

1 Oceania and the Study of Regions

Regions range from the broadest possible constructions, such as the Indo-Pacific and the transatlantic world, to localized entities contained within a single valley. But whatever their scale, regions are generally configured around a geographic space that has been invested conceptually with certain essential features. Included in the geographic construction of Oceania are four major subregions, namely, Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, which together constitute the 'Pacific Islands' or 'Island Pacific', along with Australasia, consisting of Australia and New Zealand, noting that New Zealand also falls within the Polynesian subregion. All are connected through the massive body of water that constitutes the world's largest geographical feature: the Pacific Ocean. The islands scattered across its surface may be small, giving the impression that it is almost all empty space with very little in the way of land surface, apart from Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia. But this view glosses over the fact that there are nearly fifteen million square kilometres of 'exclusive economic zones' belonging to the countries of the Island Pacific as a whole, contributing to the idea that the Pacific Ocean is not a massive vacant space but rather a 'blue continent'.

The space encompassed by Oceania, as sketched here, follows a standard physical geographic definition of the region as well as reflecting its contemporary political geography, although it is not without controversy. Nor does it encompass all the actors involved in regional politics. These include France and the United States (US) as members of the Pacific Community, Oceania's longest-standing regional organization. China has no official membership in the regional bodies but now has a significant presence, mainly through its network of bilateral relationships (for which it has a preference) and expanding aid activity. These play into contemporary regional politics as well as broader geopolitical considerations. Also figuring in the geopolitical scenario is the internationalization of the Indonesia/West Papua issue, which is a product of both colonialism and Cold War developments.

Addressing these and other aspects of regional politics in Oceania requires an account not just of contemporary dynamics but also of developments that have occurred over centuries, from the earliest human settlements through to European exploration and colonization, the period of formal regionalization in the post-war period, decolonization, the Cold War, the emergence of political regionalism and issues in the post-Cold War period revolving around security, political economy and geopolitical dynamics. These are the background conditions that inform analysis throughout the book.

A key feature of this study is a focus on identity politics and its manifestation at various levels from the local through to the national, subregional and regional as well as broader configurations around the West/non-West or North/South divide along with the South–South motif, which assumes a conjunction of identities and interests. This has particular relevance for regional politics in Oceania, located as it is in the developing world, albeit with two ‘Western’ countries situated physically in the region and playing a role as both full members of the major regional organizations as well as donor countries in the North/South context.

The initial themes addressed in this introductory chapter range over how regions emerge as political, social and economic entities, how they are conceptualized and how they come to provide a basis for identities around which political relations are configured. This includes an account of how and under what circumstances ‘regionness’ comes about, along with the idea of regional society in conceptualizing regional formations. Attention to the rise of Area Studies in the post-war period of decolonization and Cold War conditions provides further insights into the construction of regions in general and Oceania in particular. Also implicated in the emergence of Area Studies is the modernization paradigm, which continues to underpin ideas about regional development in the global South.

The final section addresses the framework for analysis offered by post-colonial approaches. While recognizing their importance in scholarly and activist debates around issues of imperialism, colonialism and hegemony, this study provides a different approach. This includes widening the scope of postcolonial studies to embrace important instances of non-Western colonialism in Oceania while also offering a more critical perspective on the often taken-for-granted binaries of colonizer/colonized, domination/subordination and repression/resistance. It therefore moves away from the standard West/non-West dichotomy that has tended to oversimplify the entities on either side of this divide and thereby many of the issues at stake.

1.1 The Idea of Regions

Geographical features inevitably loom large in definitions of regions but it clearly takes more than physical geographical criteria to invest any given area with ‘regionness’, understood as ‘the capacity of a self-defined region to articulate its identity and interests to other actors’.¹ This implies that the geographies of a region are ‘managed’,² an activity carried out primarily by those designated as members and who are therefore the most authoritative actors in defining the region, formulating policy, gate-keeping and so on. Regional management, however, is also influenced by external forces, especially those that regard themselves as legitimate stakeholders and who have the capacity to project power and influence. Regions therefore appear as geopolitical constructs, although factors such as language, religion and ethnic identity – often conflated under the rubric of culture – sometimes count as much, if not more, in establishing regionness. Having said that, it is also important to avoid the temptations of essentializing analysis in terms of ‘culture areas’ and to investigate just how regions are both historically constituted and located in broader processes of social and economic change.³ This means taking account not only of discursive practices but also of the specific actions and events that have led to the construction of regions, although all these are intimately related.⁴ Further, as much as cultural factors may appear to bind actors together in a regional formation, they may also play into tensions between them, especially where a politics of culture is at play.

Taken together, these considerations suggest that any given region exists not in any objective sense but rather as a ‘competing set of ideological constructs that project upon a certain location on the globe the imperatives of interest, power, or vision of these historically produced relationships’.⁵ Terms such as ‘Oceania’ and the entities it encompasses are therefore situated within and indeed substantially constituted by

¹ Rick Fawn, “‘Regions’ and Their Study: Wherefrom, What for and Where to?”, *Review of International Studies*, 35 (1), 2009, 14.

² Richard Herr, ‘The Frontiers of Pacific Islands Regionalism: Charting the Boundaries of Identity’, *Asia-Pacific World*, 4 (1), 2013, 36–7.

³ Mitchell Bernard, ‘Regions in the Global Political Economy: Beyond the Local-Global in the Formation of the East Asian Region’, *New Political Economy*, 1 (3), 1996, 339.

⁴ Luc Van Langenhove, *Building Regions: The Regionalization of the World Order* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 1. See also Anssi Paasi, John Harrison and Martin Jones, ‘New Consolidated Regional Geographies’, in Anssi Paasi, John Harrison and Martin Jones (eds.), *Handbook on the Geographies of Regions and Territories* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), 4.

⁵ Arif Dirlik, ‘The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure’, *Journal of World History*, 3 (1), 1992, 56.

'discourse'.⁶ The latter, in turn, is understood as a way of speaking about the world of social and political experience and, in particular, of producing meaning within a given context.⁷ This is partly reflected in the turn within geography from the concept of region to the concept of 'place' and its association with 'the complex world of identity politics, ethnicity and gender' which situate selves or subjects 'in place'.⁸ This may appear to legitimate the tendency in some approaches to Area Studies that valorize 'cultural contexts' and the particularities and specificities that are claimed to define them. Apart from evincing a certain hostility to universals, such approaches are inclined to shy away from explaining just how 'cultural contexts' are constructed, maintained, revised and reconfigured. Recognition of these dynamics has at least made some impact through the 'relational turn' in political geography in which there has been some critical rethinking on the subject of interspatial relations.⁹ This accords with the approach taken in this book, dealing as it does with shifting relations at many levels, from the local and national to the subregional, regional and global, and in which issues of identity, and the *politics of identity*, loom large.

The approaches sketched here contrast with rationalist and functionalist approaches that generally see the emergence of regions as responses to 'objective' problems such as security, trade and/or development. Integral to this reasoning is the notion that regions exist 'out there' and may be identified through objective material structures, organizations and actors.¹⁰ Although the rational/functionalist approaches are often taken as deeply opposed to the discursive/ideological formulations, I suggest that it is more productive to take them as complementary. After all, ideas are not disembodied discourses but are produced and developed in material circumstances, and vice versa.¹¹ All approaches contribute insights to the phenomena under investigation – phenomena that consist in the interaction of the ideational and the material in the production of 'the region'.

⁶ See Stephanie Lawson, 'Regionalizing the Pacific Rim: Economic, Political and Cultural Approaches', in Stephanie Lawson and Wayne Peake (eds.), *Globalization and Regionalization: Views from the Pacific Rim* (Sydney and Guadalajara: University of Technology Sydney and University of Guadalajara, 2007), 21–38.

⁷ Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (eds.), *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), 117.

⁸ J. Nicholas Entrikin, 'Introduction', in J. Nicholas Entrikin (ed.), *Regions: Critical Essays in Human Geography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), xvi.

⁹ Jack Corbett, *Being Political: Leadership and Democracy in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015), 9.

¹⁰ Fredrik Söderbaum, *Rethinking Regionalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 5.

¹¹ Bernard, 'Regions', 341.

