The correlates of regional cooperation and institution building

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Abstract

Since World War II, regional organizations and memberships have steadily proliferated. Some regional countries share mutually more membership of these organizations than others. Under which conditions do these countries cooperate in regional organizations? Although a considerable amount of literature on regionalism has been published with a qualitative fashion, no study has examined this inquiry with a dyadic robust quantitative approach. I analyzed the shared membership of 76 ROs of all interstate dyads from 1945 to 2012 and applied the dyadic clustering robust standard error estimation method (DCRSEs) for independence concern among observations. Comprehensive results show that in order of importance, being in the same alliance, geographic proximity, joint democracy, trade interdependence, common language, joint contractualist economy, more equal material capability prima facie make normative convergence a plausible motive for states' desire to cooperate on a regional scale.

Keywords Regional Cooperation, Regional Organizations, Interstate Dyads, Dyadic Clustering

1 Introduction

When do countries engage in regional cooperation? Regional cooperation refers to countries' political and institutional mechanisms to support their common interests related to geographic criteria (Das, 2016). Regional intergovernmental organizations (ROs) are institutionalized cooperation bodies between two or more states that agree to abide by a set of primary rules (Panke, 2020). Since World War II, membership in ROs has steadily proliferated. Some suggest that formal organizations have become the main actors of this era, rather than states (Keohane & Nye, 1973; Axelrod, 1984). Others emphasize the importance of regions and the changing dynamics of regional workings of contemporary world politics (Katzenstein, 2005). While some ROs have achieved remarkable levels of cooperation, ranging from economic integration to conflict resolution, others have progressed very little or have failed altogether. Much uncertainty still exists regarding incentives for countries to engage in regional convergence.

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Most regional cooperation and integration theories have identified shared economic interests, common security threats, hegemony within or outside the region, and collective identity issues as the primary factors behind regional institution-building (Börzel & Risse, 2016). However, the state of evidence for many of these conjectures is obscure for four primary reasons. First, many studies on ROs and regional cooperation have examined single or comparative case studies (Söderbaum, 2016). While the case design is fitting for developing insights and understanding individual cases, their limited generalizability makes them less suitable for forming a broad understanding of the likely forces behind regional institution building (Maoz, 2002; Gerring, 2016). Second, some studies have compared regions using geographic-continental definitions; however, the conceptualization of these regions are inevitably social constructions (Haas, 2016). Thus, any delineation is inherently arbitrary and ambiguous. Many countries border multiple regions, and it is unclear where they belong. Turkey, for instance, is located in Europe, the Middle East, and Caucasia. Third, while some prior studies have been quantitative and avoided the arbitrary designation of regions, most have performed either the country or organizational level of analysis. While these frameworks are suitable for some investigations, they are not suitable for assessing the impacts of the many factors affecting RO building. Economic interdependence, for instance, cannot be confidently scrutinized at the country level because interdependence is an inherently dyadic phenomenon in that it occurs between two states. On the other hand, Dyadic level analyses do not preclude the examination of state-level factors.

This study contributes to the existing regional cooperation knowledge by analyzing the correlations of regional cooperation at the dyadic level. Recently, scholars have introduced the unique dyadic clustering robust standard errors (DCRSEs) method (Cameron & Miller, 2015; Aronow et al., 2017). This method addresses the concerns about the validity of the dyadic unit of analysis due to dependency among dyads. Using the DCRSEs method, this study organizes states into pairings, or dyads of states—drawing on the new Regional Organization and Cooperation dataset (ROCO-III) (Panke & Starkmann, 2019)— and assess the impact of regional cooperation factors.

Analyses of most countries from 1945 to 2012 show the following factors as significant correlates of regional organizational membership. In order of impact, these are:
- Being in the same alliance
- Geographic proximity
- Joint democracy
- Trade interdependence
- Common language
- Joint contractualist economy
- Equal material capability

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. The second section provides a brief overview of theories of international cooperation. The third section discusses the correlates of regional cooperation in-depth and elucidates how dyadic relations contribute to understanding regional

cooperation. The fourth section explains the research design, data sources, and measures. The section reports the results and final section and implications of the research are presented.

