16. Regionalism in the Americas: segmented, overlapping, and sovereignty-boosting

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INTRODUCTION

The Americas have historically been divided into three groupings: twenty Latin American countries, thirteen smaller Caribbean states, and the United States and Canada. Regionalist projects have proliferated in the first grouping and, less prominently, in the second, whereas the two northernmost states have adhered to regional cooperation organizations but remained aloof from regional integration. Apart from the self-exclusion of the largest powers, functional regionalism in the Americas differs from European regionalism in four main respects: first, it is segmented rather than convergent; second, it is overlapping rather than exclusive; third, it is flexibly implemented rather than rule-enforced; and fourth and crucially, it is sovereignty-boosting rather than sovereignty-sharing.

Segmented regionalism means that several subregional organizations coexist. Whereas in Europe a sort of Darwinist evolution took place, by which the fittest organization (the European Community) absorbed most of the others (such as half of the European Free Trade Association – EFTA, most of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – COMECON, and even some former Soviet republics), many regional organizations (ROs) were created but none prevailed in Latin America. As a manifestation of the ensuing segmentation, there exist as many regional blocs as there are countries.

Overlapping regionalism means that most countries, if not all, belong to several ROs. The effects of multiple rather than exclusive membership are deleterious and include conflicts of interest and norm conflict, which increase regime complexity and reduce organizational effectiveness and institutional legitimacy.

Flexible institutionalization refers to the way most Latin American organizations make decisions and adjudicate conflicts. Through informal negotiation, muddling through, non-incorporation, and non-implementation, real-existing regional institutions look very different from treaties and protocols. This gap contributes to weaken civil society participation and business confidence, which in turn strengthen chief executive discretion.

Sovereignty-boosting regionalism means that Latin American governments aim at strengthening the nation state rather than reaping potential benefits from market integration. National authorities use ROs as shields to counter domestic instability rather than international threats.

The subsequent analysis builds on this argument.[1] Following this introductory section, I outline the historical foundations of contemporary regionalism in the Americas. The next section provides an overview of the theories used as analytical frameworks for studying regional cooperation in the Western hemisphere. The empirical sections examine the trajectories of the region's most important ROs and assess their functional performance. The chapter ends with reflections on the practices of regional governance in a number of policy fields and their institutional underpinnings. The final section summarizes the chapter's main arguments.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE AMERICAS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The origins of regional integration in the Americas lie in the South of the Western hemisphere. In fact, the unity of Latin America has been a constant in the regional political discourse. The "wars for independence were not yet over before proposals for political unity began to be heard throughout the newly independent territories" (Mace, 1988, p. 404). Simón Bolívar, the Venezuelan liberator, established his belief in a United States of "formerly-Spanish America" in his messages to the Congresses of Angostura (1819) and Panama (1826), the first attempts at continental integration. However, projects of continental unity never took off. Cultural commonalities notwithstanding, the divisive factors prevailed. Natural obstacles such as huge distances and physical barriers impeded communications. Historical legacies further aggravated regional integration. The social obstacles were also substantial: as colonial power, Spain was primarily interested in the extraction of natural resources. The administrative system it developed served this objective and entailed control over the territory from a single center. Its American colonies were thus ill connected. Disputes over territory or disagreements that were of a regulative nature were prone to distrust, rivalry, and competition. Unsurprisingly, thus, the end of the independence wars triggered civil strife that eventually divided Hispanic South America into nine independent countries. The exception was Brazil, Portugal's single South American colony, which managed to keep its unity. Central America went through a process of fragmentation, too. Only Mexico managed to retain most of its territory – only to lose half of it later to the United States.

Subsequent attempts at political unification likewise failed and led to the emergence of pan-Americanism, a softer version of continental union for the management of international relations. Unlike Bolívar's original project, pan-Americanism included Brazil and was centered on the United States instead of the Central American land bridge. Inspired in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, a US policy that opposed European colonialism in the Americas, the pan-American conferences were international summits held every 4 to 10 years, starting in Washington, DC in 1889. Pan-Americanism conceived of the world as divided in two hemispheres, where Europe embodied the old and the Americas, the new.

After World War II, in which most Latin American states remained neutral, regionalism in the Western hemisphere split into two tracks, one political, the other economic. The political track incarnated into the Organization of American States (OAS), based in Washington, DC, which brought all of the Americas together under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine. The economic track took distance from Washington, changed the focus from political cooperation to economic integration, and, eventually, split into two sub-regions: Central America and South America plus Mexico. This development must be attributed to many factors including the functionalist argument that international cooperation would be better served by functional arrangements in economic, social, and cultural domains than by political or federal integration. The thrust toward Latin American integration originated from the Economic Commission for Latin America (originally known by its acronym ECLA, since 1984 ECLAC), established by the United Nations in Santiago, Chile, in 1948.