1.2 Regions and Regionalization

Although globalization is generally taken to be a defining feature of the post-Cold War era, regionalization has also become characteristic of world order, albeit as a complementary rather than an opposing process.¹² And just as globalization has a history that can be traced back many centuries, so too has regionalization. For present purposes, however, it suffices to note that there have been several principal waves of regionalization since the nineteenth century. The first has been identified as a European phenomenon involving early customs unions and trade agreements. Another wave occurred after the First World War, again involving mostly European sites, but with extensions via such mechanisms as the Commonwealth system of preferences established by the United Kingdom (UK) in 1932.¹³ A further two waves occurred after the Second World War: first from the 1950s through to the 1970s, which included not only the European Economic Community but trade blocs instituted by developing countries; and second after the end of Cold War when regionalization became more clearly complementary to participation in the world economy.¹⁴ Each of these has involved some measure of voluntary integration in the economic and/or political spheres of two or more independent states, at least to the extent that a certain measure of authority in key areas of national policy has shifted towards the supranational level.¹⁵

Despite the setback occasioned by 'Brexit', and recent waves of populist nationalism in various parts of the region, the European Union (EU) still represents the most substantial experiment in regional cooperation and integration and is often used as a benchmark for regionalist projects elsewhere.¹⁶ Europe has also been the source of most theorizing about regions to date, which has therefore been largely Eurocentric, although that is changing.¹⁷ Elsewhere, integration may be nowhere near as deep, but there has still been much apparent enthusiasm for establishing regional organizations, even if the result is more a case of enhanced intergovernmentality than a supranational entity. Across Asia and the

¹² Stephanie Lawson, *International Relations*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 120.

¹³ Edward D. Mansfield and Helen V. Milner, 'The New Wave of Regionalism', *International Organization*, 53 (3), 1999, 596–7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

¹⁶ Mark Beeson, *Regionalism and Globalization in East Asia: Politics, Security and Economic Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2.

¹⁷ See Amitav Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Pacific, examples include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its various offshoots, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum (previously the South Pacific Forum, and hereafter ‘the Forum’). There is also the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum that, with a membership of major Pacific Rim countries such as China, India, Russia, the US and Japan, encompasses the world’s biggest economies as well as the countries with the most extensive land areas and populations. It also includes Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand – the three largest countries in Oceania.

Regional bodies are also incorporated within the United Nations (UN) system, most visibly the regional economic commissions linked to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹⁸ Currently, these are the Economic Commissions for Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Western Asia. Membership of these, however, lacks coherence as some countries have membership in more than one region (e.g., Russia and Turkey belong in both the European and the Asia and Pacific groups) while some groups contain exogenous members (e.g., the UK, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the US and Canada are members of the Latin America and Caribbean group). Moreover, a different set of regions has been constructed for the purposes of elections within the UN system, reflecting an array of geopolitical factors that have made it impossible for the UN to maintain a consistent approach.¹⁹ Indeed, the effort to define ‘region’ has long been abandoned by the UN. Nor is there a commonly accepted definition in the social sciences beyond a simple dictionary designation of ‘an area, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries’, including, for example, ‘equatorial regions’ or ‘wine-producing regions’.²⁰

Problems of definition notwithstanding, the rise of regional organizations in the post–Second World War era, along with an increasing array of global governance institutions, may suggest that the sovereign state model is no longer as central to world order as it once was. But most regional experiments outside of Europe have been concerned not to compromise state sovereignty and national interests. Given that independent sovereign statehood was, in the earlier days of post-war regionalization, still so recent for many countries, this is hardly surprising. Regionalization

¹⁸ Francis Baert, Tânia Feliciop and Philippe de Lombaerde, ‘Introduction’, in Philippe Lombaerde, Francis Baert and Tânia Feliciop (eds.), *The United Nations and the Regions: Third World Report on Regional Integration* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

²⁰ Originally located at en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/region.

outside of Europe has therefore taken the path of ‘light’ intergovernmentalism rather than integrative supranational governance. There is no reason to assume, however, that background cultural conditions or world-views in the non-European sphere are a permanent impediment to greater integration. It has been observed, for example, that pacifist, cosmopolitan and pan-regional cultures entailing a strong demand for some kind of supra-state governance may be found in various traditions of thought including Buddhism, Gandhian-inspired Hinduism, pan-Africanism, pan-Americanism and the Confucianist idea of ‘all-under-heaven’. All are oriented to the ideal of peace through cooperation.²¹

Nor is there any reason to reject out of hand all theorizing emanating from EU studies as inapplicable to other regions.²² As one commentator notes, elements of two of the leading theories of European integration, neofunctionalism and new intergovernmentalism, have much relevance for developments in Asia.²³ Approaches such as regime theory and post-functionalism may also have a wider purchase,²⁴ while ‘new regionalism’ studies from the late 1990s have contributed to a wider, more pluralistic approach capable of embracing the diversity of regional experiences around the world,²⁵ although some remain essentially Eurocentric in approach.²⁶ I say more about the issue of Eurocentrism shortly.

However conceived in theory, the boundaries and characteristics of regional entities, wherever they are found, are far from settled, but rather shift and change according to the dynamics at play at any given time, along with the discourses surrounding them. Similarly, the theorization of regions is ongoing given that ‘neither the object of study (ontology) nor the way of studying it (epistemology) has remained static’.²⁷ And

²¹ See Marion Telò and Anne Weyembergh, ‘Supranationality and Sovereignty in an Era of Increasing Complexity and Fragmentation’, in Mario Telò and Anne Weyembergh (eds.), *Supranational Governance at Stake: The EU’s External Competences Caught between Complexity and Fragmentation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 10.

²² For example, Ellen L. Frost, *Asia’s New Regionalism* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008), 11–14.

²³ Min-hyung Kim, ‘Integration Theory and ASEAN Integration’, *Pacific Focus*, 29 (3), 2014, 374–94.

²⁴ For recent discussions of the major theoretical approaches in the European context see Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, ‘Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26 (8), 2019, 1113–33; Antje Wiener, Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

²⁵ See, for example, Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Macmillan Reader* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

²⁶ Greg Fry, *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2019), 28.

²⁷ Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Theories of Regionalism’, in Mark Beeson and Richard Stubbs (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Asian Regionalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 13.

whereas regionalization in its earlier years was dominated by state elites, the contemporary scene involves an expanding cast of actors across various dimensions: security, trade, development, human rights, subregional identities and so forth.²⁸ This is certainly true of Oceania where regionalization now extends beyond the basic intergovernmentalism of the major regional organizations to involve civil society organizations (CSOs), corporate actors and other non-state entities and, not least, subregional groupings with their own agendas.

The ability of non-state actors, especially at the grassroots level, to organize and articulate a range of social, political and economic concerns and connect with all parts of Oceania, including the various diasporas, has been enhanced considerably by the spread of information communication technologies (ICTs) in recent years, leading to a growth in ‘bottom-up regionalism’.²⁹ Key issue areas include climate change, gender (in)equality and West Papuan self-determination, which, given the increasing availability of ICTs, have seen much more coordinated activism across the region. ICTs acquired additional importance during the COVID-19 pandemic at all levels of interaction and for all kinds of actors. And they will certainly continue to provide connectivity across a range of issue areas, enhancing the possibilities for ‘digital democracy’ throughout the region. Having said that, ICTs obviously come with risks as well as opportunities as recent adverse developments from cyber (in)security to dangerous disinformation attest.

1.3 Regionalism and Regional Identity

Although the terms regionalization and regionalism are often conflated, with the latter representing a convenient shorthand term for both, it is useful to distinguish between them.³⁰ First, regionalization, as described in Section 1.2, may be taken as implying a form of integration consisting largely in *processes* that generate a structure or order for which institutions and rules of governance – either formal or informal – are established by authoritative actors to achieve certain mutually

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See, generally, Jason Titifanue and Romitesh Kant, ‘Information and Communication Technologies as a Catalyst for Social Activism and “Bottom-Up” Regionalism’, in Lino Briguglio, Michael Briguglio, Sheila Bunwaree and Claire Slatter (eds.), *Handbook of Civil Society and Social Movements in Small States* (London: Routledge, 2023), 204–18.

³⁰ At least one other author has done, although the analysis does not go much beyond describing regionalism as ‘an urge for a regionalist order’, suggesting policies of cooperation and coordination, while regionalization is defined largely in terms of the growth of economic interdependence. See Fawn, “‘Regions’ and Their Study”, 12–13.

agreed ends.³¹ Understood in this way, regionalization reflects the practical development and institutionalization of ‘regionness’.

