regional order. Later, under the banner of pan-Americanism, Latin American states developed a regional norm of "absolute non-intervention in the hemispheric community," both as an abstract principle and as a means to challenge US hegemony in the region (embodied in the "Monroe Doctrine") and its perceived hypocrisy in violating the norm of non-intervention.76 One such rule, the Calvo Doctrine (after Argentine jurist Carlos Calvo) rejected the right of intervention claimed by foreign powers (European and US) in order to protect their citizens resident in Latin America. Another rule, the Drago Doctrine, named after Argentine Foreign Minister Luis Drago, challenged the US and European position that they had a right to intervene to force states to honor their sovereign debts. Over US opposition, Latin American congresses recognized revolutionary governments as de jure. Both the Calvo and Drago doctrines constituted subsidiary norms of state sovereignty in Latin America's regional order. The Latin American advocacy led the US to abandon the Monroe Doctrine in 1933 and accept non-intervention as a basic principle in its relations with the region.

In the Middle East norm subsidiarity can be discerned from what Barnett calls the "norms of Arabism," whose principal elements were "quest for independence, the cause of Palestine, and the search for [Arab] unity," as well as nonalignment.76 These may be regarded as the subsidiary norms of the Arab states system. The Arab Middle East under Nasser's leadership also adopted the anticolonial defense norm similar to that prevailing in Asia. This was evident in the Egyptian-led opposition to the Baghdad Pact, which was seen by its critics as an instrument of US and British intervention and hegemony (the tyranny of great power management) and an affront to regional aspirations and arrangements for peace and security. Nasser viewed the Baghdad Pact as severely undermining the scheme for an indigenous Arab Collective Security System, which had been mooted by Egypt. Nasser would sign an arms deal with Czechoslovakia and nationalize the Suez Canal, thereby setting the path for a major confrontation with the US and the West in 1956.

In Africa, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence, led the formulation of the subsidiary norms of an African regional order, which would feature a demand for non-intervention by outside powers in African affairs and the abstention of Africans in superpower-led collective defense pacts.77 In April 1958 Nkrumah hosted the first Conference of Independent African States. In so doing, he was deeply influenced by the Bandung Conference three years earlier, to which he had been prevented from attending by the British, who still controlled Ghana's foreign policy. The holding of the CIAS suggests imitation and learning as a pathway for norm diffusion (albeit this was a South–South mimicking, rather than a North–South one, which is

73 Acharya, "How Ideas Spread."
74 Acharya, "Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders."
76 Barnett, Dialogues in Arab Politics, 56, 106.
stressed in western scholarship). The African conference was geared not only to discussing ways to secure independence from colonial rule, but also to developing norms of foreign policy conduct aimed at addressing “the central problem of how to secure peace” (similar to the Bandung agenda of World Peace and Cooperation). Among the principles agreed to at the African conference was Bandung’s “abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the great powers.” The normative result of the Conference was “a signal departure from established custom, a jar to the arrogant assumption of non-African nations that Africa affairs were solely the concern of states outside our continent.” This marked the beginning of the African subsidiary norms of regional self-reliance in regional security and economic development. Even after Nkrumah’s eclipse, the African normative order would continue to reject superpower intervention, espouse regional autonomy, and develop regional institutions geared to achieving African cooperation if not outright political unity.

As noted, regional orders can be built around both types of normative dynamic occurring simultaneously. The Asian regionalist response to the Cold War superpower rivalry involved the localization of universal norms of sovereignty while at the same time creating new norms concerning great power dominance and military alliances for export and universalization. Subsidiary norms need not be entirely original or locally invented. Rather, they can be region-specific applications of global norms or norms borrowed from other regions. The African states borrowed the doctrine of honoring inherited boundaries originally developed in Latin America to create a relatively successful boundary maintenance regime. The originally European idea of sovereignty and nonintervention formed the basis of subsidiary norms in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Norm subsidiarity may involve international and transregional feedback and extensions of locally developed rules. Asian norm subsidiarity clearly had a discernible effect on other postcolonial regions. The Non-Aligned Movement, which attracted considerable membership in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, was a direct offshoot of the Bandung Conference. A meeting of foreign ministers in 1961 limited membership in NAM to states that were not members of “a multilateral alliance concluded in the context of Great Power conflicts.” This remained a core principle of NAM.