ECLAC sought to enlarge national markets through the creation of a regional market. Led by Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, a coalition of technocrats and reformist politicians was convinced that only economic cooperation could overcome the region's traditional dependence on the export of primary commodities (Prebisch, 1950). As import-substitution industrialization (ISI), the development strategy Latin American countries had hitherto pursued, was approaching its limits, larger markets, economic diversification, and technological modernization became indispensable requirements to sustain development (Wionczek, 1970). The creation of the European Community triggered further integrative efforts, driven by fears that the ensuing trade diversion was detrimental to Latin American countries (Mattli, 1999).

Economic integration in Latin America proceeded in waves. The first one included the formation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) and the Central American Common Market (CACM) in 1960. The second wave was a response to the pitfalls of the first and led to the creation of the Andean Pact (later AC) in 1969 and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in 1973. The third wave was a concomitant of democratization: it saw the launching of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) in 1991 and the revitalization of CACM and AC. As cases of "open regionalism," these ROs sought to combine regional preference with extra-regional openness. While the third wave reached some early success and the institutions it created persist, none accomplished its initial objectives. The Pacific Alliance, established in 2012, is the last effort to overcome the shortcomings of open regionalism by pushing it further (Briceño-Ruiz and Morales, 2017). In the 2000s, a fourth wave, called post-hegemonic regionalism, took off with the creation of the Bolivarian Alternative – later Alliance – for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in 2004, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in 2008, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2011. Today, they all languish between inaction and dismantlement.

THEORIZING LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION

Except for the pioneering work at ECLAC, theories of Latin American integration have followed the integration initiatives on the ground. We can distinguish two strands of thinking: one of them focuses on the causes of integration, the other analyzes its further dynamics. They do not necessarily compete, as the questions they pose call for different methods and approaches.

Drivers of Regional Integration: Origins and Persistence

The renaissance of regionalism after the failure of the two first waves has multiple drivers. Realist approaches underline the end of the Cold War; liberal approaches emphasize the huge economic changes brought about by globalization; constructivist approaches focus on the role of ideas and the model provided by the European Community (Fawcett, 1995). These explanatory factors work better in combination than isolation.

Mainstream theories posit that the first necessary factor for integration is a demand condition (Mattli, 1999): either economic interdependence (Moravcsik, 1998) or increasing transnational activism (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet, 1998). The second necessary factor – but like the former, hardly sufficient – is a supply condition (Mattli, 1999). The latter could be institutional arrangements or regional leadership by a hegemonic state, or both. Latin America differs from conventional wisdom as this sequence has been inverted. For instance, interdependence among Mercosur member countries had been declining for some years by the time integration was initiated, and only started to increase from then on (Hurrell, 1995). Pertinent studies have persuasively demonstrated that, under certain circumstances, supply conditions have accounted for origin or relaunching, and initial success, but also a lack thereof with stalemate or reversal

(Perales, 2003; Malamud, 2005). We can thus classify the literature on the drivers of Latin American integration according to two criteria: locus – whether domestic or foreign – and motivation – whether political or economic. This can be visualized as in Table 16.1.

		Locus	
		Domestic	Foreign
Motivation	Political	Democratization	External federator
	Economic	Market reform	Globalization

Table 16.1 Drivers of Latin American integration

Source: Author.

Explanations focusing on *domestic politics* contend that regime type, namely democracy, is a necessary condition for integration. According to this argument, failure in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as stasis in the 1970s and 1980s, were due to the collapse of democratic political systems and the rise of authoritarianism. Hence, the third wave of democratization has been identified as a driver for the third wave of (Latin American) regionalism (Dabène, 2009). Empirical studies sought to provide evidence that democracy accounts for greater cooperation among countries (Schmitter, 1991). However, other studies have countered this argument with statistical data (Remmer, 1998). Nota bene: these conflicting assertions draw on data derived from the same region – Latin America's Southern Cone. Transcending this debate, Gardini (2005) argued that it was neither democracy nor autocracy that facilitated cooperation in Mercosur but regime asymmetry. For him, preventing democratic reversal was the key motivation for newly elected rulers to cooperate with authoritarian neighbors. If the potential for interstate militarized conflict recedes, the necessity to sustain large military budgets declines; and if the military controls less resources, the threat it poses to democracy vanishes. Peace was seen as supportive of democracy rather than the other way round as posited by the democratic peace hypothesis, and regional cooperation was the cornerstone of peace.

Explanations focusing on *domestic economic factors* highlighted liberalization as main engine behind regional cooperation. Latin American governments that wanted to open their national markets, liberalize trade, and attract foreign investment viewed regional agreements as catalysts to consolidate domestic reforms (Haggard, 1997). However, Milner has cautioned against too optimistic assessments of domestic features, as sometimes they become obstacles rather than facilitators of international cooperation (Milner, 1997, p. 234).

