May 18, 2020

Dear Friends/Colleagues:

We are looking for prospective paper (chapter) writers interested in researching efforts, both successful and failed, to construct regional governance processes and institutions in an international issue arena, and then to write about it within the broad guidelines of the collaborative project described below, subject to editing by the three of us. We have no funds to offer. The organizers will seek to publish in a venue with good visibility, but make no advance promises with respect to specific outlets. We do promise to see the project through to completion and publication.

We are soliciting proposals of up to 1000 words, including notes and references, from those who would like to participate.

Proposals are due before Friday, June 19, 2020. Full drafts of the research papers are due September 30, and final versions by January 5, 2021.

Very sincerely yours,

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Policy Regionalism in South America: Drivers and Barriers**

There is much contemporary discussion about the difficulties of global cooperation to provide international public goods, especially in a world in which tensions from multiple sources, as of early 2020 prominently including the Covid-19 pandemic, have deepened the wedge between the United States and China. If global cooperation is too difficult, then regional cooperation to provide collective public goods seems a viable second-best solution. Regional cooperation might also be a stepping stone toward global cooperation. Alternatively, some propose regionalism as an antidote to the perceived evils of excessive economic globalization (Cooper, Hughes, and de Lombaerde 2007). Whatever the view, regionalism is now recognized as relevant to the full gamut of global public policy issue arenas. This project asks: What do South America’s experiences reveal about the drivers of successful or failed cross-border policy cooperation at the regional level?

Regional collaboration, or policy regionalism, encompasses governance initiatives resulting from cooperation among sovereign states (*multilateralism*) as well as international issue arena governance driven by non-state actors (*transnationalism*). Transnational actors include sub-national levels of government, civil society and advocacy groups, multinational firms, and a variety of other internationally-involved corporate actors including churches, unions, trade associations, military and law enforcement bureaucracies, philanthropic foundations, influential news media, and political parties. International governmental organizations (IGOs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Health Organization (WHO), are simultaneously venues for multilateral interactions and transnational actors with independent agency. Much of existing theory on both multilateral and transnational regional cooperation derives from studies of Western Europe, especially the European Union (for example, Borzel and Riesse 2012; Wiener and Diez 2009). A smaller, yet expanding scholarly corpus takes East, especially Southeast, Asia as its primary focus (Katzenstein 2005; Pekkannen 2016). Less has been written about Latin or South American policy regionalism in arenas other than trade, although it is an obvious candidate for cross-regional comparisons. Latin America, for example, has a longstanding, if episodic and often marginalized, tradition of participating in efforts to create a (more or less) liberal international order (Long 2018, 2020). Latin American regionalism may be particularly consequential to examine in an era in which US dominance in the world and the hemisphere has declined, leaving more space for independent action by middle powers and their citizens (Hurrell 2004; Riggorizzi and Wylde 2017).

*The Opportunity: A Request for Proposals*

We invite proposals of 500 to 1000 words, including notes and references, from scholars of and from Latin America.[[1]](#footnote-1) We would welcome proposals to analyze attempts at regional governance within any international issue arenas. Possibilities include but are not limited to: financial regulation, collective security, infectious disease control, labor rights, indigenous rights, migration governance, climate mitigation, cross-border policing, infrastructure planning, electricity planning, post-authoritarian truth-and-reconciliation movements, mining regulation, regional coordination of positions in negotiations with extra-regional actors as in sovereign debt negotiations, and water governance.[[2]](#footnote-2) International *governance*, whether global or regional, is defined as “intentional collaboration across national borders to define, organize, monitor, evaluate, regulate, or transform the incentives, institutions, processes, and outcomes in a public policy issue arena.”

The organizers plan to edit a book, or possibly a journal special issue, on policy regionalism in a variety of important issue arenas, in South America and/or Latin America. We solicit contributors willing to fulfill two tasks.

First, each participating author is requested to construct an approximately thirty year analytical policy history of major attempts, both successful and failed, at regional governance within the chosen issue arena, from roughly 1990 through the first months of the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.[[3]](#footnote-3) The always thorny questions of issue and geographic scope we leave to decisions by participating authors in dialogue with their empirical materials. This said, we will prefer policy histories that have as their geographical focus either all of Latin America or at least South America, even in (the numerous) cases in which the only successful, enduring cooperation has been among smaller, sub-regional groups of states. Nor are we requesting mere histories of a particular regional IGO, although this will be appropriate in some international issue arenas. In other issue arenas the narrative may feature competing efforts, possible with rival partisan or geographic commitments, to organize the issue arena.[[4]](#footnote-4) Such attempts need not result in a permanent multilateral organization with a physical headquarters, staff, and a budget. Instead, we are interested in tracing the course of three decades of attempts at organizing meaningful transnational or multilateral cooperation across national borders to respond to compelling public policy dilemmas that affect more than one country. In terms of possible issue arenas, this is a wide remit.

The second (and likely concurrent) task for each contributor is to relate the empirical story to theory by constructing a plausible explanatory and analytical narrative(s) of issue arena governance, working loosely within at least one of the three broad theoretical traditions set out below.[[5]](#footnote-5) That is, each participant eventually should respond to the implicit question: “How do I best account for the course of regional cooperation, successful or stymied, within this cross-border policy arena over this three-decade time period?”

*Theoretical Framing: Issue Arena Incentives, Power Politics, or Norm Entrepreneurs*

By intention, the project is theoretically catholic – yet analytical. The organizers identify three broad scholarly traditions, each of which has been helpful to researchers investigating the drivers and pitfalls of regional cooperation, and specify these traditions in ways that we hope minimize their overlap. Our request to accepted participants in this collaborative project will be to frame their contributions within at least one of these important theoretical narratives, or as a dialogue between or among them. We have provisionally labeled the three broad approaches issue arena incentives, power politics, and norm entrepreneurs.

*Issue arena incentives* theorizes cooperation across national borders by examining the distribution of incentives within the specific international issue arena (whether food grains trade, global shipping regulation, multinational vaccine development, or any other international policy arena) or its existing regulatory or governance institutions. The common assumption of most such approaches to international policy analysis is that it is the characteristics of the issue arena itself that drive actors’ choices.

For example, Barrett (2007:2-4) defines an issue arena in which a solution requires a “single best effort” from someone. If an asteroid is hurtling toward the earth, one country able to divert the impact can provide a public good for all. Alternatively, another issue arena might have a solution that is only as strong as its “weakest link.” For example, preventing the spread of smallpox or any highly infectious pandemic disease requires a collective effort by all countries. Once the analyst is able to identify the true structure of the policy problem in a specific issue arena, it may have clear implications for the “rational design” (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidel 2001) of governance institutions. Ideally, the correct or optimal institutional or organizational design for the policy problem can transform a zero-sum into a win-win (or positive sum) situation. For example, arms control agreements are designed to moderate each country’s fear of a surprise attack by including strong inspection and verification regimes in order to build mutual trust. In this case, both countries benefit by being freed to redirect their scarce resources toward economic development. Similarly, Cashore and Bernstein (2020) posit four different types of decision-making, arguing that the nature of the problem (or policy issue arena) can suggest which type of decision-making will be most appropriate. For example, optimization of costs and benefits is not a good process for conceptualizing how or when to end slavery, which is a moral imperative. Bargaining among interested parties and eventually arriving at a negotiated compromise is appropriate for allocating funds among alternate uses in a national budget process--but is a deeply flawed process for deciding on scientific questions such as what sacrifices need to be made to avert global climate catastrophe.[[6]](#footnote-6) In all of this family of approaches, it is the structure of the issue arena itself that drives the analysis.

We term a second broad approach *power politics.*[[7]](#footnote-7)It differs from the first approach in that it focuses on the larger political environment within which a national policymaker makes decisions about each issue arena. The analysis also explicitly attends to the relative power capabilities of different countries or other important policy actors, and the politically-relevant resources (such as funding for IGOs) that influential actors may control. The policymaker is assumed to be a rational national leader (or a close aide such as a senior cabinet minister) playing a “two-level game” of both foreign policy and domestic politics (Putnam 1988). Foreign policy considerations enter when, for example, Chinese or American decisions about their participation in global governance processes to develop a vaccine for the novel Covid-19 coronavirus are colored by the increasingly hostile rivalry across a wide range of specific issues that has developed between the two states. Their rivalry, in turn, may not be a function of any specific action leaders of either state have taken, nor even of an inevitable clash of domestic political systems, one democratic and the other authoritarian. Instead, their mutual testiness may be driven by the systemic-structural condition of the one country (the US) being a relatively declining hegemon, and the other country (China) being a rising challenger. The condition of being a rising challenger, in turn, is not necessarily due to aggressive foreign policy choices, but rather due to a country’s increasing possession of international power resources such as a large population coupled to a large and fast-growing economy (Waltz 1979; Tammen et al. 2000). The point is that an issue-specific focus on understanding the challenges of joint international vaccine development may not adequately explain why China and the US have trouble collaborating peacefully. More generally, shifts in overall global power relations, such as the 21st century rise of China, may alter leaders’ alliance and international political cooperation preferences across a range of specific issue arenas. For example, the peculiar international club of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) arose when a group of rising powers, heterogeneous in geographic region, domestic political system, and form of international economic insertion joined in order to promote their collective global influence, particularly in the realm of global monetary and financial governance (Roberts, Armijo, and Katada 2018). Issue arena analyses that do not take the larger international political environment into account thus may miss many of the drivers of national policy choices about regional cooperation on specific issues.

This project this broad second analytical category--power politics--also to include the sources of countries’ foreign policies in their leaders’ needs for domestic political support. This is the realm of comparative politics and political economy influencing international cooperation choices. Here the nature of a country’s national political or economic system, which may empower certain classes, sectors, or interest groups, may alter national leaders’ foreign policy preferences. For example, in a country with a weak civilian government dependent on the continued support of the military officer corps, certain policy choices, even if they might appear to provide clear net benefits for the civilian population, may be political suicide for any civilian incumbent. Thus, in Pakistan, civilian leaders who have attempted to deescalate border tensions with the country’s larger, more powerful neighbor, India, have routinely confronted military coups against them. In a related dynamic, a country’s form of insertion into the global economy, as of a particular date, may make an important difference in its leader’s subsequent foreign policy preferences, especially in global economic governance (as in Rogowski 1990; Frieden and Stein 2001). Another classic phenomenon illustrating how a leaders’ domestic political support needs may their foreign policy choices is the all too common practice of leaders suffering criticism at home of choosing to deflect domestic anger and frustration toward a foreign “enemy,” whose crimes may be imagined or exaggerated. Thus in early 2020, both Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping may have had domestic political incentives to blame the other (or the World Health Organization) for failures to control the Covid-19 pandemic. This dynamic then had negative implications for global cooperation on vaccine development. Domestic politics also may dictate how leaders integrate into global financial networks, including from whom or through what institutional mechanism they choose to borrow abroad (Bunte 2018). While our first category of approaches to explaining international cooperation hones in on the characteristics of the specific policy issue arena, this second category instead focuses on the overall political situation of each country’s leader.

The third broad analytical current for studying global governance arenas, which we label *norm entrepreneurs*, prioritizes the investigation of normative, cognitive, ideological, or perceptual shifts resulting from the activities of policy entrepreneurs. Policy entrepreneurs are would-be global governors who seek to “induce deference in others” by some combination of “institutional, delegated, expert, principled, and capacity-based authority” (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2012: 2,9,11; Fraundorfer 2017; Zürn 2018).[[8]](#footnote-8) This approach differs from the earlier two categories, but especially the second, in attending closely to transnational actors and processes who may construct “facts on the ground,” often before national political leaders are even paying close attention. The third broad approach problematizes states’ specific preferences for particular issue arena outcomes, highlighting their malleable and contingent character. In other words, even if we agree that states will pursue their “national interests,” how do incumbent leaders decide what their interests in any specific global governance arena are (Finnemore 1996:1-33)? In practice, there is much room for issue-framing and conceptualization to alter policymakers’ preferences.

The project’s third major approach thus lies within the constructivist tradition in international relations scholarship. It emphasizes the independent agency and influence that committed individuals and advocacy groups may be able to exercise in international issue arenas, as the issue visions of transnational activist coalitions become sufficiently popular and legitimate to influence the foreign policy preferences of states (Keck and Sikkink 2014). This analytical approach is particularly appropriate for investigating the creation of epistemic communities (Adler 2005) around international issue arenas whose very existence might not have been conceptualized in a prior era. Even a few decades ago, for example, few would have imagined senior policymakers in powerful states proposing formal agreements, treaties, or multilateral institutions to buttress collective global rule-making in the service of, for example, arenas as diverse as climate mitigation, controlling the proliferation of particular classes of lethal weapons, gender equality, corporate social responsibility, or the rights of indigenous groups living above the Arctic Circle. Careful tracing of the development of new issue arena conceptions also may be particularly important when formerly bitterly opposed interests unite to address a common problem, as for example with the surprising decision by human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to cooperate with private multinational firms marketing gems and luxury jewelry in order to oppose the sale of conflict diamonds by rebel (or government) armies engaged in atrocities against civilians in Africa (Haufler 2010).

. The intention behind this project is to bring together international relations scholars with interests in concrete cross-border policy arenas to write parallel papers with the aim of joint publication, probably in an edited book, framed by a theoretical introduction and conclusion by the authors, who also will edit participants’ papers. Authors may adopt any theoretical approach for framing their analytical policy histories that they like, although we will urge participants to situate their analyses loosely within one of the three theoretical traditions we have identified here. We see our role as editors to be that of helping the authors, and the contending (or conversing!) theoretical approaches, to speak to one another.

The organizers anticipate a first volume consisting of analytical policy histories centered on contentious (or harmonious) policy regionalism within Latin America, usually South America. For examples of the type of collection we envision see, for example, Avant, Finnemore, and Sell (2010); Mattli and Woods (2009); or Acharya (2016), with the important difference that our focus lies with regional rather than global governance. A second stage of the larger project will engage directly in comparative policy regionalism, most likely by contrasting Latin America (or South America) with East (or Southeast) Asia.

*Timeline*

Proposals -- Friday, June 19, 2020.

Full drafts of the research papers -- September 30.

Final versions -- January 5, 2021.

(Please submit proposals to any or all of the organizers.)

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1. The language of the project is English. This said, the organizers are willing to spend some extra effort where necessary in editing contributions by colleagues whose first language is not English. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The organizers will contribute papers on regional governance efforts for development finance (Armijo), migration and refugees (Rhodes), and infectious disease management (Fraundorfer). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The year 1990 represents *inter alia* the approximate end of, first, the Cold War; second, the “lost decade” associated with the 1980s debt crisis in Latin America; and third, the wave of democratic transitions in Latin America (and Eastern Europe). See Przeworski 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. One example of implicitly competing efforts to organize the region can be seen in the creation of development banks. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), founded in 1959 and based in Washington, D.C., comes out of the Pan-American, hemisphere-wide tradition. The Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), headquartered in Caracas and currently managed from elsewhere in South America, was founded in 1966 as the sub-regional Andean Development Corporation and has since welcomed as members all Latin American and Caribbean states and Spain, giving it a Latin American/Ibero-American character. During the administration of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), cofounded in 2003 with Cuban President Fidel Castro as a socialist alternative to capitalist regionalism attempted to establish both an ALBA bank for members and a South-America-wide Bank of the South, although neither effort ultimately flourished. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For more detailed expositions of theory and methods for constructing analytical policy narratives see Armijo and Rhodes (2015), which is especially relevant to what we here term the broad *power politics* mode of analysis, or Bennett and Checkel (2015), whose method of “process tracing” is especially useful for constructivist scholars, working within what this project calls the *norm entrepreneur* tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In additional to its important contribution to international relations, the issue arena incentives approach is common within the organization theory, public administration, and business literature on cooperation. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The power politics approach has roots in both neorealist international relations and public choice understandings of comparative political economy. It therefore encompasses both Waltz’ (2001[1959], 1979) third (systemic) and second (domestic politics) images of international relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The third explanatory current springs from constructivist international relations, and emphasizes the agency of exceptional actors, and the influence of perceptions, norms, and subjective constructions of reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)