

Issue-Areas, Sovereignty Costs, and North Americans' Attitudes Toward Regional Cooperation

MALCOLM FAIRBROTHER

*Umeå University, Sweden
Institute for Futures Studies, Sweden
University of Graz, Austria*

TOM LONG

*University of Warwick, UK
Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, Mexico*

AND

CLARISA PÉREZ-ARMENDÁRIZ

Bates College, USA

Studies of public opinion toward regionalism tend to rely on questions regarding trade integration and specific regional organizations. This narrow focus overlooks dimensions of regionalism that sit at the heart of international relations research on regions today. Instead, we argue that research should explore public preferences with respect to regional cooperation in different issue-areas. We find that people's views of regional cooperation in North America diverge from their attitudes toward trade integration alone. Using data from Rethinking North America, an untapped public opinion survey conducted in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in 2013, we show that although country-level attitudes toward trade integration in North America were similar, preferences for regional cooperation varied by country depending on the issue at hand. We propose that attitudes are shaped by citizens' perceptions of the asymmetric patterns of national-level benefits and vulnerabilities created by regional cooperation. Generally, respondents favor cooperation where their state stands to gain greater capacity benefits and oppose it where cooperation imposes greater costs on national autonomy. For policymakers, this multifaceted approach to regionalism sheds light on areas where public preferences for regional cooperation might converge. Future research that disaggregates various aspects of support for regional cooperation should help integrate the study of public opinion with "new" and comparative regional approaches that emphasize the aspects of regionalism beyond trade and formal institutions.

Les études de l'opinion publique envers le régionalisme tendent à reposer sur des questions relatives à l'intégration commerciale et à des organisations régionales spécifiques. Ce point de vue étroit néglige des dimensions du régionalisme qui sont aujourd'hui au cœur des recherches en relations internationales qui portent sur les régions. Nous soutenons que ces recherches devraient plutôt explorer les préférences publiques concernant la coopération régionale dans différents domaines d'intérêt. Nous constatons que les opinions de la population sur la coopération régionale en Amérique du Nord diffèrent de leur attitude envers l'intégration commerciale à elle seule. Nous nous appuyons sur des données issues de Rethinking North America, une enquête d'opinion publique inexploitée qui a été menée en 2013 au Mexique, au Canada et aux États-Unis, et nous montrons que bien que les attitudes nationales envers l'intégration commerciale en Amérique du Nord étaient similaires, les préférences pour la coopération régionale variaient par pays selon la question concernée. Nous proposons l'idée selon laquelle les attitudes des citoyens seraient façonnées par la manière dont ils perçoivent les schémas asymétriques entre les avantages nationaux et les vulnérabilités créées par la coopération régionale. En règle générale, les personnes interrogées étaient favorables à la coopération lorsque leur État était susceptible d'en tirer des avantages en termes de capacité et s'y opposaient lorsque la coopération imposait des coûts plus élevés en termes d'autonomie nationale. Pour les décideurs politiques, cette approche multifacette du régionalisme apporte un éclairage sur les domaines dans lesquels les préférences publiques pour la coopération régionale risquent de converger. De futures recherches désagrégant les divers aspects du soutien à la coopération régionale devraient aider à intégrer l'étude de l'opinion publique à de « nouvelles » approches régionales comparatives mettant l'accent sur des aspects du régionalisme allant au-delà du commerce et des institutions formelles.

Los estudios sobre la opinión pública en relación con el regionalismo tienden a centrarse en cuestiones relativas a la integración comercial y a organizaciones regionales específicas. Este enfoque limitado pasa por alto las dimensiones del regionalismo que se encuentran en el centro de las investigaciones de las Relaciones Internacionales sobre las regiones en la actualidad. En cambio, sostenemos que en las investigaciones se deberían explorar las preferencias del público con respecto a la cooperación regional en diferentes áreas temáticas. Descubrimos que las opiniones de las personas sobre la cooperación regional en América del Norte divergen de sus actitudes respecto a la integración comercial por sí sola. A partir de los datos de Rethinking North America, una encuesta de opinión pública sin precedentes realizada en México, Canadá y Estados Unidos en 2013, demostramos que, aunque las actitudes a nivel de país respecto a la integración comercial en América del Norte eran similares, las preferencias por la cooperación regional variaban por país en función del tema en cuestión. Proponemos que las actitudes se forman en función de las percepciones de los ciudadanos sobre los patrones asimétricos de beneficios y vulnerabilidades a nivel nacional creados por la cooperación regional. En general, las personas encuestadas están a favor de la cooperación cuando el Estado puede obtener mayores beneficios en materia de capacidad y se oponen a ella cuando la cooperación impone mayores costos a la autonomía nacional. En el caso de las personas encargadas de elaborar las políticas, este enfoque polifacético del regionalismo brinda claridad sobre las áreas en las que podrían converger las preferencias de los ciudadanos por la cooperación regional. Las investigaciones futuras en las que se desglosen los distintos aspectos del apoyo a

la cooperación regional deberían contribuir a integrar el estudio de la opinión pública con los enfoques regionales “nuevos” y comparativos que hacen hincapié en los aspectos del regionalismo más allá del comercio y las instituciones formales.

Introduction

Within international relations' burgeoning study of regionalism, leading approaches now often point out that there is more to regional cooperation than trade integration and formal regional organizations. However, these more multidimensional conceptualizations of regionalism, common in comparative regionalism and “new regionalism” approaches (e.g., Söderbaum 2015; Börzel and Risse 2016), have had little impact, so far, on studies of public attitudes toward regional cooperation (Schlippak 2015, 352; Börzel and Risse 2020, 32). Beyond Europe, the study of public opinion and regionalism remains inchoate. Research largely relies on survey questions that ask respondents their views of trade integration or their opinions of specific regional bodies (Deutschmann and Minkus 2018, 39–40). As a result, students of comparative regionalism have little sense of public support for more multidimensional forms of regional cooperation.

In the absence of more nuanced data, when international relations (IR) studies of regionalism discuss public opinion, they tend to rely on tenuous proxy indicators. We argue that such an approach is inadequate, and potentially misleading. There is a need, and there are opportunities, for studying public opinion about regional cooperation in more multidimensional ways. Specifically, research should not remain limited to questions of trade integration and specific regional organizations, but also explore preferences with respect to regional cooperation in different issue-areas. Doing so would bring research on public attitudes into more meaningful discussion with the broader study of regionalism; it could also highlight to scholars and policymakers the forms of regional cooperation that may enjoy public support. As we show, explaining why support for regionalism varies across issue-areas can connect research on public attitudes with work on comparative state capacity and sovereignty costs.

We show in this article, using data from North America, that people's views of regional cooperation diverge from their attitudes toward trade integration alone. Preferences for regional cooperation also vary by country and issue-area in meaningful ways. We illustrate this with data from *Rethinking North America* (RNA), a previously untapped public opinion survey conducted in Mexico, Canada, and the United States in 2013. In the survey, although support for trade integration in North America was similar in all three countries, preferences for regional cooperation were more variable and depended on the issue-area at hand. The differences in support across issue-areas were also greater than those between support for cooperation with different partners.

These findings add to recent work by (Jungheer et al. 2018), which demonstrates that public opinion regarding specific agreements may diverge from preferences about integration in the abstract. Indicators—such as attitudes about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or trade integration—might obscure as much as they illuminate about public support for regional cooperation. A more-nuanced treatment of regionalism—similar to that present in comparative and “new” regionalism approaches—is needed in studies of public attitudes.

Future research should disaggregate its treatments of the dependent variable of public support for regionalism, especially by issue-area. Doing so opens new vistas for theorizing how citizens perceive the benefits of regional cooperation from their own national contexts, and such research may suggest areas where public preferences for regional cooperation converge.

What explains this variation in support by issue-area? Drawing on our analysis of the RNA data, we propose that attitudes reflect citizens' perceptions that regional cooperation generates asymmetric patterns of national, sociotropic benefits, and vulnerabilities. Support for cooperation is higher for issue-areas that an individual's own government is less able to address independently; cooperation in such areas is, therefore, expected to yield more benefits. However, this support may be tempered by concerns that issue-specific cooperation can also represent a threat to national autonomy. Given the relatively high variation in state capacity among its member states (Mazzuca and Munck 2020), North America offers a useful testing ground for our hypotheses. While patterns of support for regional cooperation on specific issues are shaped by idiosyncratic factors, the broader patterns we uncover suggest an appreciation of the benefits and vulnerabilities of asymmetrical regional interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1977; Womack 2016, chap. 4; Long 2018, 120–21).