Extra-regional actors, usually powerful states or international organizations (IOs), which organize a given region to their own benefit, stand out as explanatory factors in *external political explanations.* There are two cases in point: US support to the creation and early success of CACM (Schmitter, 1970; Mattli, 1999) and EU efforts to consolidate Latin American and Caribbean integration either actively – by promoting regionalism through financial support and capacity building – or passively – by offering itself as role model (Freres and Sanahuja, 2005; De Lombaerde and Schulz, 2009). For the "external federator," the means to foster regional cooperation might be economic but the ends are ideological or geopolitical.

Last, explanations highlighting *external economic factors* emphasize systemic pressures toward region building. For Gómez-Mera (2005), the emergence and persistence of regional cooperation was molded by overlapping power inequities within a highly asymmetrical and increasingly globalized international system. By contrast, Phillips claiming to have identified a new model of regional capitalist development emerging in the region, contends that Latin American countries have pursued the same pattern of foreign policies, which have been designed in a way to fit their new economic strategies (Phillips, 1999, p. 72). Convergence of economic models and prioritization of economic policy over foreign policy were, according to her, core drivers of regionalization.

Modes of Regionalism: The Operation and Evolution of Integration

When a country has joined an RO, new interstate dynamics unfold because of path dependency, sunk costs, and regional institutions. We can divide the literature on Latin American regionalism according to whether these dynamics are deemed transformational (e.g., constructivism) or instrumental (e.g., intergovernmentalism). On this continuum lie approaches that focus on the interaction between domestic and regional features to explain integration dynamics.

Constructivist accounts maintain that preferences and identities are not exogenously given but endogenously; that is, socially constructed. Their focus is on learning processes and the building of security communities. These are understood as regions in which, first, the large-scale use of violence has become unlikely or even unthinkable, second, member states share common norms and values and, third, whose political institutions uphold a common identity (Kacowicz, 1998, p. 11). In contrast, neofunctionalists consider identity commonalities as irrelevant, contrasting Europe and Latin America: "Europe is divided by language and religion, but united by regionally similar social and economic conditions and institutions; Latin America is united merely by language and religion" (Haas, 1967, p. 333). As increasing flows of people and communications nurtured regional awareness, though, growing attention has been devoted to processes not accounted for by rationalist approaches (Hurrell, 1998; Oelsner, 2003). Along these lines, Gómez-Mera observes the emergence of a common identity in Mercosur. By providing "a stable and predictable framework of rules, norms, principles and procedures and establishing regularized patterns of interaction, regional institutions have promoted increased enmeshment, internalization and socialization among bureaucratic actors in each country" (Gómez-Mera, 2005, p. 135).

Liberal intergovernmentalism has also gained a foothold in the region. Sánchez Sánchez (2009) applied Moravcsik's framework to Central America with two modifications. First, the process of preference formation is largely detached from domestic politics and regional interdependence. While, as a result of underdevelopment and external dependence, civil society is weak, the state and its elites come out strengthened. Second, the impact of the systemic context and structural constraints are greater: as a corollary, integration becomes a defensive reaction which is strongly dependent on extra-regional actors – chiefly the United States. The role of institutions has been circumscribed because they have failed to create "creating conditions for convergence and co-operation" (ibid., p. 181), the role of institutions has been circumscribed. Likewise, in Mercosur, domestic agents have kept a low profile and interstate bargaining has not facilitated the transfer of sovereignty to regional institutions. Empirical research highlights the salience "of extra- and intra-regional power asymmetries in explaining the emergence and nature of [Latin American] regionalism" (Gómez-Mera, 2008, p. 302).

Liberal-institutionalist scholarship can be classified according to whether their focus is on governmental institutions, legal systems, or civil society. Governmental institutions, particularly executive format, are credited for enabling the early success of Mercosur and the revitalization of the Andean Community (AC). They occurred despite minimal levels of previous interdependence or effective regional institutions, and they rested on presidential diplomacy. This practice, epitomizing summit diplomacy as opposed to institutionalized, professional diplomacy, entails direct negotiations among national presidents whenever a significant decision must be made, or a serious dispute defused. This process has become known as inter-presidentialism (Malamud, 2003), a combination of an international strategy – presidential diplomacy – and a domestic regime – presidential democracy.

Focusing on regional trade agreements, Duina (2006) argues that their internal structure and legal nature depends on the type of law, either common or civil, that predominates in the majority of member states. If common law prevails, as in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a minimalist approach is likely to occur: it denotes a reactive, case-based, and gradual regulatory approach. If civil law preponderates, as in the EU and Mercosur, a more intrusive approach must be expected: it entails a propensity for a comprehensive legal codification. This approach illuminates a domestic dimension that influences regional dynamics.