The EU, again, is generally taken as the example par excellence of formal regionalization, while organizations such as ASEAN – founded in 1967 and often said to be the most successful regional institution outside Europe³² – have historically relied on more informal rules of governance. A similar level of informality has characterized the Forum, Oceania’s premier regional institution, although that has been changing. The strong rules-based and heavily institutionalized approach of the EU is often taken to be more distinctively ‘Western’ in political style compared with non-Western formations. With ASEAN, for example, the notion that the organization proceeds only on the basis of a consensus among members, which also implies a strictly non-adversarial manner, is said to reflect the region’s cultural values – again in contrast with those of the West.³³ A notable deviation from the model occurred in 2021 when Myanmar’s military leadership was excluded from the ASEAN summit, a non-political representative being invited instead. This was ‘an unusually bold step for the consensus-driven bloc, which traditionally favours a policy of engagement and non-interference’.³⁴

Despite this deviation, there has usually been less concern with ‘the production and governance of regional space than the assertion of a collective Asian political culture that preserves state sovereignty’.³⁵ Similar claims have been made about diplomatic and political culture among Pacific Island leaders in Oceania where a ‘Pacific Way’ has been invoked to convey, among other things, the idea of a distinctive diplomatic style based on consensus decision-making. And again, this is usually contrasted with the West.³⁶ This provides a prime example of the tendency to dichotomize West/non-West political cultures. In this particular case, the dichotomy turns out to be not merely misleading but

³¹ Stephanie Lawson, ‘Asia/Europe and the Construction of Regional Governance’, in Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Regional Governance in the Asia-Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2009), 301–2; see also Björn Hettne, ‘Beyond the “New” Regionalism’, *New Political Economy*, 10 (4), 2005, 545.

³² Amitav Acharya, ‘How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism’, *International Organization*, 58 (2), 2004, 241.

³³ See, generally, Jurgen Haacke, *ASEAN’S Diplomatic and Security Culture: Development and Prospects* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).

³⁴ Ain Bandial, ‘ASEAN Excludes Myanmar Junta Leader from Summit in Rare Move’, 17 October 2021, Reuters (online).

³⁵ Jesse P. H. Poon, ‘Regionalism in the Asia Pacific: Is Geography Destiny’, *Area*, 33 (3), 2001, 252.

³⁶ Michael Haas, *The Pacific Way: Regional Cooperation in the South Pacific* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

false. The evidence shows that the politics of EU integration since the 1992 Treaty on European Union was agreed has in fact been characterized overwhelmingly by deliberative, consensus-oriented behavioural norms with actual voting to decide issues the rare exception rather than the norm.³⁷ Other studies confirm that EU members pursue consensus decision-making almost as an end in itself;³⁸ that ‘informal norms of consensus are the primary mode of decision-making’;³⁹ and that deliberation and consensus are ‘part of everyday EU decision-making’.⁴⁰ An EU website also highlights this: ‘Consensus means a proposal will only be adopted if all member states are in agreement. Formal voting does not take place, the member states deliberate until they reach general agreement. Traditionally, this is the most used method of decision-making in the European Council.’⁴¹

Despite the typecasting of politics and diplomatic styles in the EU as adversarial, in contrast with consensual non-Western forms, proving problematic, it has nonetheless become entrenched as a truism, illustrating the ease with which stereotyping is deployed as an aspect of identity politics. It is also in relation to purported political styles, based on cultural attributes, that aspects of regionalism as an ideational exercise, and the construction of identity on a broad scale, emerges. Here, the term regionalism is taken to denote an ideological package of assumed values and beliefs, motives and interests that surround invocations of region and that seek to shape the processes, activities and institutions that constitute ‘the region’ as an entity. As suggested earlier, however, most commentators use ‘regionalism’ to refer more generally to all the processes, institutionalization, ideologies, etc. that combine to form ‘an extremely complex and dynamic process founded upon not one but a series of interacting and often competing logics’.⁴² These include logics of economic

³⁷ Christopher J. Bickerton, Dermot Hodson and Uwe Puetter, ‘The New Intergovernmentalism and the Study of European Integration’, in Christopher J. Bickerton, Dermot Hodson and Uwe Puetter (eds.), *The New Intergovernmentalism: States and Supranational Actors in the Post-Maastricht Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

³⁸ Uwe Puetter, ‘The Centrality of Consensus and Deliberation in Contemporary EU Politics and the New Intergovernmentalism’, *Journal of European Integration*, 38 (5), 2016, 602.

³⁹ Dorothee Heisenberg, ‘The Institution of “Consensus” in the European Union: Formal versus Informal Decision-Making in the Council’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 44 (1), 2005, 65.

⁴⁰ See Amy Verdun, ‘Intergovernmentalism Old, Liberal, and New’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, 2020 (online).

⁴¹ EU Monitor, ‘European Council Decides by Consensus’ (online).

⁴² Andrew Hurrell, ‘One World? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society’, *International Affairs*, 83 (1), 2007, 130.

and technological transformation, societal integration, power and political competition, security (both interstate and societal), and identity and community. Regionalism may therefore be viewed as 'an unstable and indeterminate process of multiple and competing logics with no overriding teleology or single-end point', producing dynamic entities that are 'inherently unstable with little possibility of freezing the status quo'.⁴³

This can certainly be said of regionalism in Oceania where the physical boundaries of the region encapsulated by the formal institutions have shifted according to geopolitical circumstances and where competing logics interact endlessly. Examples include the effective transfer of the western half of the island of New Guinea (i.e., West Papua) from the South Pacific to Southeast Asia when it was incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia. Recent developments in Forum membership have seen new members from the major French territories, previously regarded as unqualified, now being admitted while others from the Micronesian sub-region threatened withdrawal.

Developments in Oceania's subregional organizations are also in flux. The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) has been facing challenges to its integrity and functioning due to membership issues concerning Indonesia and West Papua,⁴⁴ with divisions among existing members emerging as a source of friction. The Polynesian Leader's Group (PLG) is a relatively new grouping whose membership is not yet consolidated. Micronesian organizations – the Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit (MCES) and the Micronesian Presidents' Summit (MPS) – have asserted a more robust Micronesian profile in regional politics in recent years, challenging Forum solidarity in the process. These and other developments are the subject of detailed discussion in the chapters that follow.

Returning to broader themes, both regionalization as a process and regionalism as an ideology and set of discourses, which together produce 'the region', are implicated in the formation of regional (and sub-regional) identities. This brings us to three basic interrelated characteristics of identities, best described as relational, situational and instrumental.

First, identity formation is relational to the extent that it requires a contrasting image against which a form of self-identity can be constructed. The 'self/other' or 'we/they' dimension is common to virtually every form of identity politics, drawing on various ideational motifs to establish

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Technically, the western part of the island of New Guinea now consists of two Indonesian provinces (Papua and West Papua), but 'West Papua' commonly refers to both. It has also been called, at various times, Netherlands (or Dutch) New Guinea, West New Guinea, Irian Barat, Irian Jaya Barat, Irian Jaya, Papua Barat and Papua/West Papua.

sameness and difference while tending to produce homogenized entities on either side of the divide. At the broadest level, the West/non-West or North/South developmental divide in the Oceanic context sees Australia and New Zealand placed on one side by virtue of their history as (proxy European) colonizing agents, their liberal democratic (Western) political institutions, dominant (Anglo) populations, (advanced) economic status and (again Western) geopolitical orientations and alignments. In contrast, Pacific Island countries are characterized as Indigenous, historically subjected to (mainly European/US) colonialism with very different traditional political systems (partly obliterated by imposed systems) and developing economies. Their geopolitical alignments are presently oriented to the Western sphere, but that is also subject to change.

An overarching expression of identity in the Island Pacific has long been encapsulated in the idea of the 'Pacific Way', as noted earlier. This also appears to compromise the extent to which Australia and New Zealand can be seen as genuine members of a regional society with shared norms, values and orientations to processes, policies and other issues. Relational processes of identification and differentiation therefore tend to shape metanarratives casting some states as belonging in a region and others as alien or out of place.⁴⁵ But this depends on the political circumstances at any given time.

While there is some substance in the characterizations sketched here, they are not the whole story. Within the Island Pacific, and despite the homogenizing imagery of the Pacific Way, the self/other dimension is also evident in formulations based on the three geocultural entities first devised by early European explorers and colonizers, *viz.*, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. These have been invested with considerable significance by local actors and now play a key role in broader regional politics. A Melanesia/Polynesia divide has emerged from time to time, while the notion of a Melanesian 'brotherhood' is also highly significant in the ongoing issues surrounding Indonesia's claims to West Papua as well as the ongoing colonial situation in New Caledonia. Manifestations of a Micronesian self, or 'Micronesianism', previously much weaker than both Melanesian and Polynesian subregional identities, have added another dimension to contemporary subregional politics.

National and subnational identities are of course additional elements in the mix of regional politics, often aligning with the subregional entities

⁴⁵ Wali Aslam, Leslie Wehner, Kei Koga, Janis van der Westhuizen, Cameron G. Thies and Feliciano de Sá Guimarães, 'Misplaced States and the Politics of Regional Identity: Towards a Theoretical Framework', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 33 (4), 2020, 506.

but sometimes conflicting with them. Discourses within the Island Pacific often move between asserting a common identity for all Pacific people at one end of the spectrum and, at the other end, asserting the absolute distinctiveness or uniqueness of each and every island group. Taken together, all these factors appear to make the notion of Oceania as a coherent entity, seamlessly incorporating Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries, highly problematic.