Examining patterns of variation by issue-area, therefore, suggests that different national publics may favor quite different patterns of regional cooperation. While this article focuses largely on the aggregate national level, this finding also impels us to revisit longstanding theories of how individual attributes explain public attitudes toward integration. Like the classic Heckscher–Ohlin–Samuelson model, which holds that individuals' views are shaped by whether they are likely winners or losers from free trade, largely according to the human capital they possess (Scheve and Slaughter 2001), most explanations seek to explain support for *economic* cooperation. Our analysis suggests that in North America, individual-level attributes such as education may not explain public preferences for regional cooperation by issue-area consistently across countries. Analyzing public support by issue-area may also add nuance to research highlighting the role of partisan polarization and elite framing on public opinion toward regional integration (Merolla et al. 2005; Bow and Santa Cruz 2014). Such influences may also articulate with salient national and other identities (Börzel and Risse 2019, 1242–43).

For our purposes, we take regionalism to mean regional-level coordination and cooperation with respect to policymaking and institution-building (where institutions are broadly defined to include rules, such as binding commitments allowing for more cross-border economic flows as well as legislative and administrative structures). Regionalism, therefore, encompasses not just economic integration or supranational institution-building but treats regions as “cross-national spaces where public officials have created legal and bureaucratic structures for the pursuit of codified shared objectives” (Duina 2016, 133). Because the focus on trade and specific institutions dominates the literature on public opinion and regionalism in much of the world, our call for a more differentiated approach to public attitudes

about regionalism has implications for understanding the dynamics of public support beyond North America.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on public attitudes toward regionalism, situating North America within this literature. Second, we present our main arguments in greater depth, advocating an issue-area-focused and multidimensional approach to regionalism in studies of public opinion. After discussing our data and methods, we present results from the survey of public attitudes toward North American cooperation, examining variation in support for regionalism in different policy areas. In doing so, we offer a discussion of what drives patterns of national and individual attitudes toward regional cooperation by issue-area. We conclude by suggesting how a disaggregated conceptualization of regional cooperation could inform future research on regionalism and public opinion.

Public Attitudes Toward Regionalism

Studies of public opinion of regionalism suffer from several limitations. First, they remain geographically concentrated on Europe because of the comparative richness of data there, and the depth and prominence of European integration. Second, while studies seek to identify diverse determinants of support for regionalism, they do not treat regionalism itself as multifaceted. These two limitations contrast with the expanding body of comparative regionalist scholarship (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Börzel and Risse 2016; Jetschke et al. 2020; Panke 2020) and work inspired by “new regionalism” approaches (Hettne and Söderbaum 1998; Hettne 2005; Riggiozzi 2012; Söderbaum 2015). Third, researchers often use attitudes toward specific regional organizations or toward regional economic arrangements, implicitly, as proxies for attitudes toward regional cooperation more broadly. This has knock-on effects on debates about the legitimacy of regionalism, which often draw on this constrained empirical base (e.g., Schneider and Hurrelmann 2015); elsewhere discussion of the “legitimacy” of regionalism often makes little reference to public attitudes, even in democratic contexts (e.g., Chodor 2021). In this section, we first sketch out the literature on public opinion and regionalism globally before highlighting the literature on regionalism and public opinion in North America. With a few exceptions, mostly concentrated in Europe, these literatures examine attitudes toward regionalism through questions about trade integration and specific regional bodies. Although regionalism has grown more multidimensional, these facets are inadequately reflected in studies of public opinion.

The literature on public opinion and regionalism is most extensive in Europe, driven by the prominence of the European Union, the funding it provides, and the related richness of data provided by the Eurobarometer and other major surveys. The most prominent debates focus on how “democratic deficits,” partisan divides, national identities, pocketbook and political economic concerns, elite “frames,” and generational cohorts have influenced attitudes toward regionalism (Marks, Wilson, and Ray 2002; Rohrschneider 2002; Brinegar and Jolly 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Gabel 2009; Hobolt and de Vries 2016). While these studies have identified several key correlates of support or opposition toward European regionalism, regional cooperation in Europe is almost inextricably linked with the European Union (EU). A recent, prominent survey notes: “the core question examined in this literature remains the same: What explains variation in attitudes toward European integration? In most studies, public opinion on European integration

refers to the general approval or disapproval of EU membership and European unification” (Hobolt and de Vries 2016, 414). Scholars have noted that research on public views of European regional cooperation would benefit from going beyond “umbrella terms” to a more multifaceted approach that reflects the many dimensions of European regional cooperation (Boomgaarden et al. 2011, 242).

Indeed, the literature on European regionalism includes some more explicit consideration of public attitudes toward integration in different specific issue-areas. Although these studies normally focus on particular issues, as opposed to broader patterns of regionalism, they suggest that public attitudes toward cooperation with respect to different issues may diverge from those toward either trade specifically or the EU as a whole. Liesbet Hooghe (2003, 281, 296), for example, disaggregated “policy components” to explore divergences between public and elite support for EU integration, with citizens favoring “a more caring European Union” that curtailed market excesses. More recent work along these lines suggests that European publics possess sophisticated and stable preferences in favor of EU defense cooperation, for example, and that their preferences are better informed and more supportive of integration than the traditional view of European “permissive consensus” (Schilde, Anderson, and Garner 2019). Erisen, Vasilopoulou, and Kentmen-Cin (2020) emphasize how emotional factors such as anger and fear shape respondents’ preferences on EU policy coordination in counterterrorism and migration policy. Marc Hooghe and Soetkin Verhaegen (2017) emphasize domestic-level differences in public opinion about social welfare and inequality as a cause of European stagnation in social policy integration, alongside individual material situations. In addition, several studies seek to explain country-level variation in support for European common currency (Kaltenthaler and Anderson 2001; Banducci, Karp, and Loedel 2003; Hobolt and Wratil 2015).

Beyond Europe, studies of public opinion and regionalism remain more limited. Schlipphak (2015, 352) notes “scant attention” to public attitudes on regional organizations beyond Europe. In a study on the role of regional identity, Börzel and Risse (2020, 32) refer to the lack of data on public attitudes to regional identity as “a huge lacuna awaiting further research.” The lack of data is manifest in comparative regional studies where public opinion would certainly seem relevant. For example, Duina and Lenz (2017) compare the “democratic legitimacy” of nine regional organizations, but they do so without reference to data on public opinion. The lack of data coincides with a theoretical predisposition in the IR literature, and to some extent political sociology, that sees regionalism as an elite-driven phenomenon (e.g., Haller 2008; Fairbrother 2019). We do not dispute that point, especially in contexts of limited democracy. However, the public resonance of both Brexit and Donald Trump’s anti-NAFTA rhetoric suggests that public opinion shapes the possibilities for regionalism in profound ways.

In Latin America, the longstanding prominence of regional initiatives has spurred an extensive literature on regionalism (e.g., Keller 2013), including some on public opinion. However, compared to the broader literature on Latin America regionalism, attention to public opinion there remains limited. Early comparative studies analyzed support for trade integration across the region (Seligson 1999) and attitudes on regional integration within particular countries (Davis, Gabel, and Coleman 1998). Still, regionwide studies of public opinion remain limited; the

existing studies draw primarily on two questions in the Latinobarómetro survey. In 2018, Deutschmann and Minkus could claim to publish “the first longitudinal analysis of public opinion toward Latin American economic and political integration,” a topic that had “only been studied sporadically, at single time points, and mostly with respect to single countries” (Deutschmann and Minkus 2018, 39). That study, which also draws on Latinobarómetro surveys, examines support for economic integration on the one hand and political cooperation on the other. Support for economic integration is generally higher than for political cooperation, but both vary considerably over time and by country; support is higher among men, young people, and the well-educated (Deutschmann and Minkus 2018, 52). Drawing on the same data, (Alvarez 2021) emphasizes respondents' views of their national and the regional economy as a predictor of support for integration. Aspinwall (2019) draws on hypotheses from the European context to examine support for NAFTA in Mexico, Mercosur in Argentina and Brazil, and both a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States and Mercosur in Colombia. He finds disparate patterns of support for regionalism, as represented by specific organizations or agreements. Onuki, Mouron, and Urdinez (2016) examine attitudes toward regional leadership across the region, especially views of Brazilian aspirations. Along those lines, several more recent studies examine public support in single countries for engaging with or leading regional projects, including in Brazil (Guimarães, Fernandes, and Maldonado 2020) and Uruguay (Estrades 2006).

Analyses of public opinion on regionalism in Asia are conspicuous by their absence. Regarding Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example, that absence of studies is often explained with reference to the nondemocratic nature of many participating governments (Moorthy and Benny 2013). The primary exception is a recent paper by Lee and Lim (2020) that examines levels of “affinity” for ASEAN across eight member states, with cross-national variation in affinity best explained by trust in domestic political institutions. Elsewhere in the region, Jhee (2009) finds that security concerns limit Korean citizens' support for regionalism. In the Middle East, identity factors such as “Arab-ness” and religion are often invoked in discussions of regionalism, but public opinion is not a major point of reference (Fawcett and Gandois 2010; Monier 2014). There is no study of which we are aware that examines public attitudes to regional cooperation across specific non-trade issue-areas in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East.