Grugel has investigated the relationship between New Regionalism and transnational civil society activism. Comparing processes of collective action in the FTAA and Mercosur, she finds that civil society actors influence regional governance only to a limited extent. This must be attributed "to persistent institutional barriers to inclusion, the practical obstacles for many groups of scaling up to the regional/transnational level and the particular difficulties associated with accessing trade-based negotiations" (Grugel, 2006, p. 209). By focusing on the other end of the decision-making process and referring to the low relevance of Mercosur decision, Hochstetler (2007, p. 1) concurs that the output structure is weak. Consequently, "it is not surprising that regional social movements have directed little time to this level of governance." Her finding transcends conventional wisdom, noting that civil society and social movements have had a weak impact on ROs not only because they lack both access and, more importantly, interest. Contrary to the EU, where Brussels is a significant power center, the seeming irrelevance of Latin American ROs discourages social participation and curtails popular demand for further integration.

In sum, apart from constructivism, all approaches converge on a similar characterization of how integration processes have worked. While states, transnational agents, and supranational institutions have become crucial to explain European integration, in Latin America only states matter, making regional cooperation a sovereignty-boosting exercise. Supply-side integration – market-driven as in Mercosur or peace-driven as in Central America – is always state-centered and sovereignty-protected. It is never intended to be sovereignty-sharing.

In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, most ROs in Latin America reduced rather than increased performance and theoretical research switched from integration to governance. This led some authors to reimagine ways forward, mostly by reducing politicization and encouraging problem-solving techniques (Merke, Stuenkel, and Feldmann 2021), while others focused on possible ways backward, mostly through differentiated disintegration (Zawadzki, 2019). Accordingly, empirical studies on specific ROs flourished.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

No RO encompasses exclusively all Latin American countries: the two largest continental blocs, CELAC and the OAS, also include the Caribbean – and the two northern powers in the latter case. Exclusive Latin American regionalism has always been segmented – all ROs are subregional. They are also overlapping: general-purpose organizations, such as UNASUR, crisscross smaller integration organizations. General-purpose organizations have sporadically brought different policy dimensions of regional governance to the fore, only to recede after a few years of fashionable salience. For example, regional health governance gained prominence during the UNASUR years (2008-2018), when member states accepted that the bloc spoke for them at the World Health Organization (Riggirozzi and Grugel, 2015). The impact of ROs on the regulation and provision of social policies – such as social protection and higher education – was given scholarly attention when the commodity boom allowed national politicians to indulge into higher public spending (Bianculli and Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2016), only to find themselves with a financial hangover once the bonanza was over.

Interest in regional security governance peaked around the same time, although investment by the largest powers, especially Brazil, was "low, late and soft […] [due to] a combination of low regional threats, insufficient national capabilities, a legalistic culture of dispute settlement, and the participation in transgovernmental networks that substitute for, or subtly underpin, interstate cooperation and regional institutions" (Malamud and Alcañiz, 2017, p. 18). Indeed, illegal activities have promoted regional integration more effectively than state strategies, as drug trafficking, smuggling, and corruption create more trans-border activities than states can regulate or sanction (Matiuzzi de Souza, 2020). It is no surprise then that security cooperation has concentrated on preventing regional public bads rather than providing regional public goods (Merke, 2017, p. 148). Agostinis (2021) has shown how the difficulties in dealing with COVID-19 made visible the failure of cooperation "in a region marked by limited state capacities and a persistent dependence on extra-regional markets." He argues that the dismantling of UNASUR precipitated subregional segmentation, but the reality is that UNASUR had been concealing rather than overcoming such segmentation.

Albeit not particularly successful, organizations focusing on regional economic integration have been at least more resilient than general-purpose organizations. Next, I introduce the seven most significant regional economic integration schemes.

The Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) and Latin American Integration Association (LAIA)

LAFTA was formed in 1960, only a few years after the creation of the European Economic Community (1957). Its founding treaty was subscribed by six South American countries –

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay – plus Mexico. The organization sought to establish a Latin American common market through a progressive process of "articulation and convergence" of the subregional integration initiatives. Colombia and Ecuador joined in 1961, Venezuela in 1966, and Bolivia in 1967, raising regional membership to eleven.

The agreement created a free trade zone by means of periodical and selective negotiations between its member states. The trade opening program advanced well in its first years but by 1965 it lost steam and eventually became moribund in the 1970s. One of LAFTA's key principles was reciprocity. This obliged member countries to expand their imports in equivalence to their exports. However, without monitoring institutions, and given the asymmetry among partners, the principle could not be implemented. As the benefits of integration were perceived to favor the larger countries, the complaints of the smaller ones facilitated forum shopping and ended in the constitution of a subregional group: the Andean Pact.