The second, situational characteristic inherent in identities means that they are activated, and relationalities established or emphasized, according to the dynamics of particular contexts. It is important to highlight that it is a *political* context that counts here, something that may be overlooked in approaches that assume that ‘contexts’ are, almost by definition, determined primarily by cultural and/or historical factors, providing a fixed backdrop against which political options are constrained by the limits of ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’.⁴⁶ Identities are flexible rather than set in stone, although some may be more flexible (or inflexible) than others. Fiji, for example, has been able to face either way when it comes to the Melanesia/Polynesia divide. New Zealand’s identity, too, may be adjusted according to circumstances. While identifying closely with Australia and the West more generally on a whole range of issues, New Zealand also orients itself more specifically to a Pacific Island identity, at least in the context of regional politics. This is sometimes expressed as a point of differentiation vis-à-vis Australia when it is asserted that New Zealand is ‘more Pacific’ than Australia.⁴⁷ But in other situations, there is a limit to exactly how far identities may plausibly be stretched in any given situation. Indonesia’s attempt to take on a partial Melanesian identity to legitimate its claims to West Papua is a case in point.

Third, identities are often instrumental: they may be deployed strategically in the pursuit of goals, or as defensive mechanisms in the face of unwelcome external pressures, or when internal critics challenge incumbent elites. Again, this is a political phenomenon in which the relational and situational aspects of identity formation are implicated. As we shall see, the ‘Pacific Way’ as a pan-regional motif encompassing the Island Pacific, along with subregional, national and subnational expressions of identities, have all been used strategically at different times and in different political contexts. China has also engaged in this kind of politics, promoting an identity as a South–South development partner to strengthen

⁴⁶ Stephanie Lawson, ‘Political Studies and the Contextual Turn: A Normative/Methodological Critique’, *Political Studies*, 56 (3), 2008, 584–603.

⁴⁷ Michael Goldsmith, ‘Diplomatic Rivalries and Cultural One-Upmanship: New Zealand’s Long Quest to Become More Pacific than Australia’, *Round Table*, 106 (2), 2017, 187–96.

engagement with the Island Pacific by invoking an element of sameness while placing traditional Western donors in the category of ‘other’.⁴⁸

In addition to the relational, situational and instrumental characteristics of identity formation, identities also tend to be layered, or rather multilayered. One can identify as a member of a family, a village, a province, a state and a region, along with an ethnic or linguistic group, a religion, a profession, membership of a CSO, with one’s gender and/or sexuality, and so on, all at the same time. In diaspora communities, further layering may occur through the expression of hybrid identities such as Fijian-Australian at one level while also adopting a broad Pacific Islander identity at another.⁴⁹ In the sphere of regional politics, it seems obvious that layering operates with local, national, subregional and pan-regional identities all coming into play. It is equally obvious that, depending on the political context, one layer may have more salience and be expressed more strongly at any given time.

In light of these characteristic features of dynamic identity production and deployment, it is difficult to cast identities as stable or permanent. Older conceptions of identity assuming immutability have fallen out of favour, especially given the contemporary circumstances of rapid social change and the ever-increasing interconnections between communities around the globe, not to mention the phenomenon of migration, all of which have impacted significantly, not only on island communities in Oceania, but on Australia and New Zealand as well.⁵⁰

Yet another use of the term ‘identity politics’, in both domestic and international contexts, has been in application to marginalized groups struggling to achieve social justice vis-à-vis dominant groups. Pertinent examples range from the Black Lives Matter movement to the global Indigenous rights movement. Critics of such struggles tend to use ‘identity politics’ as a negative epithet, portraying the groups as simply claiming an exaggerated victimhood to make demands. Other criticisms, while acknowledging the propensity of some activists to make ‘naïve, totalizing, or unnuanced claims’, suggest that the public rhetoric of identity politics nonetheless serves useful and empowering purposes even as these sometimes belie the complexity of claims to shared experiences or common group characteristics.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Denghua Zhang and Stephanie Lawson, ‘China in Pacific Regional Politics’, *Round Table*, 106 (2), 2017, 198.

⁴⁹ See Kirsten McGavin, ‘Being “Nesian”: Pacific Island Identity in Australia’, *Contemporary Pacific*, 26 (1), 2014, 126–54.

⁵⁰ Toon van Meijl, ‘Introduction’, in Toon van Meijl and Jella Miedema (eds.), *Shifting Images of Identity in the Pacific* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), 2.

⁵¹ Cressida Heyes, ‘Identity Politics’, in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2020 (online).

Issues in identity politics, especially with respect to the identity of international actors (states, regional institutions, corporations, CSOs and other entities), are also prominent in the literature on social constructivism.⁵² In political studies, constructivism has featured prominently in International Relations as well in comparative political studies, especially in the political culture literature. But what this literature has not investigated in much depth are the most basic concepts used in identity construction – ‘culture’, ‘tradition’, ‘ethnicity’ and associated concepts – all of which tend to be taken for granted rather than examined in any depth. Further, and as suggested earlier, the specific *political* context in which these concepts are deployed is often left unexplored or at least underanalysed.⁵³ So although few doubt the importance of ‘culture’ in contemporary international politics, there is a need to investigate ‘just how culture matters, the extent to which it matters, and the conditions under which it matters’.⁵⁴ Studies of identity politics as configured around both regional and subregional formations in Oceania are well suited to addressing such questions.

The insights of social constructivism are, however, important in highlighting certain dynamics of regional development, emphasizing as it does the role of norms and identities, as perceived or interpreted by various relevant actors – governments, businesses, civic groups, etc. – in defining or redefining that which becomes ‘a region’.⁵⁵ As noted earlier, the first step in the conceptualization of a region as a delineated, named entity associated with a particular set of characteristics is its emergence as an idea or a convergence of ideas. It is in this sense that ‘the region’ is not ‘simply there’ but rather depends on its articulation in discourse.⁵⁶ What we now call the Pacific Ocean has clearly been there for millennia, but its conceptualization as a geographic area did not exist until European explorers began to map it from the sixteenth century onwards.⁵⁷

⁵² For example, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Ted Hopf, ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’, *International Security*, 23 (1), 1998: 171–200; Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Peter Katzenstein (ed.), *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Amitav Acharya, ‘How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism’, *International Organization*, 58 (2), 2004, 239–75.

⁵³ See Stephanie Lawson, *Culture and Context in World Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 3.

⁵⁴ Hurrell, ‘One World?’, 127.

⁵⁵ Raimo Väyrynen, ‘Regionalism: Old and New’, *International Studies Review*, 5 (1), 2003, 26.

⁵⁶ Wendy Larner and William Walters, ‘The Political Rationality of “New Regionalism”: Towards a Genealogy of the Region’, *Theory and Society*, 31 (3), 2002, 391.

⁵⁷ K. R. Howe, *The Quest for Origins: Who First Discovered and Settled the Pacific Islands?* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 24.

It has also been observed that regions are politically both constructed and contested, not just by relevant actors within the region but by external actors as well.⁵⁸ Oceania and its subregions have, more often than not, been defined by external actors. But while early definitions by explorers and colonial powers still carry considerable force, they have been adapted and modified over the years by actors within Oceania to reflect the different context of post-colonial regional politics. All this reinforces the point that regional boundaries are determined not simply by the ‘givens’ of physical geography or a static conception of culture, but invariably reflect shifts in the ‘powers, norms and interests of political leaders’.⁵⁹ But, again, material facts cannot be discounted. Notwithstanding that physical land masses and waterways will always be subject to change due to rising or falling sea levels, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, the accretion of coral, etc., certain physical features of geographic space are indeed ‘just there’. The islands and populations that constitute the Melanesian subregion, for example, clearly have a material existence that is independent of particular social observations, acts of naming and modes of interpretation and analysis. But the identity and meaning of the islands – or rather their people *as Melanesian* – are social and political constructs, not material facts, and are created through interpretive practices that assign meaning and value.

This brings us to naming practices in identity politics and the extent to which these become part of the symbolic construction of meanings about place, while also functioning as powerful determinants of inclusion and exclusion.⁶⁰ It follows that names such as Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, along with the ‘Pacific Islands’, ‘Oceania’, the ‘Indo-Pacific’ and so on, are, quite apart from designating groupings of physical land masses and ocean spaces, used to ‘humanize’ an area, to endow it with associations and meaning, to either identify it with ‘us’ or distinguish it from ‘us’, setting boundaries in the mind as much as on the map.⁶¹ Mental maps also guide understandings of regional or

⁵⁸ Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Regionalism in Comparative Perspective’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 31 (2), 1996, 133.

⁵⁹ Nye cited in *ibid.*

⁶⁰ See Lawrence D. Berg and Robin A. Kearns, ‘Naming as Norming: “Race”, Gender and the Identity Politics of Naming Places in Aoteroa/New Zealand’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 14 (1), 1996, 99–122; and Laura Kostanzi and Guy Puzey, ‘Trends in Onomastics: An Introduction’, in Guy Puzey and Laura Costanzi (eds.), *Names and Naming: People, Places, Perceptions and Power* (Bristol: Multimedia Matters, 2016), 1.

⁶¹ R. Gerard Ward, ‘Widening Worlds, Shrinking Worlds? The Reshaping of Oceania’, Pacific Lecture delivered for the Centre for the Contemporary Pacific (Canberra: Australian National University, 12 October 1999), 2.

international order and decision-making.⁶² And precisely because they are socially and politically constructed, they are subject to continuous reconstruction through ongoing acts of interpretation as relevant contexts change. This reinforces the point that the idea of region combines both material and virtual elements that are malleable rather than fixed.⁶³ The shift from ‘Asia-Pacific’ to ‘Indo-Pacific’ to designate the broader strategic region within which Oceania is located provides a prime example. Having said that, identities derived from such constructs, which feed into issues of power, legitimacy and authority, and guide strategic and diplomatic choices, among many other things, can become deeply entrenched through processes of institutionalization and take on an aura of permanence.

1.4 The Concept of Regional Society

The idea of a ‘regional society’ derives from the more general concept of ‘international society’ developed by the English School of International Relations theory. It is part of a longer-standing tradition of liberal international thought concerned to elucidate the conditions under which peace and security can be achieved in an anarchical international sphere, highlighting the extent to which a certain cooperative *social order* is nonetheless achievable among states – an order that goes beyond a mere *system* in which interaction prompts states simply to observe and evaluate the behaviour of other states as a means of calculating one’s own particular self-interest. ‘A society of states ... exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values ... conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.’⁶⁴

Empirically, a number of regional societies around the globe can be identified, each of which has its own structural and normative frameworks.⁶⁵ One assumption that flows from this is that the greater the commonality of cultural ties, which increases in likelihood among states in a particular region, the greater the chances of developing a thicker, more coherent form of regional society. It is also the case, however, that

⁶² Rory Medcalf, ‘Contest for the Indo-Pacific’, *Australian Outlook*, 1 July 2020 (online).

⁶³ Cf. Anssi Paasi, ‘The Resurgence of the “Region” and “Regional Identity”’: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Observations on Regional Dynamics in Europe’, *Review of International Studies*, 35 (1), 2009, 131.

⁶⁴ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 13.

⁶⁵ Yannis A. Stivachtis, ‘Interrogating Regional International Societies, Questioning the Global International Society’, *Global Discourse*, 5 (3), 2015, 327.

rivalries and tensions are often higher among states in close proximity within a regional complex, regardless of assumed cultural commonalities, than among states far removed geographically. This is what makes efforts to socialize states on a regional basis all the more important. The EU is founded precisely on the notion of a regional society, prompted initially by the devastating experience of its 'warring states' history, and dedicated to building a society of states underpinned by common values, interests, rules and institutions.

One study with a strong security focus offers a comparative analysis of several regions in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, examining all the difficulties confronting attempts to establish regional societies in these locations, chief among which are the legacies of colonialism and problems of state-making in the early decolonization period. These legacies include the very legitimacy of certain states in the perception both of their own citizens, or at least significant groups of them, as well as of neighbouring states. Together with lack of capacity across a range of state responsibilities, such factors have contributed to inadequate 'stateness' as the basis on which to build regional order and, in turn, a robust regional society.⁶⁶ Looking to the Island Pacific, one can identify similar problems in state-building, especially in Melanesia, but many of the problems visited on other parts of the former colonial world are either absent or very much mitigated by other factors. And while there have been serious conflicts within states – notably Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Indonesia's West Papua provinces – conflict between or among the states of Oceania as a whole has never been an issue, making the project of building a regional society less problematic.

Regional *civil* society, which contributes significantly to the broader concept of regional society, is also worth highlighting.⁶⁷ The early theorization of regions took regionalist projects to be largely statist affairs, rendering the region as not much more than an amalgamation of national spaces represented by state elites while ignoring the role of non-state actors, or treating them simply as incidental to state-based ones.⁶⁸ 'Civil society' names the space in which many other actors pursue their interests separate from or outside the sphere of state-organized activity. Although the term was once used mainly in relation to private interests operating in the commercial sphere, corporate power and interests

⁶⁶ Mohammed Ayoob, 'From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 53 (3), 1999, 251.

⁶⁷ On this subject see Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 141–9.

⁶⁸ Bernard, 'Regions', 336.

are now generally seen as aligned with the state – or perhaps this is the other way around, since state interests are often aligned with those of the corporate world. Either way, corporate or commercial interests are usually excluded from the realm of civil society. Thus ‘civil society’ in the contemporary period is now more commonly applied to the plethora of voluntary associations – commonly known as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the more recently favoured term civil society organizations (CSOs) – that promote social goods both within national societies as well as through the broader spheres of regional and global organization.

While one can point to generalized features of CSOs, the causes and ideologies they promote, the activities they engage in, the resources they can draw on, the contexts within which they operate and the strategies they deploy all vary enormously. Encompassed within the very wide and diverse spectrum of CSOs, then, are:

[A]nti-poverty movements, business forums, caste solidarity groups, clan and kinship mobilisations, consumer advocates, democracy promoters, development cooperation initiatives, disabled persons’ alliances, environmental campaigns, ethnic lobbies, faith-based associations, human rights advocates, labour unions, local community groups, peace drives, peasant movements, philanthropic foundations, professional bodies, relief organisations, sexual minorities’ associations, think tanks, women’s networks, youth groups and more.⁶⁹

Almost all of these varying causes and/or interests are represented across Oceania, not just within national spheres but increasingly across the regional and subregional spheres as well, and extending beyond to the global level.

Despite their apparent status as entities pursuing social goods independently of the state, and sometimes in opposition to state policy, CSOs frequently accept, and indeed seek, state funding or subsidies for their activities. This dependence, says one critical theorist, inclines the objectives of CSOs towards conformity with the established order, rather than presenting any challenge to it.⁷⁰ Thus if CSOs have a role in promoting emancipatory or counter-hegemonic political, social or economic discourses or activities with a view to actually transforming an existing order in which current injustices prevail, such a role may at the very least be compromised. Be that as it may, CSOs have played a key part in ‘civil society regionalization’ in Oceania, as they have

⁶⁹ Jan Aart Scholte, ‘Global Civil Society: Opportunity or Obstacle for Democracy?’, *Development Dialogue*, 49, November 2007, 17.

⁷⁰ Robert W. Cox, ‘Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order’, *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1), 1999, 11.

elsewhere,⁷¹ finding greater efficacy in the pursuit of their common causes while contributing further to the substance of regional society in the process.

1.5 Area Studies, the Modernization Paradigm and Regions as Culture Areas

The analysis of regions and the particular attributes assigned to them must also recognize their constitution through scholarship. 'Area Studies' emerged as a new scholarly venture in the post-1945 period, especially in the US, denoting multidisciplinary research and teaching programs organized around the study of particular regions. The latter were defined in the US 'in large part by the conditions of the Cold War: East Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania'.⁷² Note that North America is missing from this list, presumably because it is not 'other'.

The US formulation of Area Studies in this period attracted much criticism, mainly because of its association with geostrategic interests and the recognition that the production of knowledge through its programs was less a disinterested intellectual enterprise than the manifestation of the projection of power and a quest for domination.⁷³ Indeed, it has been suggested that the whole point of the modern university system, which emerged around the beginning of the nineteenth century, was precisely to provide for the production of knowledge essential to the expansionary interests of Europe and the US.⁷⁴ This claim, however, is somewhat exaggerated. Universities and colleges have always engaged in knowledge production over a substantial range of subject matter that has little to do with 'expansionary interests'. The very same universities (mainly in 'the West') have also provided the means by which the most scathing scholarly critiques of such enterprises have been produced.

The institutionalization of Area Studies is also said to have been driven by the entrenchment of modernization theory in American social science and in policy circles as an aid to the spread of US hegemony. But again,

⁷¹ For example, Marta Reuter, *Networking a Region into Existence? Dynamics of Civil Society Regionalization in the Baltic Sea Area* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2007).

⁷² Neil L. Waters, 'Introduction', in Neil L. Waters (ed.), *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies* (Hanover, NH: Middlebury College Press, 2000), 2.

⁷³ See, generally, David Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ Masao Miyoshi, 'Ivory Tower in Escrow', in Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian (eds.), *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 22.

some forms also provided ‘critical spaces for generating opposition to imperial interventions’.⁷⁵ However, it is the link between modernization theory, Area Studies and US imperialism that has received the most attention. One study of Japanese historiography in the post-war period notes that the Ford Foundation’s Area Studies program was designed only following ‘intense negotiations’ with various government agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency.⁷⁶ Modernization theory also sought to legitimate US Cold War ideology by promoting the belief that capitalism and liberal democracy provided the essential foundations for successful development. At the same time, modernization theory in the US responded to decolonization by presenting itself as an anti-imperialist and non-racist alternative to the ‘civilizing mission’ of the old European empires.⁷⁷ Some may find the idea that the US represented both anti-imperial and non-racist approaches almost laughable.

Modernization theory also sought to present itself as scientific in a positivist sense, delivering ‘precision and rigour in particular through a greater reliance on formalization, mathematization and measurement’ in comparison with the ‘scattered historical erudition of regional specialization and the traditional teaching of political theory, considered to be vague and value-laden’.⁷⁸ Numerous critiques of the positivist turn in social science, as well as defences of interpretive/historical methodologies, have been advanced over the past half century or so, and there is no need to rehearse all these here. Suffice to say that research in both the natural sciences and the social sciences is a human activity – and therefore by definition a *social* activity – attended by all the dynamics characterizing social interaction that in turn impinge on and compromise the quest for objective knowledge.⁷⁹ With specific reference to the concept of modernization embedded in the theory, it has been suggested that, when ‘stripped of its scientific pretensions’, it became ‘little more than a classificatory device distinguishing processes of social change deemed “progressive” from those which are not’.⁸⁰

A further consequence of modernization theory’s influence was the strengthening of the dichotomous construction of modernity vis-à-vis the traditional, with the latter often viewed as impeding social change. Traditional societies were characterized by a predominance of ascriptive,

⁷⁵ Vicente L. Rafael, ‘Regionalism, Area Studies, and the Accidents of Agency’, *American Historical Review*, 104 (4), 1999, 1209.

⁷⁶ Sebastian Conrad, ‘“The Colonial Ties Are Liquidated”: Modernization Theory, Post-War Japan and the Global Cold War’, *Past and Present*, 216 (1), 2012, 182.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁸ Nicolas Guilot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and the Politics of Global Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 109.

⁷⁹ Lawson, *Theories*, 2–4.

⁸⁰ Tipps, ‘Modernization Theory’, 222.

particularistic, diffuse and affective patterns of action, extended kinship structures with a multiplicity of functions, little spatial and social mobility, a deferential system of social stratification, mainly primary economic activities, a tendency towards autarchy of social units, an undifferentiated political structure with elitist and hierarchical sources of authority, and so on. Modern societies, on the other hand, displayed a predominance of achievement, a nuclear family structure serving more limited functions, complex and highly differentiated occupational systems, high rates of both spatial and social mobility, a preponderance of secondary economic activities and production for exchange, the institutionalization of change and self-sustained growth, differentiated political structures with rational-legal sources of authority, and so forth.⁸¹ The tradition/modernity binary or dichotomy has been much criticized over the years, as has the modernization school of thought, with challenges to the latter coming especially from dependency and world system theory.⁸² Modernization theory has often been declared obsolete, but its assumptions remain highly influential and ideas about linear progress in development still have much currency among actors in both developed and developing countries.

One of the more interesting aspects of the tradition/modernity debate is not so much the accuracy of the categories or their contents, but the extent to which they represent certain ideological positions. One early commentator, apart from highlighting the many variations in the relationship between traditional forms and newer institutions and values masked by the dichotomy, noted the extent to which both tradition and modernity could be used as 'explicit ideologies operating in the context of politics in new nations'.⁸³ So while US developmentalist approaches were underpinned by a modernizing ideology during the Cold War – of which neoliberalism in the contemporary period is a direct successor – the phenomenon of revivalism with respect to culture, custom or tradition has proved equally powerful, and no less in the island countries of Oceania than anywhere else.⁸⁴ Moreover, in an age of identity politics, this phenomenon is observable not just in the former colonial world but throughout much of the global North as well. All these issues have much

⁸¹ J. Samuel Valenzuela and Arturo Valenzuela, 'Modernization and Dependency: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Latin American Underdevelopment', *Comparative Politics*, 10 (4), 1978, 537–8.

⁸² Alvin Y. So, *Social Change and Development: Modernization, Dependency and World-System* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990).

⁸³ Joseph R. Gusfield, 'Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change', *American Journal of Sociology*, 72 (4), 1967, 352.

⁸⁴ Stephanie Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga, and Western Samoa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

relevance to aspects of political economy discussed in Chapter 11, as well as to other themes throughout the book.

The creation of Area Studies also led to the search for ‘deeper cultural unities’ in discrete areas or regions which effectively changed ‘a cartographic convenience into an entity with an identity internal to itself’.⁸⁵ Indeed, the study of specific cultures has been described as ‘the soul of area studies’.⁸⁶ The notion that the world is comprised essentially of broad culture areas has a ‘venerable history in anthropology’ with the discipline providing important conceptual tools.⁸⁷ Writing about developments in the US, and well before the emergence of Area Studies, one commentator noted that specializations in the discipline were often by regions, the boundaries of which seemed ‘inherent in the phenomena themselves’.⁸⁸ Assuming a common origin for the ‘same mesh of cultural traits’ among groups in geographically contiguous areas, the term ‘culture area’, whose boundaries stopped at the point at which the particular traits were no longer found, seemed an appropriate formulation for ‘expressing the regional character of human social behaviour’.⁸⁹ Although the notion of culture areas (and the entire discipline of anthropology) have often been associated with the intellectual crime of exoticism,⁹⁰ they have nonetheless provided useful ‘discursive frameworks for organizing disciplinary practices’ and are likely to continue to do so, as work on the Melanesian culture area, for example, attests.⁹¹ But the ‘culture areas’ of Oceania provide much more than this. They also provide a discursive field around which important subregional political affiliations have formed.

1.6 Framing the Analysis

Contemporary analyses of regional politics, or at least those attuned to developments outside of Europe, may also benefit from insights provided by postcolonial approaches. These have been highly influential in

⁸⁵ Emerson quoted in Grant Evans, ‘Between the Global and the Local There Are Regions, Culture Areas, and National States: A Review Article’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 33 (1), 2002, 148.

⁸⁶ Waters, ‘Introduction’, 5.

⁸⁷ Bruce M. Knauft, *From Primitive to Postcolonial in Melanesia and Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 4–5.

⁸⁸ Clark Wissler, ‘The Culture-Area Concept in Social Anthropology’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 32 (6), 1927, 883–4, 891.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 891. Another author notes the use in both Germany and the US in this period to deploy the concept of area studies in curating museum collections – see R. Lederman, ‘Globalization and the Future of Culture Areas: Melanesianist Anthropology in Transition’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27, 1998, 427–49.

⁹⁰ Lederman, ‘Globalization and the Future of Culture Areas’, 428.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

framing the terms of debate about the colonial experience and its aftermath and are obviously relevant to Oceania where issues of colonialism, past and present, have figured so prominently. The present study, while acknowledging the important contribution made by these approaches, is nonetheless concerned critically to examine some of the major assumptions implicit in conventional postcolonial studies, especially as these are configured around the West/non-West divide.⁹²

The notion of the ‘postcolonial’, from which is derived ‘postcolonial theory’, ‘postcolonial discourse’ and ‘postcolonialism’ – terms that are often used interchangeably – has come to embrace a field of meaning that goes well beyond its literal/temporal sense in designating something that simply comes ‘after colonialism’. The latter is catered for by the hyphenated ‘post-colonial’, which is usually intended to indicate the more straightforward temporal meaning and is used in the present study to refer simply to events or developments occurring after formal independence. Where the (unhyphenated) term ‘postcolonial’ appears, it reflects an explicit ideological/theoretical approach – noting that ideology and theory share much common ground in the social scientific enterprise. This is because ‘postcolonial’ without the hyphen usually denotes a normative approach to the interpretation of both past and present in the former colonial world which is strongly *anti*-colonial. More specifically, it claims to constitute a form of counter-hegemonic discourse that critically addresses both the interpretation of the colonial past and its ongoing effects in the present, as well as manifestations of neocolonialism.

This further entails a concern with ‘hegemonic regionalism’ and the prospects for ‘post-hegemonic regionalism’ that, in the case of Oceania, involves a rejection of economism and the reassertion of Indigenous and civil society concerns.⁹³ Absent from much of this debate, however, are issues of internal colonialism and the role of local elites in perpetuating hegemonic practices as well as manifestations of colonialism and neocolonialism emanating from non-European or non-Western sources. One aim of the present study is to confront these particular issues.

As for the genesis of postcolonialism, it is usually claimed to have occurred within literary studies,⁹⁴ and the late Edward Said, a professor

⁹² The same approach is taken in ‘decolonial studies’ now popular in Latin American studies. See Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

⁹³ See Helen Leslie and Kirsty Wild, ‘Post-hegemonic Regionalism in Oceania: Examining the Development Potential of the New Framework of Pacific Regionalism’, *Pacific Review*, 31 (1), 2018, 20–37. See also Katerina Teaiwa, ‘On Decoloniality: A View from Oceania’, *Postcolonial Studies*, 23 (4), 2020, 601–3.

⁹⁴ See, generally, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002).

of comparative literature, is widely regarded as having produced the founding text in the genre.⁹⁵ The influence of his work has extended to virtually every field within the humanities and social sciences including historiography, which has produced a distinctive body of ‘colonial discourse theory’.⁹⁶ The geographical reach of Said’s ideas has also been extended. For while his work concentrated largely on the ‘Near Orient’, showing how this region functioned to provide Europe’s major ‘cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other’,⁹⁷ his critique of the phenomenon of ‘Orientalism’ as perpetrated by European scholars in the heyday of the European empires has been put to work in virtually every part of the world that has experienced colonialism in one form or another, including Oceania.⁹⁸ This has produced ‘Oceanism’ as an ‘homogenizing project of power and discourse’ creating in turn ‘racialized identities, essentialized mentalities and cultural typologies’.⁹⁹ This trend, incidentally, which effectively universalizes Said’s framework, contradicts the cultural and historical specificity of cases that is so often invoked in postcolonial studies as well as in studies in the contextualist mode that has dominated much recent historiography.¹⁰⁰

Said’s notion of Orientalism consists in a discourse through which Europeans have historically represented the ‘Oriental’ as an essentially inferior ‘Other’ against which contrasting positive images of the European/Western self have been constructed. These claims are embedded primarily in a critique of colonialism focusing, in particular, on the links between power, representation and knowledge.¹⁰¹ Postcolonial critique more generally is said to have emerged as the product of resistance to colonialism and imperialism and so identifies primarily with the subject position of anti-colonial activists.¹⁰² Postcolonial theory is

⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

⁹⁶ D. A. Washbrook, ‘Orient and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire’, in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, ed. Robin W. Winks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 596–8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Greg Fry, ‘Framing the Islands: Knowledge and Power in Changing Australian Images of the “South Pacific”’, in David Hanlon and Geoffrey M. White (eds.), *Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 29–30; Robert Nicole, ‘Resisting Orientalism: Pacific Literature in French’, in Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (eds.), *Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 265–90.

⁹⁹ Jeffrey Sissons, ‘Conspiracy, Culture and Class in Oceania: A View from the Cook Islands’, *Contemporary Pacific*, 10 (1), 1998, 164.

¹⁰⁰ For a critique of these approaches see Lawson, ‘Political Studies’.

¹⁰¹ See Said, *Orientalism*, 6–9.

¹⁰² Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15, 19.

therefore associated largely with forms of resistance to European or Western imperialism and colonialism, the body of ideas that supported it and its ongoing effects. So, although postcolonial theory is often seen as far from singular and coherent,¹⁰³ its central themes are clear enough.

One critique of standard postcolonial studies has highlighted a tendency to focus narrowly on the legacies of colonialism in India, which 'has a centrality in the literature of postcolonial studies not inferior to India's erstwhile position as the jewel in the British crown'.¹⁰⁴ But even when they go beyond this single case, the range remains narrow, both geographically and empirically, while generalization tends to be excessive. Consequently, 'their theoretical formulations tend to neglect the historical and linguistic features of colonial empires outside the Anglo-American framework'.¹⁰⁵ Notwithstanding an interest in recovering the agency of local actors in non-Western settings, postcolonial approaches see imperialism as a 'Western' problem, thereby reproducing the very Eurocentrism that they purport to combat.¹⁰⁶

There is also a tendency to overhomogenize European thought, as if all Europeans shared a single mindset.¹⁰⁷ One can readily extrapolate from this that non-European or Indigenous people also tend to be overhomogenized. The result is the construction of a 'white global culture' against which a postcolonial world can be defined. Such tendencies elide 'internal fractures' in places such as India where the experiences of tribal minority peoples since independence has been no better and, in some cases, possibly worse than at any time during the colonial period.¹⁰⁸ This highlights the phenomenon of 'internal colonialism' where less powerful groups within a state are now subject to mechanisms of genocide, exploitation, cultural devastation and so on. The field of postcolonial studies, however, remains much more attuned to the legacies of Western colonialism and its subjugation and exploitation of various non-Western subjects.

This also raises the issue of Eurocentrism in approaches to the study of regions and other aspects of global politics, history, economics and society, defined as 'a cultural phenomenon that views the histories

¹⁰³ Gregory Castle, 'Editor's Introduction: Resistance and Complicity in Postcolonial Studies', in Gregory Castle (ed.), *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), xiv.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Thomas Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Young, *Postcolonialism*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1988), 9–10.

and cultures of non-Western societies from a European or Western perspective'.¹⁰⁹ Beyond that, it is said to function as a universal signifier assuming the superiority of European or, more generally, Western cultural values over those of non-European societies.¹¹⁰ Eurocentrism is a variation of the more general phenomenon of ethnocentricity that refers to the tendency not only to see the world through the particular lens provided by one's own ethnic group, community or society, but to assume that the culture and values inherent in that group are superior or at least to be preferred to those of other groups. But Eurocentrism is seen to be especially problematic because it is implicated in the exercise of power on a massive scale, not only in terms of 'hard power', as in the deployment of coercive military or economic means, but in other more subtle ways as well, such as through the imposition of cultural values. Historically, colonialism has been a major vector of Eurocentrism, and the continued dominance of the West in global politics to date has ensured that its impact remains profound.

Applying the term 'Eurocentric' to the ideas of an individual or a group, however, is not just a neutral evaluative move, but is itself a political move. It is certainly part and parcel of contemporary intellectual discourses revolving around issues of identity, not just of those that are the subject (or object) of study but of those doing the studying. The invocation of Eurocentricity complements the West/non-West (or the North/South) divide so often deployed in world political studies generally, and postcolonial studies in particular. It also posits an insider/outsider dichotomy as a rhetorical device that, like the West/non-West divide, depends on its simplicity for effect. In the postcolonial world, scholars of Western/European origin may be regarded as less authentic interpreters of non-Western histories and cultures, with Indigenous voices given much more credence, not just because they are more 'authentic' but because it also shifts the balance of rhetorical power in their direction. Clearly, one's speaking position matters a great deal, and it seems incontestable that a speaker located within a particular context has insights not available to those outside, although what exactly constitutes 'context' and where its boundaries begin and end is no straightforward matter.¹¹¹ It is equally obvious that neither Western nor Indigenous scholars, as with political figures or with the members of any particular group of even moderate complexity, speak with one voice.

¹⁰⁹ Arun Kumar Pokhrel, 'Eurocentrism', in Deen K. Chatterjee (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Global Justice* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011) (online).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See Lawson, 'Political Studies'.

Critiques of Eurocentrism in comparative regional studies have also raised the question of agency. When viewed through the postcolonial prism, agency becomes ‘a mechanism for the scholar and the subject of the research to give voice and center knowledge about the world without Europe as a reference point’.¹¹² Rather, the focus on agency seeks to ‘center the activeness of the actors involved in the regional project’.¹¹³ The present study also seeks to highlight this aspect of Indigenous agency in the development of Oceania’s regional organizations. At the same time, it can scarcely downplay the significant role played by European/Western powers in the process.

On a related theme, the extent to which the major colonial powers in Oceania have differed among themselves is also an important factor. Historically, France stands out as having been particularly resistant to greater Indigenous participation in regional affairs, let alone decolonization, while the UK, Australia and New Zealand actively sought to encourage it. In much postcolonial thought, however, agency tends to be viewed almost exclusively in terms of Indigenous resistance vis-à-vis Western colonial impositions. Accordingly, it remains in thrall to a dialectical view of history and, as a corollary, also ‘remains tied to an imperial philosophy of difference’.¹¹⁴

Another criticism of studies in the postcolonial genre is that they remain overly concerned with issues of cultural identity at the expense of more pressing issues of political economy that are, for many, a matter of life and death. Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmed, in particular, have taken postcolonial theorists to task for abandoning or at least playing down class as a category of analysis.¹¹⁵ To these critiques we may add that postcolonial theory also ignores a certain convergence of interests and values between colonizing agents and some important local actors that cuts sharply against the grain of postcolonial critiques focusing only on domination (by colonizing powers) and resistance (by the colonized) in colonial relationships.

Other approaches, such as those focusing on the nature of patron–client relations in colonial and post-colonial contexts, sometimes offer a more nuanced mode of analysis in which imperialism is seen not as a one-dimensional process in which Europeans simply forced their way in

¹¹² Balogun, ‘Comparative Regionalism’.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See, generally, Simone Bignall, *Postcolonial Agency: Critique and Constructivism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), ch. 2.

¹¹⁵ See especially Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1994); and Young, *Postcolonialism*.

and unilaterally imposed their own version of order, but as a complex mix of negotiation and compromise, exchange and transformation, with local actors playing a significant role in producing a workable system within which elites among the latter also adopted roles of patrons within that system.¹¹⁶

In his later work on *Culture and Imperialism*, Said notes that questions of power and authority once raised in relation to the classical empires of Britain and France may now be directed at despotic successor regimes from Kenya, Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt, to Pakistan, Burma and Haiti, to name just a few, where 'the struggle on behalf of democracy and human rights continues'.¹¹⁷ But there is almost nothing on Indigenous collaboration in the colonial project itself.¹¹⁸ Nor is there a reconciliation between 'democracy and human rights' as Western constructs, but which Said explicitly supports as a universal good on the one hand, and the postcolonial notion that standards of political behaviour derived from these constructs have been imposed in a Eurocentric/Orientalist fashion on non-Western societies through processes of colonialism and neocolonialism on the other.

While successor regimes in the Pacific Islands have scarcely matched the depredations of some elsewhere in the former colonial world, they have not been without problems of social and political injustice in which the agency of Indigenous elites must bear some scrutiny. One study in Pacific historiography has pointed out that many scholars have been reluctant to address issues of stratification and other forms of inequality within Pacific Island societies, except where 'subalternity' coincides with anti-colonial analysis.¹¹⁹ When it comes to the hegemonic aspects of Indigenous hierarchies, or the close identification of interests and values between at least some Indigenous elites and colonial officials during the colonial period, some perceive a tendency to silence rather than critique.¹²⁰ And, as suggested earlier, postcolonial approaches also tend to

¹¹⁶ See, especially, Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), 321.

¹¹⁸ The index to Said's *Culture and Imperialism* has an entry on 'collaboration' but this reference is to a chapter entitled 'Resistance and Opposition' in which no discussion of 'collaboration' appears.

¹¹⁹ Jocelyn Linnekin, 'Contending Approaches', in Donald Denoon, Stewart Firth, Jocelyn Linnekin, Malama Meleisea and Karen Nero (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 31.

¹²⁰ For example, Robert Borofsky, 'An Invitation', in Robert Borofsky (ed.), *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 10. The problem of an 'academic politics that unequivocally condemns imperialism and all its works' is noted in Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: Making*

gloss over forms of local (non-Western) domination and subordination because they do not fit their particular normative framework that has been set up largely as a critique of Western practices.

The present study therefore takes issue with postcolonial theory's claims to constitute a coherent and effective counter-hegemonic discourse. While it is acknowledged that postcolonial theory has contributed much to the critique of Western colonialism and its mechanisms of oppression and control – which I have no intention of defending – I suggest that it often relies on a normative framework based on overly simplistic images of oppressors and oppressed who are lined up, again, on either side of the West/non-West divide. This produces a two-dimensional view of the world that tends to evade confronting other hegemonic practices, especially those of local Indigenous elites either during the colonial period or in its aftermath. It also elides the issue of non-Western colonialism. The legacy of Japanese imperialism in Micronesia and Indonesia's annexation of West Papua are important cases in point, while the rise of China with its increasing presence in Oceania is an emerging issue for neocolonialism.

We must also consider the trend to 'decolonizing knowledge', which, in universities, has taken the form of 'decolonizing the curriculum'. Again, this is a positive contribution to contemporary intellectual developments calling for much greater inclusion of ideas, sources, analyses and so on from outside a largely white, male canon of work that has so far dominated throughout much of the former colonial world as well as in metropolitan centres of learning. Its initial impetus has come largely from developments in South Africa where post/anti-apartheid education and 'liberation pedagogy' had been developing and has been further

British Authority in the Pacific Islands (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 1. Another critique of the tendency to treat colonialism as monolithic is Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) while a more direct critique of the domination/subordination and resistance dichotomy in the Pacific is Keith L. Camacho, 'The Problems of Indigenous Collaboration: The Role of Chamorro Interpreters in Japan's Pacific Empire, 1914–1945', *Journal of Pacific History*, 43 (2), 2008, 207–22. Ian Campbell, 'Chiefs, Agitators and the Navy: The Mau in American Samoa, 1920–29', *Journal of Pacific History*, 44 (1), 2009, 41–60 shows how internal rivalries among Samoans is sometimes mistaken for resistance. Another salient critique from a different 'culture area' is Sherry B. Ortner, 'Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37 (1), 1995, 173–93, which examines the systematic way in which relations of domination and subordination within Indigenous societies are glossed over in anthropological work. Other examples of historiography exploring issues of stratification, collusion and collaboration include Peter Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders under German Rule: A Study in the Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016); and Stewart Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983).

promoted by student protest movements calling for ‘decolonization’ in universities.¹²¹ This may be related to trends discussed earlier about the kind of identity politics that seeks recognition for marginalized groups. The more sophisticated proponents of the decolonizing of education and knowledge movement, however, do not call for the abandonment of ‘Western’ knowledge, nor do they seek to posit a dichotomy between Western and non-Western sources, but rather argue for an inclusive approach in which contributions from both are recognized. Certainly, a diversity of sources, methods, ideas and epistemologies is a strength, not a weakness, in any scholarly field, and is especially important to the present study.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has illuminated the extent to which virtually all parts of the world are now enmeshed in formal processes of supra-state regionalization. It has also distinguished between regionalization as a process and regionalism as a set of discourses involving the formation of identities, although regionalization and regionalism are complementary and, in many ways, necessary to each other. The idea of regional society, the emergence of Area Studies and the modernization paradigm, as well as the conceptualization of regions as culture areas, all provide further insights into the phenomenon of regionalism, both in general terms and more specifically in application to Oceania. Area Studies in particular has helped to consolidate regions as units of scholarly analysis. And, although we may well critique the way in which such studies were used in the pursuit of certain geopolitical ends during the Cold War, few students of Oceania as a region, or more especially of the Island Pacific as a special entity, could dismiss Area Studies as having no value.¹²² ‘Pacific Studies’ as a specialized area of scholarly interest is well established in various centres of learning from Hawai’i to Australia, New Zealand, China and Europe along with many other locations in both the Island Pacific and the Pacific Rim.

In more recent times, postcolonial theory has also made its mark on the way in which scholars frame their approach and promote their own policy prescriptions, contributing further insights into the dynamics of

¹²¹ See, generally, Jonathan D. Jansen (ed.), *Decolonisation in Universities: The Politics of Knowledge* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

¹²² See Jon Gross and Terence Wesley-Smith, ‘Introduction: Remaking Area Studies’, in Terence Wesley-Smith and Jon Gross (eds.), *Remaking Area Studies: Teaching and Learning Across Asia and the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2010), ix–xxvii.

power, agency and representation both in the colonial past and the post-colonial and neocolonial present. But because mainstream postcolonial framing has tended to adhere to a strict West/non-West dichotomy, it also tends to miss important cleavages within these categories while ignoring critical aspects of the agency of local Indigenous elites and neglecting the role of non-Western powers in the colonial enterprise. Moreover, while some of the most powerful actors, both past and present, have come from outside the region, contemporary regional politics is an arena in which local actors exercise considerable agency and influence although, to paraphrase Marx, not necessarily in circumstances of their own making. Agency therefore appears as a theme of this study, as is the trend in other recent accounts of Oceania and its people.¹²³

Critiques of postcolonial approaches notwithstanding, the legacies of Western imperialism has been profound, and therefore much of the discussion in the chapters that follow involves its impact on regionalism in Oceania. Before the advent of Western powers, however, Oceania was populated through successive waves of immigration that created the basis on which the various societies evolved. The longer view, as set out in Chapters 2 and 3, therefore provides the essential backdrop to the emergence of Oceania as a dynamic region populated with an array of actors who have made Oceania what it is today.

¹²³ For example, Lorenz Gonschor, *A Power in the World: The Hawaiian Kingdom in Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019); Fry, *Framing the Islands*, 2019.