A recent variant in studies of regional cooperation beyond Europe examines preferences regarding the choice of regional partner, although these studies have examined trade agreements or specific regional bodies, as opposed to more multidimensional regional cooperation. Survey experiments suggest that citizens prefer FTAs with culturally similar countries and countries with high labor and environmental standards (Spilker, Bernauer, and Umaña 2016), concerns that also shape attitudes toward “mega-regional” proposals such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (Steiner 2018).

In addition to studies focused on regional economic integration, researchers have also examined attitudes toward specific regional international organizations. In doing so, they follow the longstanding practice of tracking public attitudes about the European Union. In perhaps the most expansive study comparing public opinions of regionalism outside of Europe, Schlipphak (2015) tests several models of public attitudes toward regionalism, derived from research in the European context, against data from surveys

of African and Latin American publics. The study's dependent variable is respondents' views of the African Union or the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Unasur), respectively. In effect, this substitutes views of concrete organizations for regional cooperation. While that is not necessarily problematic (assuming adequate public knowledge of the organization), this is different from examining public preferences for regional cooperation. Attitudes about specific organizations and agreements are shaped by specific societal contexts and political debates, one recent study has shown (Jungherr et al. 2018), thus limiting their ability to serve as adequate proxies for more abstract preferences.

Public Attitudes toward North American Regionalism

The study of public opinion toward regionalism in North America reinforces our concern with the limitations noted above. First, research on public opinion toward North American regionalism remains relatively scattered. As Bow and Santa-Cruz (2014, 187) noted, “it is striking how little we know about public attitudes toward [North American] regional cooperation.” Second, conceptualizations of regionalism tend to conflate support for regional free trade, or NAFTA specifically, with public attitudes toward regional cooperation in general. This treatment coincides with North America's diminished role in the IR literature on regionalism in general as well as the treatment of the region as synonymous with NAFTA.

Given the prominence of NAFTA and a dearth of other formal regional institutions, it is perhaps unsurprising that attention to North American regionalism has focused on trade and trade agreements. NAFTA was designed as a trade and investment initiative, largely eschewing formal, institutionalized cooperation on other issues, even if one of its signature features was the provision of strong intellectual property and investor rights, coupled with robust dispute-settlement processes (Fairbrother 2019). However, NAFTA unleashed several elements of regional integration and intergovernmental and societal cooperation. These include migration-driven societal integration (Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010), increasing bureaucratic links (Aspinwall 2009), civil society cooperation (Nolan García 2011), business-cycle convergence (Blecker 2014), and deeply integrated production networks (Wilson 2011). Drawing on the World Values Survey, Basañez, Inglehart, and Nevitte (2007) illustrate that the three countries saw convergence in their residents' social attitudes in the decade following NAFTA. Bow (2015) suggests that in the North American context, regional cooperation has generally taken place behind the scenes, through track-two diplomacy and regulatory coordination among government agencies. Despite a weak institutional structure, deep integration and policy responses do occur in North America across various levels of governance in different issues areas, including migration, security, and the environment (Genna and Mayer-Foulkes 2013; Bow and Anderson 2014; López-Vallejo 2016).

In the literature on North American regionalism, attention to public opinion is rarely systematic. Discussions tend to emphasize questions of political framing. Starting with the first debates on NAFTA, political leaders such as Ross Perot mobilized opinion against North American cooperation, especially in the United States. That villainization reached a crescendo during the campaign and presidency of President Donald J. Trump (Bonikowski 2019). But well before Trump burst onto the political scene, scholars already emphasized the role of political framing. Pastor (2011,

65–79) argued that residents of North America were more inclined to cooperation than their leaders, who were often swayed by loud-but-small fringe groups. Survey-based research has underscored the importance of political rhetoric and cues (Skonieczny 2001; Merolla et al. 2005) and partisan affiliation (Bow and Santa Cruz 2014; Gravelle 2014) in shaping attitudes both in favor and against North American regionalism.

In these studies, regionalism is understood as synonymous with NAFTA (now the USMCA) or free trade, drawing on survey questions regarding public opinion of NAFTA/USMCA, attitudes toward free trade, and opinions of Canada and Mexico. These questions are often included in surveys in the United States, for example, those by the Pew Research Center. These surveys are sometimes replicated in Canada and Mexico, again using opinions of NAFTA as a benchmark (Stokes 2017). In addition to questions on NAFTA/USMCA and free trade, surveys often include questions about how favorably respondents view their neighbors (De Olden 2015).

In North America and beyond, this survey of the literature suggests that there is a gap in our knowledge about public attitudes toward regionalism—particularly the multiple dimensions encompassed by contemporary regionalism—outside Europe. Within Europe, there has been greater attention to attitudes to cooperation in distinct issue-areas, although the role of the European Union weighs heavily in these, complicating extrapolation to regions with less-prominent regional organizations. Outside Europe, the studies that do exist are largely based on questions that ask respondents' opinions of specific organizations or preferences regarding trade integration. In North America, research literature has generally reduced views of North American regionalism to questions about NAFTA/USMCA or favorability ratings of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Studies of public opinion and North American regionalism, like in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, rarely reflect the multiple dimensions encompassed by contemporary regionalism.

Issue-Areas and Public Views of Regional Cooperation

Building on the literature above, we suggest it may be misleading to assume that public attitudes toward regional cooperation are invariant depending on the issue-area. On the contrary, we expect public attitudes to vary by issue, and also to diverge from attitudes toward trade specifically. Our first hypothesis is therefore:

H1: *Support for regional cooperation within a country will vary significantly across issue-areas.*

Views of specific agreements often vary from general views of free trade (Jungherr et al. 2018), a pattern we also expect for preferences regarding regional cooperation on non-trade issues. Likewise, opposition to trade integration or specific regional bodies may obscure public support for cooperation in many other sectors. For example, an environmentally concerned respondent might oppose greater trade integration but favor upward harmonization with respect to climate policies, such as in the form of a regional emissions trading system (as exists in Europe). Such variation should matter to understandings of public support and democratic legitimacy of regional cooperation, and it may illuminate for policymakers the areas in which regional cooperation would enjoy greater public backing.

If public attitudes are not well captured by support for trade integration, and do indeed vary by issue-area, what then explains these patterns of variation? As in the literature on support for trade integration, one may consider explanations at the national, regional, and individual levels. In Europe, where the greatest volume of public opinion data on issue-areas exists, other factors become important—including sociotropic factors such as the robustness of national welfare systems (Hooghe and Verhaegen 2017). Here, however, we are interested primarily in explaining national-level variation to better connect with the IR literature on regionalism. Many issues central to regional cooperation, such as environmental, energy, border, or defense and security cooperation, lack the individual-level, “pocketbook” effects often ascribed to trade. Nonetheless, individuals can develop reasonable preferences with respect to these issues, even when the personal costs and benefits of them are ambiguous.

We propose that individuals generally favor regional cooperation on issues where they expect sociotropic benefits for their country—enhanced well-being, an ability to ameliorate transnational problems, etc. The relative structure of benefits—as well as vulnerabilities—emerges from patterns of regional asymmetry. Following the logic of (Keohane and Nye 1977), smaller (or lower capacity) states may derive relatively greater benefits from regional cooperation, although they are also more exposed to power asymmetries and negative shocks (see also Womack 2016, chap. 4). This suggests that different patterns of support should emerge cross-nationally, shaped by each country's regional positionality. Expanding on this logic, we expect citizens' support for regional cooperation to be highest in issue-areas in which their state has lower relative capabilities to address transnational problems unilaterally.

H2: *Citizens will favor greater regional cooperation on issue-areas in which their country possesses lower state capacity.*

However, individuals also worry about their country's sovereignty. For example, Bearce and Scott (2019) find growing opposition to the “sovereignty costs” presented by the growing role of international organizations, which they link to cross-border economic flows.¹ Respondents, therefore, weigh the possible capacity-enhancing benefits of cooperation against potential restrictions on state autonomy. Such concerns may be particularly pronounced in issue-areas where citizens fear regional cooperation may most limit autonomy, diminish existing state capacities, or invite intrusion.

In asymmetrical regions, both the benefits and the risks of cooperation are more pronounced for the smaller partners. As prospect theory suggests (Tversky and Kahneman 1981; Boettcher 2004), people will be more loss averse in issues that are viewed as particularly risky. In an asymmetrical context, respondents in weaker states may fear delegating national authority (and, therefore, ceding state competency) in areas in which their country performs relatively well. Asymmetry may, in turn, be ameliorated by high levels of favorability or trust in the larger partner (Genna 2009; Schneider and Hurrelmann 2015). Levels of support, then, are governed by the interaction of expected sociotropic benefits (+) with the perceived risk of high sovereignty

¹ Bearce and Scott emphasize individual-level characteristics, particularly labor market skills, in their explanation of opposition to international organizations. They also see this as linked to the rise of an anti-internationalist populism.

costs (–). As a result of these countervailing pressures, we propose:

H3: *Within a given country, individuals will most strongly support regional cooperation with respect to issue-areas in which the sovereignty costs of cooperation are lowest.*

Put differently, citizens will favor greater cooperation in areas in which their country has lower state capacity relative to regional partners. They will be less supportive in areas where cooperation implies sovereignty costs to areas of stronger state capacity. As defined by Hafner-Burton, Mansfield, and Pevehouse (2015, 1), “States bear what are often referred to as ‘sovereignty costs’ when they surrender discretion over national policies in order to adhere to the standards set by an international institution.” We suggest that perceptions of sovereignty costs will vary for different states (e.g., Goodliffe and Hawkins 2006, 363), but also depending on different issue-areas, in relation to a state’s capacities in those issue-areas.

In our case, Mexico is understood to possess much lower overall state capacity than the United States and Canada (Mazzuca and Munck 2020, 36–46), as a result of lower income, violence, inequality, and the effects of decades of clientelist single-party rule (Grindle 2012, 169–72; Davis 2017). Given that lower capacity, on average, Mexicans will favor higher levels of cooperation. However, state capacity is not homogenous (Centeno, Kohli, and Yashar 2017); many middle-income states, such as Mexico, possess areas of high capacity that have been deemed “archipelagos of excellence” (Bersch, Praca, and Taylor 2017). Citizens may perceive regional cooperation as a source of greater sovereignty costs without large benefits on some issues, if they believe their state possesses a strong capacity to cope with those issues on its own. In the absence of clear, cross-national measures of state capacity or citizen perceptions of that capacity in each issue-area, our ability to systematically test hypothesis 3 is somewhat limited. However, we draw on some salient differences in capacity below, particularly as they relate to Canada and Mexico. In the context of asymmetric regions, such as North America, both the potential benefits and the potential risks are amplified for smaller partners, making these distinctions most evident.

Data, Results, and Discussion

In this section, we present and discuss data on public attitudes toward trade integration and other areas of regional cooperation in North America.

Before turning to our analysis and discussion, we briefly explain our data and methods. We use data from RNA, a public opinion poll spearheaded by Robert Pastor, Frank Graves, and Miguel Basáñez, to explore whether and how public attitudes toward regionalism in North America vary depending on issue and partner country.² The RNA data were collected in October 2013, in Mexico, Canada and the United States, before the intensified polarization of the Trump presidency, especially regarding NAFTA and Mexico (Bartels 2018). The US survey, conducted by Knowledge Networks, used a probability-based online panel, with one thousand and six hundred US respondents, with oversampling of states on the US–Mexico and US–Canada borders. In Canada, the survey was conducted by EKOS, using a combined telephone and online survey, with a total of 1,505 respondents. In Mexico, interviews were conducted face to

face, with 1,320 Mexican residents, by Data Opinión Pública y Mercados.

Unfortunately, the survey collected no information about respondents’ political views (conservative, liberal, etc.), party identification, or past voting. Limitations in the data from the RNA survey keep us from testing all key individual-level determinants of issue-area variation, such as partisanship, social and political values, employment sector, and geography of residence, although they do allow us to consider education, age, gender, and income. These data suggest that the effects of these demographic characteristics vary significantly both by issue-area and depending on the country of residency. Contrasts emerge even between North America’s high-income countries: highly educated US respondents are most supportive of cooperation, whereas more highly educated Canadians are less so (see table 1 and online appendix 1). These findings nonetheless suggest that assessing variation in support for regionalism by issue-area opens new possibilities for individual- and multilevel analysis.

The RNA data are also rich in other ways. Our empirical analysis concentrates on a specific element of the RNA survey: a series of questions about regional integration in six different policy domains: energy, environment, defense policy, border security, economic policies, and currency policy. We contrast responses to the questions about the six issue-areas to a separate question specifically about regional free trade. We also explore how support for policy integration across the six areas varies according to the specific combination of partner. The surveys included simple split-ballots, where respondents were asked about their support for policy coordination and free trade on either a trilateral *or* a bilateral basis. In the American and Canadian surveys, the bilateral option excluded Mexico; in the Mexican survey, bilateralism meant the exclusion of Canada. We, therefore, treat these as survey experiments. North America is an apt region for this initial exploration. Given its configuration as a three-country region, it allows straightforward analysis of views on bilateral versus regional cooperation. National-level divergences within the region allow us to examine patterns of variation in economic development and state capacity.

We fit regression models of support for regional cooperation in the six policy areas, and support for free trade. The outcome is individual-level agreement with the statement “there should be free trade between *Canada, the United States, and Mexico*” or “there should be free trade between *Mexico and the United States*” (As explained above, the second statement differs across the three countries.) Responses fall on a four-point scale. We estimate support for other forms of cooperation using survey responses to the following statement: “There are a number of social and economic issues that Canada, the United States, and Mexico deal with, which overlap and ultimately impact the other countries. In the future, would you like to see Canada, the United States, and Mexico develop policies in an independent fashion or develop integrated policies in each of the following areas?” (Areas of policy integration included currency, energy, defense, economic, environment, and border security. Half the sample received a version mentioning only two of the three countries.) Respondents could select a position from “completely independent” to “completely integrated” policies on a seven-point scale.

Results and Discussion

We now turn to the results of the analysis and discuss the patterns observed. First, we present support for regional

² We are grateful to Graves and Basáñez for sharing the full data and for their agreement to make these data available at the time of acceptance. These are available via the ICPSR: <https://doi.org/10.3886/E160762V2>.

Table 1. Models of support for trilateral or bilateral coordination in six policy areas

	<i>Canada</i>			<i>Mexico</i>			<i>USA</i>		
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>
Bilateral only		-0.13*	-0.29**		0.03	0.02		0.46**	0.52**
EN: Bilateral only			-0.03			0.07			-0.21**
DP: Bilateral only			0.17			0.02			-0.07
BS: Bilateral only			0.42**			0.09			0.26**
EP: Bilateral only			0.02			-0.15			-0.25**
CU: Bilateral only			0.35**			-0.03			-0.08
Energy (CE)			4.44**			3.94**			3.94**
Environment (EN)		0.94**	5.42**		1.14**	4.97**		0.47**	4.52**
Defense (DP)		-0.07	4.11**		0.27**	4.17**		-0.19**	3.78**
Border security (BS)		0.96**	4.76**		1.58**	5.37**		0.54**	4.35**
Economic (EP)		-0.26**	4.14**		0.53**	4.69**		-0.16**	3.91**
Currency (CU)		-1.11**	2.79**		0.58**	4.57**		-1.06**	2.92**
High school education		0.00	-0.03		0.09	0.03		0.16	0.10
Some postsecondary		-0.37*	-0.42*		0.05	0.03		0.11	0.07
Bachelor's or higher		-0.43*	-0.48*		-0.30*	-0.25		0.40*	0.35*
Age 35–44		-0.04	-0.03		-0.12	-0.12		0.01	-0.01
Age 45–54		0.10	0.14		-0.01	0.01		-0.29*	-0.31**
Age 55–64		0.01	0.03		-0.24	-0.22		-0.05	-0.07
Age 65+		0.13	0.17		-0.26	-0.27		0.13	0.09
Male		0.09	0.10		-0.02	-0.01		0.05	0.02
Medium–low Income		-0.29*	-0.25*		0.07	0.10		-0.17	-0.14
Medium–high Income		-0.03	0.01		0.03	0.12		-0.18	-0.10
High income		-0.08	-0.06		0.22	0.23		-0.12	-0.09
(Intercept)		3.73**	4.20**		4.67**	3.97**		4.19**	3.91**
Individual-level variance		1.73	1.81		1.85	1.91		1.96	1.93
Residual-level variance		2.84	2.23		3.39	3.06		1.98	1.66
<i>N</i> (respondents)		7,511 (1,266)			6,156 (1,052)			8,019 (1,383)	
Residual	CE	1		1			1		
Correlation	EN	0.60	1	0.38	1		0.70	1	
Matrix	DP	0.42	0.36	1	0.47	0.32	1	0.55	0.56
	BS	0.43	0.40	0.47	1	0.29	0.42	0.33	1
	EP	0.59	0.46	0.46	0.46	1	0.48	0.33	0.48
	CU	0.45	0.31	0.42	0.39	0.54	1	0.40	0.34

Notes: The first and second model for each country is a linear multilevel (random-effects) model of responses to Question 7 in the RNA surveys. These models treat responses as clustered within respondents, while the third model for each country treats the clustering within respondents differently, with a residual covariance structure reflecting the correlations among the six issue-area attitudes. Reference categories are: partial or less than high-school education, age under thirty-five years, low income, and energy policy. All models were estimated using R's MCMCglmm package, with uninformative priors.

Significance codes (probability of estimating the wrong sign): 0 “***” 0.01 “**” 0.05.

free trade, by country (see [figure 1](#)). Second, we show the variation in support for regional cooperation by issue-area in North America (see [figure 2](#) and [table 1](#)). These data reveal substantial agreement among US respondents that “there should be free trade” in North America. US respondents are more supportive of free trade with Canada alone than with both Canada and Mexico at once. US support for free trade rises from 2.9 to 3.3 (on a one to four scale) when this is limited to bilateral free trade with Canada, instead of trilateral free trade including Mexico. While this partner preference seems consistent with the findings of ([Spilker, Bernauer, and Umaña 2016](#)), who emphasize similarity in economic and labor conditions, it was not consistent across the three countries. For both Canadians and Mexicans, in contrast, it makes no difference whether free trade is bilateral or trilateral (support is 3.2 and 3.1 either way, respectively), perhaps reflecting the geographical and economic centrality of the United States. Notably, with a minor exception for lower US support for trilateral trade, the three countries share strikingly similar levels of support for free trade.

The similarity of Canadian, Mexican, and US views of regional free trade contrasts with much greater variation in levels of support for regional coordination in different issue-areas. First, the three countries vary in average levels of support for regional cooperation across the six issue-areas, with Mexico showing the highest average level of support. The importance of partner preference remains similar to that seen for free trade, with little impact for Mexico. For Americans, on the other hand, there is consistently stronger support for regionalism with Canada alone compared to with Mexico. On the issue of border security, the difference is substantial—almost a full point on the seven-point response scale. Canadians appear to be more positive about trilateralism than bilateralism (cooperation with the United States alone), although the difference is slight, and the issue of border security is an exception. The models in [table 1](#) show that, controlling for other covariates, Americans are significantly more supportive of bilateral than trilateral cooperation (as we saw in [figure 1](#)), whereas—averaging across the six issue-areas—Canadians slightly prefer trilateralism to bilateralism.

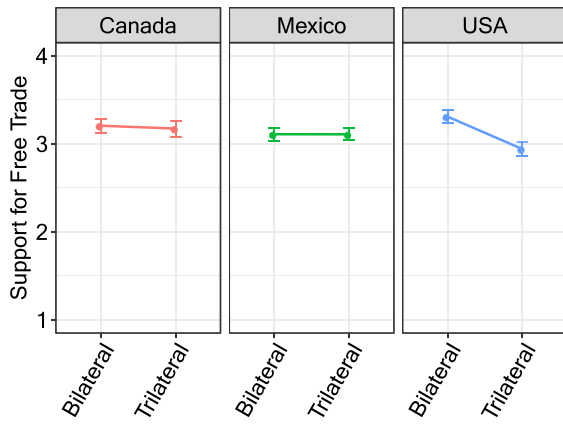


Figure 1. Support for bilateral or trilateral free trade, by country. For Canadian and Mexican respondents, “bilateral” means with the United States, and for Americans it means Canada alone. The response options range from one to four, and the graphic incorporates survey weights for the two RNA surveys that provided them.

What is most evident, however, are the substantial differences between the average preferences for regional cooperation in different issue-areas. While any direct cross-national comparisons must be made cautiously, as responses to the various survey items may not be strictly equivalent, for example, because of cultural and linguistic differences across the three countries (Davidov et al. 2014), Mexicans appear to be most supportive of regionalism and Canadians the least. Consistent with our first hypothesis, within each country, support for regional cooperation varies substantially across issue-areas; in fact, the differences among them are larger than any cross-national difference among respondents, or when comparing preferences for bilateral or trilateral policy coordination. Put differently, the question of “on what should your state cooperate” matters in ways not captured by partner preferences or views of free trade.

Support for policy coordination varies from country to country and from issue to issue. As figure 2 shows, all three national publics hold very different views of the desirability of regional coordination depending on the issue (currency, energy, defense, economic, environment, and border security). These patterns suggest some areas of overlap where regional cooperation might enjoy broad support as well as divergences where it probably will not. There is significant support for policy integration at a North American level with respect to environmental protection and border security, but US and Canadian respondents do not share Mexicans’ support for North American currency coordination.

What might explain the patterns of variation by issue-area observed in the North American case? To examine this, we present regression models of the data presented thus far in a graphical form. Table 1 shows three models for each country, the first two being multilevel (also known as random-effects) models. All the models treat the data—responses to series of questions about regionalism—as clustered *within* survey respondents. The first two models for each country include random effects for respondents, and if there is variation within respondents, that will indicate that support for policy integration varies by issue-area. The first model in table 1 is a null model, without covariates, which allows us to identify the share of the variance in the data due to each of two levels: the level of *respondents* and the level of *responses*. For Canada, the shares are 38 and 62 percent, for Mexico 35 and 65 percent, and for the United States the shares are 50–50. In other words, in all three countries, individual survey respondents express quite different levels of support for policy cooperation across the six issue-areas. Those differences are largest for Mexicans and lowest for Americans, with the latter discriminating the least across the six policy areas. Consistent with hypothesis 2, Mexicans express the highest support for regional cooperation in most of the issue-areas while still discriminating among issues.

Despite the emphasis in much of the trade-related literature on individual-level factors, especially labor market

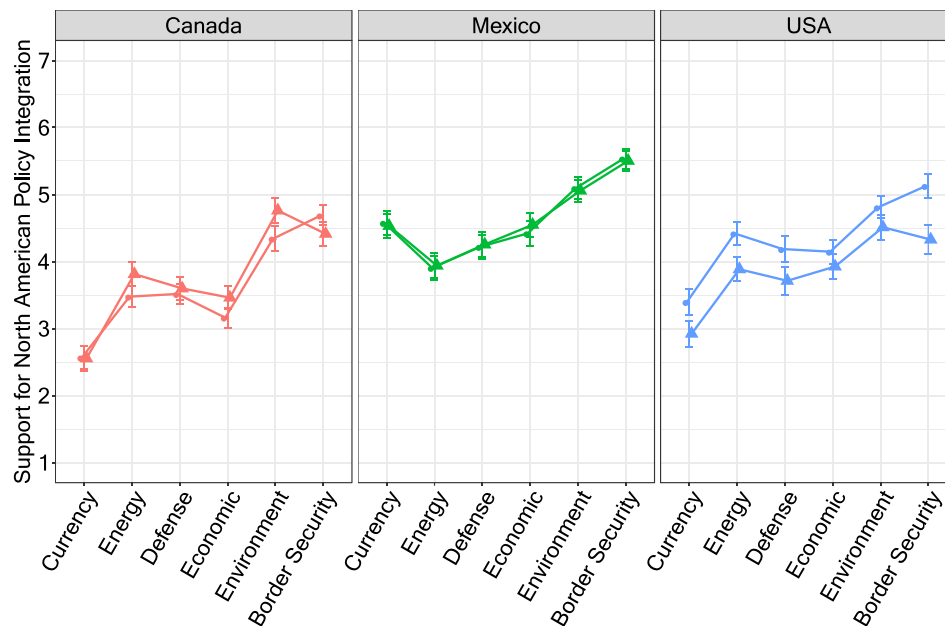


Figure 2. Support for bilateral versus trilateral integration, in six policy areas, by country. The circles are for bilateral and the triangles are for trilateral integration. For Canadian and Mexican respondents, the hypothetical bilateral integration is with the United States, and for the Americans it is with Canada. The response options range from one to seven, and this graphic incorporates survey weights for the two RNA surveys that provided them (Canada and the United States, but not Mexico).

conditions such as education, those demographic characteristics do not provide a clear explanation of variation for support by issue-area in North America (see [table 1](#)). Individual-level factors—at least those for which we have data—offer seemingly inconsistent explanations. For example, while Americans with a college degree are more supportive of regionalism, Canadians and Mexicans with higher levels of educational attainment are *less* supportive. In [table 1](#), the second model for each country treats each respondent's six responses as functions of a set of demographics (education, age, gender, and income) as well as an indicator for whether the response was regarding bilateral-only (as opposed to trilateral) cooperation. These models also include a series of dummy variables for issue-area, capturing the difference from the average response for the reference category, which is energy policy. We find that more highly educated Americans are more supportive of cooperation generally, while among Mexicans and Canadians more education is associated with *less* support. On the other hand, in the latter two countries, while education predicts support for various forms of non-trade cooperation, income is a better predictor of support for trade cooperation: Canadians and Mexicans with the highest incomes are more supportive of free trade.³

The third model for each country treats the clustering of responses within respondents somewhat differently. Rather than incorporating a random effect for each respondent, these models estimate a residual covariance matrix. These matrices, which appear at the bottom of [table 1](#), show the correlations across individuals' responses in the six issue-areas. Considering the three matrices, we can again see that Americans' responses regarding the six issue-areas are more highly correlated with each other, whereas the correlations are lowest for the Mexican respondents. Cronbach's alpha for the six items is 0.79 in Mexico, 0.83 in Canada, and 0.88 in the United States, showing that while there are differences across average levels of support in the six areas, a given individual does tend to be more or less supportive of cooperation with respect to different issue-areas.

The third model for each country (each of which includes separate intercepts for each of the six areas) also incorporates an interaction term capturing the issue-specific difference between respondents' views of bilateral versus trilateral cooperation. These interaction terms show that Canadians are more supportive of bilateral rather than trilateral coordination with respect to border security and currency policy. Border security is, similarly, the issue on which Americans are least supportive of cooperation with Mexico. In contrast, Americans' preference for bilateralism rather than trilateralism is weakest with respect to environmental and economic policies. Mexicans appear to be indifferent about the involvement of Canada in any issue-area.

Questions of state capacity and possible sovereignty costs help explain these patterns. We propose that asymmetries in national capabilities and vulnerabilities offer a tentative explanation for the issue-area variations observed in North America. As we discussed in our hypotheses above, we expect respondents to support cooperation in issue-areas where they perceive sociotropic benefits; those benefits will be greatest in issue-areas in which there is less unilateral capacity to tackle a problem. Respondents—especially those

in smaller states in an asymmetrical region—will also worry about the sovereignty costs that cooperation may incur, especially when benefits of cooperation appear limited.

Consistent with hypothesis 2, Mexican citizens' attitudes toward these areas of cooperation appear to be shaped by the view that as a lower capacity state in an asymmetrical region, Mexico stands to gain from regional cooperation to address shared problems. This is especially true in areas such as border management and environmental protections where state capacities are lower. In contrast, Mexicans demonstrated greater skepticism about energy cooperation. Consistent with hypothesis 3, that reticence mirrors a national experience of resource nationalization and a state oil company, PEMEX, long seen as national champion ([Brown and Knight 1992](#)). This suggests both a perception of higher state capacity in energy policy and greater vulnerabilities and possible sovereignty costs when considering cooperation with Mexico's large and energy-hungry northern neighbor.

Canada has higher state capacity but remains asymmetrically exposed to US overreach. Consistent with our second hypothesis, Canadians express lower support for policy coordination, but Canadian support is highest in areas where unilateral policy gains are limited by the nature of the issue—environment and border security. Border cooperation has been particularly salient. Given its reliance on exports to the United States, largely by land, cooperation to keep borders open has been an important Canadian priority since the September 11, 2001, attacks provoked a brief closure ([Ackleson 2009](#)).

As the region's most powerful state, the United States possess high capacity and is less exposed to possible sovereignty costs. An exception to that, however, is in border security where US support for cooperation is comparatively high. The border is a perennial bugbear in US politics, with politicians dramatizing a supposed US inability to “control” the border. Even the wall-building Trump administration prioritized gaining Mexican cooperation at the borders—even if this was intended to be cooperation on the United States' terms—to limit the arrivals of Central American migrants. Given those concerns, and the inherent difficulties of unilateral management of international borders, for many US respondents, the benefits of border cooperation appear to outweigh the costs.

The sharper differences on regional currency cooperation are also suggestive. For all three countries, attitudes regarding currency policy are least related to attitudes about the cooperation in the other five areas. Canada's greater currency stability and financial sector capacity make this an area with limited benefits; currency is also an area associated with high sovereignty costs and greater economic risks. Mexican support for currency cooperation—an outlier compared to Canada and the United States—fits with this pattern of accepting greater sovereignty costs in areas of lower state capacity. Given Mexico's history of currency crises and concerns about the weakness of the peso, respondents seem more open to regional currency cooperation. Both Canada and Mexico would stand to lose substantial autonomy in (presumably US-led) regional coordination on currency. However, for many Mexicans, their state's difficulties in managing past currency crises mean that potential gains of regional coordination are substantial. While Canadians face similar risks and costs, the benefits of currency cooperation are less salient.

In sum, North Americans discriminate to a surprising degree when asked about regional cooperation in different policy areas. On this basis, we argue for a more-nuanced

³We also tried models interacting the demographics with a dummy for bilateral-only, for each outcome in each country. We found few notable patterns, except that older Americans were consistently the most sensitive to whether potential cooperation is trilateral or bilateral-only. That is, they are even more supportive than the average American specifically of bilateral-only cooperation. (Results not shown, but available on request.)

approach to the study of regionalism and public opinion. We also suggest there is a need for greater attention to public opinion more generally in the study of regionalism outside Europe, with nuanced attention to how support for regionalism may vary by issue-area in ways that are not reflected in questions about trade integration or specific organizations.

Conclusion

The study of regionalism in IR is booming, with growing attention to the multidimensional nature of regional projects. Comparative regionalism, in particular, emphasizes the diversity of regional forms (Acharya 2007; Börzel and Risse 2016) and regional organizational designs (Jetschke et al. 2020; Panke 2020). Building on “new regionalism,” it is now understood that regions are socially and politically constructed in different forms, with diverse emphases, and through various pathways. These currents of IR scholarship on regionalism make a concerted effort to break with the implicit or explicit use of Europe as the model or point of comparison for regionalism elsewhere.

However, the study of *public opinion* on regionalism—particularly beyond Europe—remains nascent and lacks the appreciation of diversity now common elsewhere in the literature. With few exceptions, discussions of public opinion and regionalism rely on survey questions about economic integration, especially free trade, or specific regional bodies or agreements. This article suggests that there is much to be gained by bringing the multidimensional approach common elsewhere in the study of regionalism into research on public attitudes.

Along those lines, the article has made the following contributions. First, we demonstrate the added value of disaggregating regional cooperation by issue-area when studying public attitudes of regionalism. We support our arguments with an illustration of how public views of regional cooperation vary by issue-area in North America. Second, we advance a tentative explanation for the patterns of variation by issue-area that we observe in North America. Drawing on classic work on benefits and vulnerabilities under asymmetric interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1977), we suggest that respondents of lower capacity states may favor relative, sociotropic benefits of cooperation where their state struggles to provide such gains alone. However, patterns of public opinion also evince concern about the risks of cooperation in areas in which individuals perceive their country to be vulnerable. Theoretically, our contribution has been to develop an argument about how perceptions of sociotropic costs and benefits, in line with states' relational positions and national characteristics, can shape public attitudes toward regional cooperation on different issues.

The comparative regionalism literature considers North America a rather odd region, if it is considered a region at all. Indeed, North America is highly asymmetric, US-centric, lacking in supranational institutions, and institutionally focused on trade. It includes only three states, at least in its formal configuration, and its constituent members possess disparate cultures and historical ties. While those differences are helpful in identifying and isolating variation in attitudes toward partners and issue-areas, as well as allowing for an analysis based on varying state capacities, they should also provide a note of caution in generalizing our findings regarding the role of asymmetries.

While North America represents an extreme case of intra-regional power disparities, it is not completely unique

(Prys 2010; Krapohl, Meissner, and Muntschick 2014). South American regional integration has been substantially dominated by Brazil (Santos 2011; Teixeira 2012), while Central Asian regionalism has Russia at its core (Bohr 2004). In southern and western Africa, nominally economic institutions (the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)) have been used by a leading state (South Africa and Nigeria) to advance a host of purposes. As in many studies of regionalism, when it comes to understanding public support for processes of regionalism, the heavily studied European model may therefore be more outlier than norm (Mattheis 2017). Opinions about regional cooperation in these diverse regions are likely to show important variation depending on the role of the largest power as well as on the most salient policy issue-areas.

Improved knowledge of public opinion and North American regionalism is important for the future of cooperation in the region and for studies of public opinion and regionalism more broadly. Public opinion and leadership concerns about public opinion have shaped the direction of North American regionalism from its inception. During the debates about NAFTA in the early 1990s, states engaged in mass efforts to influence public attitudes about North American free trade—even in Mexico, where political opposition was limited (Mayer 1998; Long 2014). After NAFTA, public hesitation about deepening North American cooperation helped derail the Security and Prosperity Partnership in the mid-2000s and contributed to the rise of Donald Trump (Brodie 2016; Macdonald 2020). Additional research is needed to examine how (dis)approval of regional cooperation in different issue-areas relates to political views, party affiliation, and voting behavior—factors of obvious importance given the Trump presidency's effects of partisan support for North American free trade, for example.

Despite the shock of the Trump presidency, possibilities for North American cooperation have perhaps improved. Despite salient opposition, broader public dispositions in the three countries have been broadly favorable to cooperation. However, the future of North American regionalism may not resemble the forms of regionalism on which much of the literature has focused—free trade and supranational organizations. To take just one example, in the environmental domain, the cap-and-trade systems of California and Québec have been linked since 2014, and there are no signs that public hostility will undo this climate policy arrangement. Variations in public opinion suggest public support for regionalism as government-led policy cooperation and coordination in some issues but not in others. Attention to issue-areas in which strong support for regional cooperation exists may allow supporters of regional projects to build on firmer, even if narrower, ground.