Regional heterogeneity and divergent national interests are major causes for the failure of LAFTA (Wionczek, 1970, p. 64). The organization "never really got off the ground and this spill-around situation was maintained throughout the 1970s until the member countries decided to transform LAFTA into the Latin American Association for Integration" (Mace, 1988, p. 413). Founded in 1980, LAIA used other means to promote integration. Instead of a free trade zone, an economic preference zone was established creating conditions favorable to the growth of bilateral initiatives – as a prelude to the institution of multilateral relationships in Latin America. LAIA enabled the establishment of subregional agreements limited to the countries wishing to carry out collective action, without compelling them to confer the accorded benefits to third parties. Although the establishment of a common market still figured as a long-term objective, the new organization displayed more realism: flexibility and gradualism took precedence over fixed reciprocity and automatic extension to all partners. The accession of Cuba (1999) and Panama (2012) enlarged membership to thirteen.

LAIA not only favored the internal clustering of countries according to subregional criteria, it also promoted integration focused on production sectors. Sectoral integration sought to build up the region from its components toward the whole rather than the other way round. Overarching the third wave of Latin American regional integration, LAIA was slightly more effective than its predecessor.

The Central American Common Market (CACM)/Integration System (SICA)

In 1960, the Treaty of Managua established CACM, with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua as members. Costa Rica joined the grouping in 1963. The agreement was primarily the result of economic and political motivations. Pivotal was the perceived threat emanating from the Cuban revolution, which explains why the new RO received greater support from the US compared than LAFTA.

A member of the first wave of regional integration, CACM "went much further and […] was much more responsive to ECLA's proposals than LAFTA" (Mace, 1988, p. 411). By the late 1960s, it was celebrated as "the underdeveloped world's most successful regional integration effort" (Wynia, 1970, p. 319). With the growth of intra-regional trade as benchmark, the accomplishments of CACM exceeded those of LAFTA. By 1965, CACM's level and scope of integration came close to a customs union: most internal tariffs had been abolished, a common external tariff had been established and the institutional structure grew in complexity. This progress must be attributed to technocratic management and to the low political and economic costs of integration: economic integration did not threaten powerful interests and the administrative expenses were covered by foreign sources (Nye, 1968). Yet, despite initial progress, the fragility of the achievements soon became apparent. Members of the grouping were confronted with the task of holding the integrative structure together rather than expanding it. The scope of the tasks performed by an increasing number of regional institutions expanded without increasing the RO's authority; that is, the level of regional decision-making. Schmitter (1970) called this mechanism *spill-around*, to distinguish it from the expected *spill-over* by which neofunctionalists characterized the progress of European integration. In 1969, the Football War between El Salvador and Honduras prematurely ended the process, which would remain stagnated for the next two decades.

In the 1990s, pacification and democratization created favorable conditions for a revival of regional integration in Central America (Dabène, 2009). This time, however, Central American region building had to cope with the participation of the United States in NAFTA, which privileged partnership with Mexico. Furthermore, institutional development had been cumulative and non-centralized, exacerbating policy coordination problems. In 1991, the Protocol of Tegucigalpa incorporated most existent organizations under the umbrella of the Central American Integration System (SICA). The concomitant institutionalization of presidential summitry was "a key factor in the renewed dynamism of the cooperation and integration processes in Central America" (CEPAL-BID, 1997, p. 35). However, SICA remained a languid process living on foreign aid. Most of its budget comes from external actors, including the United States, the EU, and Taiwan.

The Andean Community (AC)

The Andean Pact, predecessor of the AC, was established in 1969 within the framework of LAFTA as part of the second wave of regional integration. In the light of LAFTA's bias toward its larger and economically more advanced members, one of the new grouping's major goals was to improve the conditions for participation of less developed countries in regional integration. The five founding members signing the inaugural Cartagena Agreement were Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru. Venezuela acceded to the Andean Pact in 1973, while Chile quit in 1976. In the 1990s, a time of prolific region building known as the New Regionalism, the Andean Pact – renamed Andean Community (AC) – was relaunched and its institutional structure revitalized after a prolonged period of stasis and crisis.

The formation of the Andean Pact responded to LAFTA's failure. At the economic level, it relied on intra-regional trade liberalization and regional industrial planning. Its decision-making structure, which included a Commission and a Junta, with majority-rule voting and binding supranational authority, was as ambitious as it was exceptional.

The Andean Pact's initial positive trajectory ended with the accession of Venezuela and the withdrawal of Chile, in what was a succession of major crises. These events led to the renegotiation of key mechanisms and, in the end, the relinquishment of the original complex integration scheme (Mace, 1988).

