

Conclusion

This conclusion synthesizes the different theoretical lessons that can be drawn from the chapters of this book, and offers a closing comment on the influence of the "left turn" on regional integration.

Part 1 of the book constituted a unique introductory chapter, sketching a series of historical and theoretical guidelines. First, it briefly characterized Latin American attempts at regional integration with two types of oxymoron: consistency despite instability, resilience despite crises. It then made an effort to suggest a definition bridging different theoretical traditions. Regional integration is thus defined as a historical process of increased levels of interaction between political units (subnational, national, or transnational), provided by actors sharing common ideas, setting objectives and defining methods to achieve them, and by so doing contributing to building a region. There are three corollaries to this definition: (1) the process can encompass a great diversity of actors (private and public), levels (from below and from above), and agendas; (2) It can result from a deliberate strategy or emerge as an unintended consequence of a social interaction; and (3) not least, it can entail institution building.

I admit that this definition can be criticized, on the ground that it can apply to an excessively wide range of situations, yet it proved useful for this inquiry. This introduction also summed up the history of Latin American integration, emphasizing its instability and the gap between objectives, means, and outcomes. Finally, I selected some theoretical tools considered best suited to account for some features of Latin American integration not sufficiently addressed by the literature: imagined political integration long remaining essentially rhetorical; economic, social or cultural integration from below despite many obstacles; integration from above launched at some critical junctures; resilience and consistency of the institutional arrangements despite

instability and crises; mismatch between scope and level of integration; and poor policy outcomes. The discussion has been organized around three basic questions: how and why is a regional integration process launched? How does it evolve? And how can its politics and policies be characterized? The theoretical instruments used draw essentially from historical institutionalism and constructivism, with some references to neo-functionalism. Some variables were highlighted like politicization and external incentives.

The theoretical discussion has supplemented the initial definition and its three corollaries. Concerning the onset of the process, I found that: (1) the increase in the level of interaction does not happen "from scratch." History matters (critical junctures, environment and negotiations); (2) the initial objectives and methods can be diverse, economic as well as political; (3) they rely on a convergence of ideas among a variety of actors; and (4) there can be endogenous as well as external incentives. Concerning the evolution of the integration process, (1) There can be permutations of objectives and crossed instrumentalizations between economy and politics; (2) The process entails politicization and the consideration of common interest in specific historical junctures, but there is no irreversibility; (3) Institution building is crafted by ideas and models; (4) Mismatches between scope and level of integration can fulfill a symbolic function. Finally, as regards the policies and politics of integration, regional integration processes are no exception in the context of a worldwide demand for democracy and accountability in the international organizations. The issue can be raised at two levels: (1) In the different regional arrangements, there are attempts to reform the institutions so that they can be more representative, participative and redistributive/allocative; and (2) At the interregional level (Latin America/United States and Latin America/European Union), a multi-level governance is being build.

Part 2 of the book was concerned with the political instrumentalization of regional economic integration.

Chapter two examined a first instrumentalization, namely the way regional integration processes are associated with crisis-resolution efforts. A brief theoretical discussion has allowed us to make the following theoretical points: (1) Highlighting the critical juncture that triggers an integration process (launching or relaunching) allows better understanding of the type of integration that follows, especially the balance between economic and political objectives; (2) A critical juncture must be described in terms of "linkage politics." International contexts, domestic politics, as well as their interactions

matter; (3) Sequences of junctures leave representations, deprived of influence, progressively fades by path dependence, partially on a new path. The opening Central American

Chapter three examines a regional integration democracy. The idea that democracy can help consolidate arrangements and on to highlight the initial juncture, The Latin American on their politicization a turning point. The new generation concerning the first Asunción, due to the diffusion of democratic ideas regarding the with a coup attempt as well as other arguments concludes that democratic institutional effects, but political instability

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In chapter four Theoretically, regional areas, can entail variations that point, I suggest institutional isomorphism arrangements mirrored turned to case studies tutional luxuriance

matter; (3) Sequencing of events is of great importance; (4) Critical junctures leave historical legacies, mainly through institutions and representations. Institutions usually survive over time, but they can be deprived of influence, and the learning effect of past experiences progressively fades away; (5) Subsequent crises resolutions are constrained by path dependency, but they can nonetheless act as new critical junctures, partially erasing the past and engaging regional integration on a new path. The chapter proves the validity of these arguments, studying Central America in the 1950s and 1980s.

Chapter three examined a second instrumentalization, the way a regional integration process can help defending and consolidating democracy. The chapter opened with a theoretical discussion showing that democracy can be a favorable condition for regional integration, but not a sufficient one. It also stressed that, conversely, integration can help consolidate democracy, thanks to constraining institutional arrangements and the shaping of actors' behaviors. The chapter went on to highlight the European example, insisting on four variables: initial juncture, spill over, conditions of eligibility and socialization. The Latin American experiences are studied putting the emphasis first on their politicization, or lack of it, showing that the 1980s marked a turning point. The case of MERCOSUR is studied to show how the new generation of agreements was born out of a preoccupation concerning the fragility of democracy. However, the 1991 Treaty of Asunción, due to the 1990 neoliberal turn in the region, the regional diffusion of democracy and U.S. influence, does not carry any provisions regarding the defense of democracy. The issue resurfaced in 1996 with a coup attempt in Paraguay and since then the MERCOSUR, as well as other agreements, include a democratic clause. The chapter concludes that democratic clauses can act as deterrents because of reputational effects, but they are not adapted to the present day threat of political instability.

Part 3 of the book was dedicated to the study of the design and development of institutions.

In chapter four, I addressed the issue of institution building. Theoretically, regional integration processes, even limited to free trade areas, can entail very different levels of institutionalization. Discussing that point, I suggested pushing further DiMaggio and Powell's theory of institutional isomorphism, as considering the way regional institutional arrangements mirror domestic formal and informal institutions. I then turned to case studies, focusing first on Andean and Caribbean institutional luxuriance and, conversely, on MERCOSUR's institutional

modesty. For a series of reasons, MERCOSUR could not hold to its initial intentions and witnessed an accelerated proliferation of agencies without crossing the line of supranationality. Every process followed the same trend: increasing institutional complexity coexisting with a concentration of power in the hands of the presidents. I explain this convergence with a domestically-inspired mimetism.

In chapter five, I turned to the scope and level of integration and tried to explain a widely recognized mismatch. I started by discussing Schmitter's theory of "crisis-provoked decisional cycles" leading to "encapsulation," suggesting improving it with two incentives, external and symbolic. The example of Central America is examined at length to illustrate this theoretical proposition and validate it, describing external incentives and what I called an umbrella-race leading to an endless expansion of the integration agenda. I then supplemented this study with a quantitative analysis of MERCOSUR and CAN's decisions, showing the diversification of the agenda over the years. Finally, the example of NAFTA is used to examine the scope and level of integration as independent variables, discussing the hypothesis of NAFTA as an external constitution for Mexico and Canada.

Part 4 of the book tackled the issue of democracy in, and democratization of, a regional integration process. I did so from three perspectives: representative, participatory, and redistributive democracy.

Chapter six focused on the parliamentary option, and started examining the logic that led the European Union to change its assembly into an elected parliament, progressively granting it decision-making prerogatives. I then described the different Latin American forums of deliberation and the three regional parliaments (in Central America, the Andes and the Caribbean), examining in more details the reforms that led to the creation of a Parliament in the MERCOSUR. While analyzing the main features of the new Parliament, I speculate regarding the latter's possible future importance in the integration process. The Parliament has not been awarded any decision-making capacity, yet much depends on the way the new "merco-parliamentarians" will make use of the institution, using formal and informal rules. The chapter closes looking at the first members' profiles and concludes that their geographical origin and political weight could mean some commitment.

Chapter seven addressed the issue of democratization "from below." I start by reflecting on the reasons why non-state actors can get involved in transnational activities and distinguish between different types of involvement, whether driven by interests, values, or politics. I then

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analyze a series of spontaneous events, essentially in Central America and MERCOSUR. In both regions, many local initiatives for integration have been created by a wide variety of actors. Yet, the official organs tend to ignore them. I also describe framed modes of participation, and conclude on a skeptical note regarding the literature on regional civil society.

In chapter eight I consider a democratized regional integration process as a system favoring the general interest, producing regional public goods, and as being held accountable by the citizenry. A theoretical discussion leads me to apply this outcome-centered conception of democracy at three levels, raising three questions: (1) is solidarity a core value of the integration process? (2) are there any regional public goods produced? And (3) are there any allocative or redistributive common policies? After revising the emblematic but complex case of the European Union, the Latin American cases are scrutinized. Particular attention is given to MERCOSUR's recent redistributive policy. Despite its defaults, MERCOSUR's structural funds definitively represent a step forward in the direction of trying to provide regional goods.

Part 5 of the book made an incursion into the study of regionalism at the hemispherical level.

Chapter nine has tested two different but not mutually exclusive hypotheses about the Summit of the Americas Process: (1) Ceremonial regionalism and (2) Multilevel governance. After a discussion of the different ways of studying how international regimes and governance contribute to a better understanding of the Miami Process, the chapter shows that the summits fulfill a symbolic function, allowing the presidents to send signals to their constituencies about their spirit of solidarity and the relevance of problem-solving at the international level at a time of domestic problems of governability. Hence, the agendas of the summits are quite overloaded. I then turn to the Summit of the Americas process and shows that a new inter-American system is being installed, looking like Marks' Type II Multilevel governance. The chapter concludes that there are competing models of integration and overlapping jurisdictions, and suggests a typology using two sets of variables (scope/level and actors/projects). However, the United States has been successfully imposing a discipline on the continent for a wide variety of issue areas.

The introduction of this book discarded any attempt to speculate about the next steps of Latin American integration process. Yet, the overall swing to the left following the 2005–2006 electoral cycle¹ has

brought about an unusual political situation. Most of the new presidents had promised a reactivation of regional integration during their campaign. Did they deliver? Are we in the presence of a new critical juncture, capable of triggering a third phase in the postwar history of regional integration?

There is wide scope to doubt it. Nowhere more than in MERCOSUR are the limitations of leftist pro-integration rhetoric so obvious. The clash between Argentina and Uruguay over the paper mills epitomizes MERCOSUR's weakness, from an institutional and above all political standpoint. Chapter four mentioned 2004's lost opportunity to make the integration process a decisive move toward deeper integration (Ouro Preto II reform). In MERCOSUR, a previously unsuspected leftist nationalism has proven to be as paralyzing as the 1990s neoliberal focus on trade-centered integration.

As the first decade of the 2000s comes to an end, it is the radical left which is putting the integration process on a new track. Interestingly enough, despite a marked tendency to use the eternal Bolivarian rhetoric of unity and brotherhood, Hugo Chávez has proved to be very pragmatic, using oil diplomacy to reshape the map of integration.

However, as mentioned in chapter nine, the new born Union of South American Nation (UNASUR) that Chávez has contributed to forge, is a strange mixture of a renewed agenda of integration, putting the emphasis on infrastructure, energy, security and social issues, and old habits of over-institutionalization. It remains to be seen if UNASUR can secure a convergence of MERCOSUR and CAN. However, it can be forecasted that without a strong political commitment, UNASUR will become yet another decorative device and will not allow Latin America to close the traditional gap between a "We have to downgrade our level of expectations"² type of discourse and the overambitious institutional arrangements. Hopefully this book will have helped the reader understand why this probable new disappointment will not come as a surprise.

Acknowledgments

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3. Peter Smith, "The Politics of Integration: The Challenge of Integration, Europe
4. <http://www.opalc.org/> (accessed 10/10/04)
5. In the whole book, the acronym UNASUR is used.

One Historical

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4. Andrew Axline, "Latin America: A Changing Reality," *Latin America*
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