Acknowledgments

This article emerged in a series of workshops convened by the Robert A. Pastor North American Research Initiative, which is supported by the Center for Latin American & Latino Studies and the School of International Service at American University. We thank participants in those workshops for formative feedback and Eric Hershberg for his leadership of the initiative; thanks, too, to Francesco Duina for comments on an early version. We are grateful to the journal's editors and two anonymous reviewers for constructive suggestions and a remarkably efficient editorial process.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at Fairbrother, M., Long, T., and Pérez-Armendariz, C. "Issue-Areas, Sovereignty Costs, and North Americans' Attitudes Towards Regional Cooperation." Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2022-02-07. <https://doi.org/10.3886/E160762V2>.

References

- ACHARYA, A. 2007. "The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics." *World Politics* 59 (4): 629–52.
- ACHARYA, A., AND A.I. JOHNSTON, eds. 2007. "Comparing Regional Institutions: An Introduction." In *Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, 1–31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ACKLESON, J. 2009. "From 'Thin' to 'Thick' (and Back Again?): The Politics and Policies of the Contemporary US–Canada Border." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 39 (4): 336–51.
- ALVAREZ, M.V. 2021. "La Opinión Pública Latinoamericana Frente a La Integración Regional (1995–2018)." *Estudios Internacionales* 53 (199):33–60.
- ASPINWALL, M. 2009. "NAFTA-ization: Regionalization and Domestic Political Adjustment in the North American Economic Area." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 47 (1): 1–24.
- . 2019. "Public Attitudes to Regional Integration in Atlantic Latin America." In *Trade and Commercial Interactions in the Atlantic Basin: Present and Future Issues*, edited by R.G. Flores Jr. and F.T. Martin, 137–56. Washington, DC: Jean Monnet Network on Atlantic Studies and Brookings Institution.
- BANDUCCI, S.A. E.A. KARP, AND P.H. LOEDEL. 2003. "The Euro, Economic Interests and Multi-Level Governance: Examining Support for the Common Currency." *European Journal of Political Research* 42 (5): 685–703.
- BARTELS, L.M. 2018. "Partisanship in the Trump Era." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (4): 1483–94.
- BASÁÑEZ, M., R. INGLEHART, AND N. NEVITTE. 2007. "North American Convergence, Revisited." *Norteamérica* 2 (2): 21–61.
- BEARCE, D.H., AND B.J. JOLLIFF SCOTT. 2019. "Popular Non-Support for International Organizations: How Extensive and What Does This Represent?" *The Review of International Organizations* 14 (2): 187–216.
- BERSCH, K., S. PRAÇA, AND M.M. TAYLOR. 2017. "Bureaucratic Capacity and Political Autonomy within National States: Mapping the Archipelago of Excellence in Brazil." In *States in the Developing World*, edited by M.A. Centeno, A. Kohli and D. Yashar, 157–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BLECKER, R.A. 2014. "The Mexican and US Economies after Twenty Years of NAFTA." *International Journal of Political Economy* 43 (2): 5–26.
- BOETTCHER, W.A. III. 2004. "The Prospects for Prospect Theory: An Empirical Evaluation of International Relations Applications of Framing and Loss Aversion." *Political Psychology* 25 (3): 331–62.
- BOHR, A. 2004. "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order." *International Affairs* 80 (3): 485–502.
- BONIKOWSKI, B. 2019. "Trump's Populism: The Mobilization of Nationalist Cleavages and the Future of US Democracy." In *When Democracy Trumps Populism: European and Latin America Lessons for the United States*, edited by K. Weyland and R. Madrid, 110–31. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- BOOMGAARDEN, H.G., A.R.T. SCHUCK, M. ELENBAAS, AND C.H. DE VREESE. 2011. "Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support." *European Union Politics* 12 (2): 241–66.
- BÖRZEL, T.A., AND T. RISSE. 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2019. "Grand Theories of Integration and the Challenges of Comparative Regionalism." *Journal of European Public Policy* 26 (8): 1231–52.
- . 2020. "Identity Politics, Core State Powers and Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 58 (1): 21–40.
- BOW, B. 2015. "Legitimacy, Politicization and Regional Integration in North America." In *The Legitimacy of Regional Integration in Europe and the Americas*, edited by H. Hurrelmann and S. Schneider, 33–56. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BOW, B., AND A.S. CRUZ. 2014. "Polls, Parties, Politicization, and the Evolution of North American Regional Governance." In *Regional Governance in Post-NAFTA North America*, 188–216. New York: Routledge.
- BOW, B., AND G. ANDERSON. 2014. *Regional Governance in Post-NAFTA North America: Building without Architecture*. New York: Routledge.
- BRINEGAR, A.P., AND S.K. JOLLY. 2005. "Location, Location, Location: National Contextual Factors and Public Support for European Integration." *European Union Politics* 6 (2): 155–80.
- BRODIE, J. 2016. "The Security and Prosperity Partnership: The Short History of a Strategic Bargain." In *Our North America*, edited by J. Castro-Rea, 103–24. London: Routledge.
- BROWN, J.C., AND A. KNIGHT, eds. 1992. *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- CENTENO, M.A., A. KOHLI, AND D. YASHAR, eds. 2017. *States in the Developing World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CHODOR, T. 2021. "The Changing Face of Mercosur: Legitimacy and the Politics of Scale in South American Regionalism." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 59 (2): 417–31.
- DAVIDOV, E., B. MEULEMAN, J. CIEGIUCH, P. SCHMIDT, AND J. BILLIET. 2014. "Measurement Equivalence in Cross-National Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 55–75.
- DAVIS, C.L., M.J. GABEL, AND K.M. COLEMAN. 1998. "Citizen Response to Regional Integration in the Americas: The Cases of Costa Rica and El Salvador." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33 (2): 88–109.
- DAVIS, D. 2017. "Violence, Fragmented Sovereignty, and Declining State Capacity: Rethinking the Legacies of Developmental Statism in Mexico." *States in the Developing World*, edited by M.A. Centeno, A. Kohli and D. Yashar, 63–92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DE OLDEN, L. 2015. "La Vecindad Con Estados Unidos: Interés Nacional y Opinión Pública." *Foro Internacional* 55 (3): 737–71.
- DEUTSCHMANN, E., AND L. MINKUS. 2018. "Swinging Leftward: Public Opinion on Economic and Political Integration in Latin America, 1997–2010." *Latin American Research Review* 53 (1): 38–56.
- DUINA, F. 2016. "North America and the Transatlantic Area." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*, edited by T.A. Börzel and T. Risse, 133–149. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DUINA, F., AND T. LENZ. 2017. "Democratic Legitimacy in Regional Economic Organizations: The European Union in Comparative Perspective." *Economy and Society* 46 (3–4): 398–431.
- ERISEN, C., S. VASILOPOULOU, AND C. KENTMEN-CIN. 2020. "Emotional Reactions to Immigration and Support for EU Cooperation on Immigration and Terrorism." *Journal of European Public Policy* 27 (6): 795–813.
- ESTRADES, C. 2006. "Opinión Pública y MERCOSUR: Conocimiento y Apoyo de Los Uruguayos al Proceso de Integración Regional." *Revista Uruguaya de Ciencia Política* 15 (1): 107–27.
- FAIRBROTHER, M. 2019. *Free Traders: Elites, Democracy, and the Rise of Globalization in North America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- FAWCETT, L., AND H. GANDOIS. 2010. "Regionalism in Africa and the Middle East: Implications for EU Studies." *Journal of European Integration* 32 (6): 617–36.
- GABEL, M.J. 2009. *Interests and Integration: Market Liberalization, Public Opinion, and European Union*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- GENNA, G.M. 2009. "Positive Country Images, Trust and Public Support for European Integration." *Comparative European Politics* 7 (2): 213–32.
- GENNA, G.M., AND D.A. MAYER-FOULKES. 2013. *North American Integration: An Institutional Void in Migration, Security and Development*. New York: Routledge.
- GOODLIFFE, J., AND D.G. HAWKINS. 2006. "Explaining Commitment: States and the Convention against Torture." *The Journal of Politics* 68 (2): 358–71.
- GRAVELLE, T.B. 2014. "Partisanship, Border Proximity, and Canadian Attitudes toward North American Integration." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 26 (4): 453–74.
- GRINDLE, M.S. 2012. *Jobs for the Boys: Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- GUIMARÃES, F.D.S., I.F. FERNANDES, AND G. MALDONADO. 2020. "Domestic Attitudes toward Regional Leadership: A Survey Experiment in Brazil." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 16 (1): 98–117.
- HAFNER-BURTON, E., E.D. MANSFIELD, AND J.C.W. PEVEHOUSE. 2015. "Human Rights Institutions, Sovereignty Costs and Democratization." *British Journal of Political Science* 45 (1): 1–27.
- HALLER, M. 2008. *European Integration as an Elite Process: The Failure of a Dream?* London: Routledge.
- HETTNE, B. 2005. "Beyond the 'New' Regionalism." *New Political Economy* 10 (4): 543–71.