2 Theories of regional cooperation

International relations (IR) scholars have long debated why and how states cooperate. Nomothetic theories of international cooperation are mostly rationalist and state-centered and can partially explain regional cooperation. While regional integration theories which roots functionalism have successfully elucidated Global North regionalism, but it appears arguable to explain the regionalism for the rest of world.

Functionalists put forward that nation-states and nationalist movements are the primary sources of international conflict. The solution for overcoming nationalism is to increase cooperation through economic ties and international organizations based on shared interests (Mitrany, 1943). Neo-functionalists stress the increasing social, economic, and technological interdependence built upon the logic of diffusion of sectoral integration. States create administrative bodies based on expertise to encourage economic cooperation and advance integration. Once sectoral integration occurs, integration spreads to related sectors and triggers cooperation in other fields (known as the spillover effect) (Haas, 1958, 1964; Haas & Schmitter, 1966). However, critics suggest that neo-functionalism may be too European Union (EU)-centric perspective, as it seems unable to explain such integration in any other parts of the world due to the supranational structure in which member states cede authority and sovereignty to a body that regulates and decides on their behalf.

Neoliberal institutionalism posits that cooperation in a decentralized, international system is possible. Institutions promote cooperation because they provide information to their members about others' behavior and monitor both sides' compliance, thereby helping to solve states' primary concern: the defection problem (Axelrod & Keohane, 1985). Institutional frameworks provide plausible implications at the regional level. Regional organizations also help states overcome challenges by ensuring credible commitments for both sides and agreeing on a common denominator.

The other central components of the neoliberal paradigm are interdependence and globalization (Keohane & Nye, 1973, 2000). States cooperate based on rules in areas as diverse as the production, distribution, and marketing of coffee or the reduction of nuclear weapons in an international setting where interdependence has expanded along with globalization. At the regional level, however, globalization has an integrative effect. As global trade expands, it can also create unequal exchanges between developed and underdeveloped economies, further benefiting developed economies because of financial leverage. Due to this vulnerability to stronger global competition, ROs can be a functional instrument for reacting to these challenges. To protect the region's interests, on the one hand, ROs increase economic effectiveness; on the other hand,

implementing regulations can be handled better than the national approach could have been. (Schirm, 2002).

The theoretical assertions of the hegemonic stability theory also reflect regional cooperation. A powerful hegemon often takes the initiative, adopts a mediator's role, mitigates tensions, and unifies other regional stakeholders pursuing economic or geopolitical interests (Fawcett & Gandois, 2010). Developments after the Cold War have shown that both global and regional hegemons, such as the US, Russia, Brazil, India, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia, have established regional building to strengthen military ties and promote stability in their regions (Gowa, 1994).

Scholars of liberal intergovernmentalism underscore the influence of various domestic groups on regional cooperation policies. Moravcsik (1998) claimed that the principal actors in international politics are states, but individuals and national pressure groups also play an essential role in regional integration. Domestic interest groups or business elites establish ties with other trans-regional groups to access each other's markets for exporting products or sourcing energy or raw materials (Duina, 2016). However, regulations and national bureaucracies prevent them from cooperating efficiently. To overcome this obstacle, they pressure their governments to facilitate relations and foster trade. Hence, under the pressure of domestic interest groups, governments may focus on regional cooperation.

3 The correlates of regional cooperation

There is not an ideal consensus on the definition of regional intergovernmental organizations in the literature, but most generally agree that ROs are institutions that have three specific characteristics. First, ROs have primary rules with compliance monitored with institutional bodies, such as a secretariat. Second, at least two or three members must be actively involved. Third, the criteria for membership must be related to a geographic location in some way (Panke, 2020). Therefore, regional organizations are separated from international organizations by taking a geographical context, such as The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Regional or preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and informal organizations fall outside this definition.

As mentioned, the literature emphasizes economic interdependence, democracy, security threats, and cultural identity issues as the primary factors behind regional institution-building (Haas, 1964; Milward, 1992; Solingen, 1998; Hemmer and Katzenstein, 2002; Söderbaum & Shaw, 2003; Fawcett & Gandois, 2010; Börzel, 2016). Most recent research suggests countries' economic type as also a potential factor in regional cooperation (Mousseau, 2019). The author addresses each correlate separately.

3.1 Trade Interdependence

Institutionalists could interpret the liberal international arrangements for trade and international finance as responses to the need for policy coordination created by interdependence (Keohane,

1984). This idea can also be assumed for regional relations, where the interdependence between partners is more intense than global. Regional countries need a coordinator who could allow them to negotiate rules and commitments regarding trade transactions and reduce information asymmetry.

The preliminary regional integration ideas consistently emphasize that trade invigorates the economic relations of states, and integration in one area will have spillover effects in other areas (Haas, 1961). This spillover effect of interdependence strengthens political ties, which establish the basis of long-term cooperation (Copeland, 1996). Cooperation in economic, financial, and technical matters gradually becomes a political union and paves the way for supranational institutions (Mitrany, 1975).

There are two main reasons states are more likely to trade and cooperate within their regions than outside. The first is the insight of the gravity model in economics. According to this model, the closer the geographic distance between two states—considering their economical size—the more bilateral trade flows should be expected (Isard & Peck, 1954; Hegre, 2009). Distance increases transport costs and, everything else being equal, countries with larger economies trade more than those with smaller ones. The emergence of the European common market in the 1950s— and its gradual evolution to community and then union—is almost an ideal case of the gravity model effect and functionalist and neo-functionalist expectations on how interdependence should promote regional organization over time.

The second reason states are more likely to trade and cooperate within their regions than outside of them is to seek security from the competitive pressures of globalization. States seek membership in regional bodies to protect themselves from the negative externalities of global markets (Schirm, 2002; Breslin et al., 2002). They may establish preferential or regional trade agreements that unite their markets, economies, production processes, and political and strategic forces. While regional agreements allow the states to benefit through regional trade, ROs function like a platform that enables the members to reduce transaction costs, create new free trade markets, and bring foreign direct investment (Börzel, 2016).

Many studies support the role of trade in promoting RO formation and participation in various ways. Analyzing cases, Kim et al. (2016) report that regional partners are keener to participate in ROs because they facilitate trade between them, allowing members preferential access to their markets by relaxing the rules. By doing so, they pave the way for regional economic institution-building in which countries regulate and cooperate with their trade relations (Mansfield & Milner, 1997; Fishlow & Haggard, 1992). Analyzing the regional integration efforts of ASEAN, MERCOSUR, and SADC, Krapohl (2017) finds support for the view that developing countries expect to increase their trade volume through regional integration because they both protect themselves against global competition and benefit from this through increased investment and exports. Analyzing states, Panke (2020) reports the economic benefits from trade as the foremost force for participation in ROs.

However, the evidence for trade as a cause of RO participation is limited due to the lack of quantitative dyadic-level analyses. Of all the above studies, only Panke (2020) analyzed RO

participation in a large-N framework. Panke's study marked a significant advance in our understanding of the factors that promote regional cooperation, as it showed that countries with larger economies are more likely to participate in ROs than those with smaller economies. However, because the analysis was of states rather than dyads, trade interdependence could only be inferred from economic size. In fact, everything else being equal, countries with larger economies are often less interdependent than those with smaller ones because they usually are less dependent on foreign trade due to their larger size.

Overall, the only way to definitively determine if trade integration is a factor in regional cooperation in ROs is to examine pairs of countries in a dyadic framework. Therefore, in the analyses below, I test the hypothesis, "*as trade interdependence increases, participation in regional organizations increases*" (H1).

3.2 Regime Type

The literature is mixed regarding how regime type can affect participation in ROs. Research on democratic peace implies that democracies should be more likely than autocracies to participate in ROs. Democratic peace is the phenomenon that democratic countries are less likely than autocratic countries to fight each other, even though the risk of armed conflict between democracies and autocracies is average (Maoz & Russett, 1993). Research has found that democracies tend to cooperate more than autocracies (Mousseau, 1997; Leeds, 1999). This research suggests the 'dyadic' hypothesis that democratic countries may be more likely than autocratic countries to participate in ROs, but only with each other.

The alternative to the dyadic hypotheses is the 'monadic' one: the idea that democratic countries may be more likely than autocratic countries to participate in ROs, regardless of the regime status of the other state in the dyad. Several studies support the idea that liberal democracies promote more democracy through international organizations (Russett et al., 1998; Boehmer et al., 2004; Pevehouse, 2005). Panke's (2020) state-level analysis suggested that democracies are more likely than autocracies to participate in ROs. Supporting this democracy promotion effect is Van der Vlueten and Hoffman's (2010) analyses of the European Union (EU), Organization of American States (OAS), and Southern African Development Community (SADC) ROs, where they found that the enforcement of democracy on members depends on the democratic identity of the leading regional powers in the ROs.