Another implication of the theories of localization and subsidiarity is that despite the borrowing and imitation that is implied by both processes, the resulting norms need not and frequently do not have exactly the same meaning in different regions. Region specificity is a hallmark of norm diffusion. Latin Americans borrowed the European doctrine of nonintervention but turned it into a more absolute doctrine (in European practice, intervention could still be justified for the sake of maintaining balance of power). Asians, too, zealously adopted nonintervention, but introduced another significant local variation: abstention from superpower-led military pacts. Although subsidiary norms may travel from one region to another due to snowballing, learning, and emulation, and thereby retain a certain basic meaning across regions, the process of diffusion can also cause new variations in their understanding and application. Hence while all postcolonial regions, including Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa developed subsidiary norms linked to nonintervention, this took on different meanings and even different institutional forms. In Asia, as the SEATO experience suggests, it produced a total opposition to collective security or defense pacts, but Latin Americans used it as a precondition for participating in a regional collective security system with the US as long as Washington pledged not to interfere in their internal affairs. The Arabs and Africans rejected superpower-led defense pacts much like the Asians, but they were prepared at least to try indigenous schemes for collective security and defense cooperation to an extent not found in Asia. Regional context, need, and discourses determine how subsidiary norms develop in different regions.

Finally, it is important to take note of how ideational regions and regional norm dynamics, including localization and subsidiarity, might produce change, and what kind of change. Here much more empirical work needs to be done to demonstrate the causal and constitutive effects of norms, but some indications are already available. I have argued elsewhere that localization produces gradual, or “every-day,” forms of normative change. Subsidiarity is no different. Yet since

81 Jeffrey Herbst, “Crafting Regional Co-operation in Africa,” in Acharya and Johnston, eds., *Crafting Cooperation*.
85 Acharya, *How Ideas Spread*. 
both processes are largely voluntary and driven by local initiative, the
effects of change could be lasting, although not necessarily permanent
(as indicated in the diffusion of classical Indian ideas into Southeast
Asia). An important indicator of the impact of norm diffusion is insti-
tutional change, or changes to existing structures and processes of
regional institutions that are exposed to new norms. The experience
of Europe shows that the impact of norm diffusion might lead to sign-
ificant changes to hitherto balance-of-power orders, as happened with
its internal relationships (the shift from nationalism and sovereignty to
supranationalist integration) after the formation of the European Coal
and Steel Community (ECSC) and later (from the mid 1970s) with
the common security norm (which calls for inclusiveness, transparency,
and dialogue) that redefined the East–West Cold War relationships in
Europe. Also evident now in Europe is the European Union’s “nor-
mative power,” comprising “rule of law, good governance, democracy,
human rights, order, and justice.” 55 These norms are promoted not only
to other parts of Europe, including the new member states of EU, but
also internationally to other regions of the world.

In Asia the localization of the cooperative security norm (similar to
common security but without the latter’s emphasis on legalistic and for-
mal mechanisms of compliance and verification) had a similar, although
less deep-rooted impact on the highly polarized balance-of-power
system of the Cold War period. Hence the ASEAN Regional Forum,
established in 1994 after a great deal of normative debate, has embraced
inclusiveness in its membership; embracing Cold War dyads such as the
US and China, India and Pakistan, and North and South Korea, and
undertaking a limited number of confidence-building measures among
its members. Notably, it is playing a significant role in the socialization
of China. ASEAN as a subregional grouping itself promptly accepted
Vietnam, its main adversary during the Cold War years. The Middle
East is perhaps the only major region where the common/cooperative
security norm has had little institutional effect, and this may be
explained in terms of the conditions that explain successful norm local-
ization identified in the literature (including but not limited to the
strength of preexisting beliefs such as pan-Arabism, and the absence of
credible insider proponents of new norms). In Africa, the most relevant
norm is not common-cooperative security but the norm of humanitarian

55 Michelle Pace, “The Construction of EU Normative Power,” Journal of Common
Market Studies 45, no. 5 (December 2007), 1045; Thomas Diez, “Constructing the
Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering ‘Normative Power Europe,’” Millennium: