

Preface

One of the pre-eminent trends within the post-war global economy has been the move towards regionalism. Whilst there are a multitude of forms of regionalism across the global economy of varying depth and coverage, all were motivated by the desire to enhance trade (and frequently investment) across a group of states who occupy a contiguous/semi-contiguous space. Across many such arrangements the need to adapt national infrastructure systems or even create dedicated regional systems has become an increasingly salient territorial strategy. This is based on a belief that without such regional systems the full economic and political benefits of regionalism cannot be realised. The development of, progress towards and state motivations for such systems is the core theme of this book. The process of developing such structures is viewed through the lens of territoriality as such a constant theme throughout the work is to assess the extent to which this process of regional infrastructuring supports states in the attainment of their territorial objectives. In some states, this is a process of adapting national systems to the new reality of the international system. For other states, regional infrastructure is used as a platform to promote the development of immature national systems.

This book seeks to add to increased academic attention paid to the development of international infrastructures. By focusing on the region, there is a need to account for all processes of international infrastructural integration occurring within that regional grouping. In beginning to examine the issue, the units of study (i.e. regions) were equated to the main geographic continents, with the Americas treated as a single region of study. The book focuses on four regions (Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas). The potential for an analysis of the fifth (Oceania) was explored but was dropped due to the combination of a lack of material, space and time. Moreover, within those regions studied, formal regional integration frequently takes place with a series of regional sub-agreements. In many cases, these are the main focal points of formal policy programmes to develop regional infrastructure systems.

As mentioned above, core to these processes is the state-based system and often core developments in the evolution of regional infrastructure lie outside the formal regional integration agreements. There has been a long

precedent of states engaging in interstate agreements to connect national infrastructure systems. There are also processes where interstate agreement leads to dedicated trans-national infrastructures (notably in energy). Finally, there is the role of the global/regional hegemon in the development of such systems. In the past, colonial powers have proved powerful drivers in shaping regional infrastructure systems. In the contemporary environment, China is proving to be a high-profile catalyst for the development of intraregional connectivity, especially in Asia.

In writing a book addressing contemporary events and processes, there is always a danger that what gets written gets overtaken by events. I have tried to keep the material analysed as up to date as possible, but the danger of dealing with what could be obsolescent is ever present. To this author, infrastructure and infrastructuring are not only highly relevant to contemporary debates but tend to lack a clear coherence of any underlying political/economic narrative underpinning their examination. My hope is that this book (along with others I have written and co-written) goes some way to offering a more coherent analysis of this fascinating subject.