The failure of the AC integration scheme was due to a combination of factors: the rigidity of the agreements, the unequal distribution of costs and benefits, the politicization of integration issues, the non-compliance of the member countries with the grouping's decisions (Vargas-Hidalgo, 1979), extended political instability in member states, and the lack of regional leadership. To settle conflicts between members, the Court of Justice and the Andean

Parliament were created in 1979. Yet they lacked stature and the integration process stagnated for a decade. Finally, all presidents met in 1989, setting in motion a process of deepening and opening. In the following year, the Andean Presidential Council relaunched the organization through the institutionalization of chief executive summits (Lloreda Ricaurte, 1998). Its economic record, however, remained disappointing. The free trade zone and a common external tariff in force since the mid-1990s have contributed little to advance economic development. Instead, social turmoil, political instability, and economic crises have been hallmarks of the region. With the rise of a new bilateralism, epitomized by member countries signing bilateral trade agreements with third parties, Andean integration has further degraded. In 2006 Venezuela left the bloc and applied for Mercosur membership.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Small and dispersed, Caribbean countries have cultivated functional cooperation among themselves since their late independence after World War II. From early attempts at political union, which led to the establishment of the West Indies Federation in 1958, through deeper and more structured engagements of the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) in 1965, a more sustained measure of regional integration was born in 1973, when Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago signed the Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community. The treaty was revised in 2002 to allow for the establishment of a single market and a single economy. Twenty years later, CARICOM includes fifteen countries and territories.

Originally, CARICOM brought together all the English-speaking parts of the Caribbean, whether independent countries or British dependencies, but later it also came to include Dutch- and French-speaking territories. The revised Treaty of Chaguaramas envisaged deeper integration and established such ambitious supranational institutions as the Caribbean Court of Justice. Yet most of the regional structures depend on EU funding and guidance.

Currency governance in the Caribbean is very much dependent on extra-regional powers. For example, the East Caribbean dollar serves eight countries and territories; it is minted by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and pegged to the United States dollar. Nine other countries and dependencies in the region officially use the US dollar or the Euro as legal currency. The EU has been a crucial actor in funding Caribbean institutions and policies (De Lombaerde, 2005).

The Southern Common Market (Mercosur)

The members of Mercosur are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Created in 1991 by the Asunción Treaty, intra-regional trade flows tripled in the grouping's first seven years. Extra-regional trade flows also markedly increased. It boosted foreign direct investment in its member states and attracted attention of international business and foreign governments. However, after 1998 it witnessed a succession of crises and rebounds that have become its equilibrium condition.

An offspring of the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991) and the end of acrimonies between Argentina and Brazil, Mercosur developed a new, outward-looking economic profile. In 1995, the Ouro Preto Protocol elevated it to a customs union. Mercosur was envisaged to become a common market under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization.

Yet its institution building did not match this ambitious objective. It remained shallow; all its decisions are made through consensus-based intergovernmental mechanisms. As a more centralized institutional arrangement, a limited dispute settlement system initially served as an ad hoc mechanism of arbitration. In 2004 a permanent Court of Appeals was added, but its intervention is optional and has rarely been invoked. Furthermore, neither direct effect nor supremacy of the community norms exists. The parliament set up in 2006 lacks both representativeness and competences. Since its origins, Mercosur built on intergovernmentalism as a means to protect political steering from bureaucratic encroachment. At the core of this process are regular, mandatory presidential summits, which made presidential diplomacy the crucial driver of cooperation (Malamud, 2005).

Mercosur treaties focus on economic integration (content) and organizational structure (form). They omit aspects that have acquired greater relevance in the EU such as regional citizenship, social cohesion and democratic decision-making, which are left to secondary regulation. Repeatedly, projects have been launched with a view toward deepening integration. Cases in point are an infrastructure-building scheme in 2000 and the establishment of a small convergence fund in 2005. Yet real integration lagged behind: despite its name, Mercosur has failed to become a common market. At best, it has established the blueprints for a customs union; at worst, even its existing free trade zone is defective.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)

NAFTA was an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States to create a trade bloc in North America. The agreement came into force on 1 January 1994 and superseded the 1988 Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Canada. In 2020, under the initiative of US President Donald Trump, the agreement was renegotiated and replaced by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

The main forces behind a North American free trade zone were US Republican Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Because of significant opposition in both the United States and Canada, two side-agreements had to be signed: the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC) and the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC).

The creation of NAFTA resulted in the reduction of barriers to trade and investment between the signatories. However, the effects on employment, the environment, and economic growth remained controversial. The most unforeseen event was "NAFTA-ization," a process similar to Europeanization as initial bargains between states led to political adjustment within the states. This phenomenon has been more visible in Mexico and in certain sectors, especially regarding changing patterns of cross-border bureaucratic communication. A study has concluded that, in an asymmetric region and "even in a lightly institutionalized regional trade agreement, the institutional, legal and civil society capacity of less-developed members is strengthened" (Aspinwall, 2009, p. 1).

The Pacific Alliance

As a manifestation of the growing movement in terms of trade and investment toward the Pacific region (Vadell, 2013), Chile, Mexico, and Peru became members of the Asia-Pacific

Economic Cooperation (APEC) in the 1990s. Other Latin American countries also expressed interest in joining the organization. The prevailing narrative of these countries depict themselves as gateways for trade between both regions (Wehner and Thies, 2014).

In 2012, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico created the Pacific Alliance, a regional project based on preexisting trade agreements between all of its members that sought to consolidate them into a common free trade zone and, most importantly, make connections to Asian economies. Later, Panama and Costa Rica applied for membership, but what distinguishes this organization is the number of observer states; that is, countries that have expressed an interest in participating of the bloc proceedings and potentially joining: fifty-nine, which is fifteen times as many as member states. Such worldwide attention to an organization whose intra-regional trade flows are extremely low (about 1 percent of total foreign trade) conveys the symbolic power of the Pacific Alliance: it is about policy signaling and nation-branding rather than regional integration. This economically oriented project has had political consequences, though, as it furthered the fragmentation of Latin American economic regionalism (Nolte and Wehner, 2016, p. 38). The Pacific Alliance has symbolically become a counterweight to the more statist Mercosur and the anti-neoliberal ALBA project (Briceño-Ruiz, 2014).

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE: INSTITUTIONS, POLICIES, AND FINANCE

Initially, democracy was neither a goal of nor a condition for regional integration. Both LAFTA and CACM included non-democratic governments among their founding members, and neither of them mentioned the word "democracy" in their foundational treaties. Economic development and regional integration were conceived of as technical issues, in isolation from the type of government of the member states and the decision-making procedures of the newly established common institutions.

Only after the third wave of democratization, which in Latin America began in 1978, did the link between ROs and democracy emerge. In the 1990s, the issue of democracy took center stage in the three main Latin American blocs. In Mercosur, the foundational treaty was signed only after Paraguay got rid of its long-time dictator, President Stroessner, and joined previously democratized Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in 1991. Between 1989 and 1990, the Andean Community was revived through the establishment of a new body, the Andean Presidential Council. The connection of the new institution with democracy was made evident when it suspended Peruvian membership in the wake of President Fujimori's 1992 self-coup. In Central America, pacification and democratization led to the institutionalization of presidential meetings in 1991, transforming the CACM into the Central American Integration System (SICA). By mid-1990s, all subregional organizations in Latin America had turned from complete indifference to full commitment to democracy. The time was ripe for the next step: the development of democratic clauses.

Democratic clauses are the operative instrument of democratic conditionality. In turn, democratic conditionality is a strategy developed by some IOs to induce candidate and/or member states to comply with their democracy standards. SICA signed the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in 1995, which promoted democracy and the rule of law in all the member states; Mercosur adopted a democratic clause through the Ushuaia Protocol in 1998; and the AC followed suit through the Additional Protocol to the Cartagena Agreement in 2000.

They were crowned by the Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted in September 2001 by the OAS. However, some studies have questioned the effectiveness of democratic conditionalities in general and democratic clauses in particular. The performance of these mechanisms "is tied to the interests of governments that are both their rule makers and their enforcers in concrete political crises" (Closa and Palestini, 2015, p. 8). Hence, governments design a democratic clause to minimize its probability to escape their discretionary control, so it ends up enforcing regime – and incumbent – stability rather than democracy. Closa and Palestini suggest that bias is structural to the link between ROs and democracy in Latin America. Even though ROs have evolved from democratic indifference to democratic protection, their efficacy as guarantors of national democracy has remained low at best.

Several organizations have established some kind of parliament or parliamentary assembly, among which are the Andean Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the Latin American Parliament, and the Mercosur Parliament. None has decision-making competences, and almost none performs substantive representative functions (Malamud and de Sousa, 2007). So why establish them? Answers go from institutional mimicry through policy diffusion to domestic side payments, but rarely do they point to regional governance (Malamud and Dri, 2013; Risse, 2016). In Latin America, regionalism remains a president's business.

Several regional courts exist in Latin America. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, established in 1979, belongs to the OAS system and is focused on limiting state arbitrariness toward individuals rather than guaranteeing property rights and contract enforcement or adjudicating in conflicts between states. It is comparable to the Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights rather than the Court of Justice of the EU. Adjudication between states is also performed by three subregional courts: the Court of Justice of the AC (founded in 1979), the Central American Court of Justice (which was in operation between 1907 and 1917 and was reestablished in 1991), and Mercosur's Permanent Review Tribunal (inaugurated in 2004). Of these multi-purpose tribunals, the most deeply scrutinized has been the Andean court.

According to Helfer, Alter, and Guerzovich (2009, p. 45), "the Andean Tribunal of Justice is one of the most active international courts in a world increasingly populated by international courts and tribunals." Its agenda is dominated by disputes relating to trademarks, patents, and other intellectual property rights, which within the Andean Community are regulated at the regional rather than the national level. Helfer et al. (2009, p. 8) find that the tribunal "has contributed to building an effective rule of law for intellectual property in a region of relatively weak national legal systems."

Mercosur's Tribunal has been far less active. Indeed, it issued only six infringement proceedings and three preliminary rulings between 2005 and 2012, after which it did not produce any further rulings. Neither firms nor individuals are allowed to resort to the tribunal, which is only accessible to the governments and courts of the member states.