- HETTNE, B., AND F. SÖDERBAUM. 1998. "The New Regionalism Approach." *Politeia* 17 (3): 6–21.
- HOBOLT, S.B., AND C. WRATIL. 2015. "Public Opinion and the Crisis: The Dynamics of Support for the Euro." *Journal of European Public Policy* 22 (2): 238–56.
- HOBOLT, S.B., AND C.E. DE VRIES. 2016. "Public Support for European Integration." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19 (1): 413–32.
- HOOGHE, L. 2003. "Europe Divided? Elites vs. Public Opinion on European Integration." *European Union Politics* 4 (3): 281–304.
- HOOGHE, L., AND G. MARKS. 2005. "Calculation, Community and Cues: Public Opinion on European Integration." *European Union Politics* 6 (4): 419–43.
- HOOGHE, M., AND S. VERHAEGEN. 2017. "The Democratic Legitimacy of EU Institutions and Support for Social Policy in Europe." In *A European Social Union after the Crisis*, edited by C. Barnard, F. Vandembroucke and G. De Baere, 92–119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JETSCHKE, A., S. MÜNCH, A.R. CARDOZO-SILVA, AND P. THEINER. 2020. "Patterns of (Dis)Similarity in the Design of Regional Organizations: The Regional Organizations Similarity Index (ROSI)." *International Studies Perspectives* 22 (2): 181–200.
- JHEE, B.-K. 2009. "Public Support for Regional Integration in Northeast Asia: An Empirical Test of Affective and Utilitarian Models." *International Political Science Review* 30 (1): 49–65.
- JUNGHERR, A., M. MADER, H. SCHOEN, AND A. WUTTKE. 2018. "Context-Driven Attitude Formation: The Difference between Supporting Free Trade in the Abstract and Supporting Specific Trade Agreements." *Review of International Political Economy* 25 (2): 215–42.
- KALTENTHALER, K.C., AND C.J. ANDERSON. 2001. "Europeans and Their Money: Explaining Public Support for the Common European Currency." *European Journal of Political Research* 40 (2): 139–70.
- KELLER, R. 2013. "Building 'Nuestra América': National Sovereignty and Regional Integration in the Americas." *Contexto Internacional* 35 (2): 537–64.
- KEOHANE, R.O., AND J.S. NYE. 1977. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- KOREMENOS, B., C. LIPSON, AND D. SNIDAL. 2001. "The Rational Design of International Institutions." *International Organization* 55 (4): 761–99.
- KRAPOHL, S., K.L. MEISSNER, AND J. MUNTSCHICK. 2014. "Regional Powers As Leaders or R Ambos? The Ambivalent Behaviour of B Rrazil and S Outh A Frica in Regional Economic Integration." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 52 (4): 879–95.
- LEE, H.W., AND S. LIM. 2020. "Public Feelings toward ASEAN: One Vision, One Identity, One Community?" *Asian Survey* 60 (5): 803–29.
- LONG, T. 2014. "Echoes of 1992: The NAFTA Negotiation and North America Now." Accessed February 14, 2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/echoes-1992-the-nafta-negotiations-and-north-america-now>.
- . 2018. "The US, Brazil and Latin America: The Dynamics of Asymmetrical Regionalism." *Contemporary Politics* 24 (1): 113–29.
- LÓPEZ-VALLEJO, M. 2016. *Reconfiguring Global Climate Governance in North America: A Transregional Approach*. New York: Routledge.
- MACDONALD, L. 2020. "Canada in the North America Region: Implications of the Trump Presidency." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 53 (3): 505–20.
- MARKS, G., C.J. WILSON, AND L. RAY. 2002. "National Political Parties and European Integration." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (3): 585–94.
- MATTHEIS, F. 2017. "Repositioning Europe in the Study of Regions: Comparative Regionalism, Interregionalism and Decentred Regionalism." *Journal of European Integration* 39 (4): 477–82.
- MAYER, F.W. 1998. *Interpreting NAFTA: The Science and Art of Political Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- MAZZUCA, S.L., AND G.L. MUNCK. 2020. *A Middle-Quality Institutional Trap: Democracy and State Capacity in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- MEROLLA, J., L.B. STEPHENSON, C.J. WILSON, AND E.J. ZECHMEISTER. 2005. "Globalization, Globalización, Globalisation: Public Opinion and NAFTA." *Law and Business Review of the Americas* 11 (3/4): 573.
- MONIER, E. 2014. "The Arabness of Middle East Regionalism: The Arab Spring and Competition for Discursive Hegemony between Egypt, Iran and Turkey." *Contemporary Politics* 20 (4): 421–34.
- MOORTHY, R., AND G. BENNY. 2013. "Does Public Opinion Count? Knowledge and Support for an ASEAN Community in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13 (3): 399–423.
- NOLAN GARCÍA, K.A. 2011. "Transnational Advocates and Labor Rights Enforcement in the North American Free Trade Agreement." *Latin American Politics and Society* 53 (2): 29–60.
- ONUKI, J., F. MOURON, AND F. ÚRDINEZ. 2016. "Latin American Perceptions of Regional Identity and Leadership in Comparative Perspective." *Contexto Internacional* 38: 433–65.
- PANKE, D. 2020. "Regional Cooperation through the Lenses of States: Why Do States Nurture Regional Integration?" *The Review of International Organizations* 15 (2): 475–504.
- PASTOR, R.A. 2011. *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- PÉREZ-ARMENDÁRIZ, C., AND D. CROW. 2010. "Do Migrants Remit Democracy? International Migration, Political Beliefs, and Behavior in Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (1): 119–48.
- PRYS, M. 2010. "Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood." *International Studies Review* 12 (4): 479–504.
- RIGGIROZZI, P. 2012. "Region, Regionness and Regionalism in Latin America: Towards a New Synthesis." *New Political Economy* 17 (4): 421–43.
- ROHRSCHNEIDER, R. 2002. "The Democracy Deficit and Mass Support for an EU-Wide Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 463–75.
- SANTOS, S.C. 2011. "Brasil y La Región: Una Potencia Emergente y La Integración Regional Sudamericana." *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 54 (2): 158–72.
- SCHEVE, K.F., AND M.J. SLAUGHTER. 2001. "What Determines Individual Trade-Policy Preferences?" *Journal of International Economics* 54 (2): 267–92.
- SCHILDE, K.E., S.B. ANDERSON, AND A.D. GARNER. 2019. "A More Martial Europe? Public Opinion, Permissive Consensus, and EU Defence Policy." *European Security* 28 (2): 153–72.
- SCHLIPPHAK, B. 2015. "Measuring Attitudes toward Regional Organizations Outside Europe." *The Review of International Organizations* 10 (3): 351–75.
- SCHNEIDER, S., AND A. HURRELMANN, eds. 2015. "Understanding the Legitimacy of Regional Integration: A Comparative and Mixed-Method Perspective." In *The Legitimacy of Regional Integration in Europe and the Americas*, 1–16. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SELIGSON, M.A. 1999. "Popular Support for Regional Economic Integration in Latin America." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31 (1): 129–50.
- SKONIECZNY, A. 2001. "Constructing NAFTA: Myth, Representation, and the Discursive Construction of US Foreign Policy." *International Studies Quarterly* 45 (3): 433–54.
- SÖDERBAUM, F. 2015. *Rethinking Regionalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SPIPKER, G., T. BERNAUER, AND V. UMAÑA. 2016. "Selecting Partner Countries for Preferential Trade Agreements: Experimental Evidence from Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Vietnam." *International Studies Quarterly* 60 (4): 706–18.
- STEINER, N.D. 2018. "Attitudes towards the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in the European Union: The Treaty Partner Heuristic and Issue Attention." *European Union Politics* 19 (2): 255–77.
- STOKES, B. 2017. "Views of NAFTA Less Positive – and More Partisan – in U.S. than in Canada and Mexico." *Pew Research Center* May 9, 2017. Accessed February 14, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/09/views-of-nafta-less-positive-and-more-partisan-in-us-than-in-canada-and-mexico/>.
- TEIXEIRA, C.G.P. 2012. *Brazil, the United States, and the South American Subsystem: Regional Politics and the Absent Empire*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- TVERSKY, A., AND D. KAHNEMAN. 1981. "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice." *Science* 211 (4481): 453–58.
- WILSON, C.E. 2011. *Working Together: Economic Ties between the United States and Mexico*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- WOMACK, B. 2016. *Asymmetry and International Relationships*. New York: Cambridge University Press.