The contrasting cases of the Andean Court and Mercosur's Tribunal depict South America as a region in which the protection of property rights and legal enforcement is segmented. In some cases, the reluctance of the courts to enforce regional regulations is due to the notion of their own vulnerability: as judges anticipate that national governments will not comply with the court's rulings, they prevent institutional embarrassment by not issuing any.

As regards the degree of legal security provided by ROs, Arnold (2017) highlights a further problem: non-incorporation. In most Latin American organizations, regional decisions do not enjoy direct effect or direct applicability: to enter into force, regulations should be internalized by every member state according to their domestic provisions. This means that regional norms, even those adopted by unanimity, are not enforceable until they have not been ratified by the last member state. In Mercosur, for example, two-thirds of the directives require incorporation, but only half of them have obtained it. Why do member states approve norms in regional bodies that then fail to validate domestically? Arnold blames this behavior on the gap between the reward from signing agreements and the costs of implementing the ensuing policies. This contributes to further eroding the legal predictability of the ROs.

As regards funding for regionalist projects, two banks have been established: the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and CAF – Development Bank of Latin America. The idea of a development institution had been suggested at the First Pan-American Conference, in 1890, to back the creation of an inter-American system, but it was born almost seventy years later because of the initiative of Brazil's President Juscelino Kubitschek. With headquarters in Washington, DC, the IDB was founded in 1959 and works under the aegis of the OAS. The Bank is owned by forty-eight sovereign states, of which only twenty-six are entitled to receive loans.

CAF is a development bank established in 1970 within the framework of the Andean Pact, though it later expanded beyond AC. Today it is owned by nineteen countries, seventeen of which are in Latin America and the Caribbean plus Spain and Portugal, as well as thirteen private banks. It promotes development through credit operations, non-reimbursable resources, and technical support. Its establishing agreement was signed in Bogotá in 1968, but its headquarters have always been in Caracas.

One national lending institution has had a regional role: the Brazilian National Development Bank (BNDES). The BNDES saw dramatic increases in its financial resources for lending after 2005. The bank was "internationalized" to finance exports and support foreign direct investments and other international economic activities. While BNDES loans were not accompanied by intrusive conditionalities, they were conditioned on the use of Brazilian firms and products to access funding (Hochstetler, 2014, p. 360).

Until 2014, when judicial Operation Car Wash revealed a regional scheme of corruption centered on national oil giant Petrobras, Brazil's approach to regional finance had looked better than two competitors. On the one hand, the free market-oriented project of the United States-led Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA or ALCA, by its Spanish acronym); on the other, Venezuela's ALBA, which promoted "assertive state management vis-à-vis both foreign and domestic investors, populist redistribution, and increasing reliance on non-market financial transactions" (Armijo, 2013, p. 95). Brazil's project covered the middle ground, promising to unite South America through the "creation of continent-wide physical infrastructure and capitalist financial markets, while retaining an ongoing role for public sector banks responsive to central government priorities" (ibid., p. 95). The collapse of Venezuela's economy, the ousting of the Workers' Party in Brazil, and the advent of Donald Trump led to the breakdown of the three projects.

Connectivity in infrastructure, energy, and telecommunications was promoted by two major projects: the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA) since 2000 and the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project since 2008, respectively led by Brazil and Mexico (Portales, 2017). South American functional cooperation emerged amidst low levels of economic interdependence and market-driven demand. This phenomenon "can be explained largely by the articulation of a *regional leadership* and its effect on the convergence of *state preferences*" (Palestini and Agostinis, 2018, p. 46).

However, there was variation in policy outcomes: while Brazil's leadership on transport infrastructure turned this policy area relatively successful, divergent state preferences and Venezuela's defiant leadership turned energy integration unsuccessful. In 2009, IIRSA was incorporated into the South American Council of Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN), which collapsed in 2018 together with UNASUR.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has illuminated four main features of regionalism in the Americas. First, the proliferation and resilience of subregional organizations have crystallized in segmented rather than convergent regionalism. Second, the coexistence of general-purpose and integration organizations has configured a map of overlapping rather than concentric regionalism. Third, the sub-optimal performance of formal institutions has paved the way for flexible and informal procedures like interpresidentialism, under-enforcement, and non-incorporation. Fourth, Latin American governments have used regionalism to reinforce national sovereignty and protect incumbents rather than creating common markets or promoting collective action. Regionalism has contributed to defusing interstate conflicts, though, an achievement that should not be minimized.

So, how has Latin American integration fared sixty years after its start? Let Prebisch talk: regional integration "was not a failure. It was not a success. It was a mediocrity, a typical Latin American mediocrity" (cited in Pollock, Kerner, and Love, 2001, p. 21). Neither failure nor success: lenient endurance and muddling through have characterized regionalism in the Americas. Nowadays, van Klaveren (2017) suggests, Latin American regionalism keeps "navigating in the fog."

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NOTE

1. Parts of this chapter draw from Malamud (2010).

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