Still, a third trend of thought suggests that authoritarian states may be more likely than democratic states to form and participate in ROs. Rittberger and Schroeder (2016) suggest that authoritarian states form ROs as a form of Alliance in opposition to the Western global order. For instance, Moscow and Beijing, who previously viewed each other as threats, formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), ostensibly to address regional security issues but possibly, in part, to contain Western dominance. Another reason to expect autocratic states to be more likely than democracies to join ROs is their value as legitimization tools at home and abroad (Obydenkova & Lybman, 2018). Valbjørn (2016) shows how the Arab League RO helps legitimate

some authoritarian members. Autocratic leaders also try to increase their popularity in the eyes of domestic elites and citizens by projecting the image of having close relations with regional countries. Stronger autocrats try to foster mutual support with the flow of information exchange (Börzel, 2016); they might even redistribute their resources to weaker ones to keep them in the network (Lybman & Obydenkova, 2018).

The literature thus yields two hypotheses on regime type, monadic and dyadic. The monadic hypothesis tests if *democracies (autocracies) are more likely than autocracies (democracies) to participate in regional organizations* (H2). The dyadic test examines if *democracies are more likely than autocracies to participate in regional organizations with each other* (H3).

3.3 Relative Power

Regional security organizations, which are formalized bodies of alliances, are central in international politics (Morrow, 1991). Realists would expect alliance formation as a function, not of regime type or ideology, but relative capability (Walt, 1985, 1987; Mearsheimer, 1994; Kacowicz & Press-Barnathan, 2016). Balance-of-power Realism suggests that weaker states tend to ally together when a stronger state emerges in the region or enters the region from afar (Walt, 1987). Hegemonic Realists, on the other hand, expect the opposite: that if there is a stronger power, or "hegemon," in a region, it will ease tensions among the weaker powers and smooth the path toward regional cooperation (Mattli, 1999: 56; Gilpin, 1987: 87–90). Weaker countries will join ROs because they help them address security and non-security challenges (Börzel & Risse, 2016; Acharya, 2011; Barnett & Solingen, 2007; Fawcett, 2004). The hegemonic perspective suggests that *as power asymmetry between states increases, participation in regional organizations increases* (H4).

3.4 Contract-intensive Economy

In recent years scholars of development and conflict have begun to pay attention to the existence of two distinct kinds of economies in history: 'gift'-intensive and 'contract'-intensive (Mousseau et al., 2003; North et al., 2009), concepts long known in the fields of Anthropology and Sociology (Mauss, 1966; Maine, 1861, 1917; Durkheim, 1893, 1997; Weber 1904: 201). A contract-intensive economy is one where most households obtain their material needs by engaging in a contract with strangers in the open marketplace. Examples include the countries with advanced market-oriented economies, such as most members of the OECD. A gift-intensive economy, in contrast, is one where households band together into groups based on norms of reciprocity, such as mafias, clans, tribes, feudal vassalages, and political parties. Examples of countries with gift-intensive economies include most countries of Latin America and Africa. Contract or gift-intensive economy is not defined by income or region, however, but economic norms: some OECD members have gift-intensive norms, such as Mexico, and some Latin American and African countries have contract-intensive norms, such as Chile and Botswana (Mousseau, 2018). Studies report that countries with

contract-intensive norms rarely have widespread support for terrorist or sectarian forms of violence (Boehmer & Daube, 2013; Krieger & Meierrieks, 2015; Meierrieks & Gries, 2012) and rarely wage war against one another (Enia & James, 2015; Hegre et al., 2020). They also tend to have stronger and more capable states (Enia, 2017) and are largely immune from military coups (Chacha & Powell, 2016).

There is reason to expect that countries with contract-intensive economies may be more likely than others to participate in ROs. Economic norms theory highlights that everyone is materially better off in a contract-intensive economy when everyone else in the marketplace is also better off (Mousseau et al., 2003). The result is a reliable voter consensus on the value of economic growth. In gift-intensive societies, in contrast, groups of households compete for state rents, frequently voiced with identity and ideological claims. As a result, distributive issues can sometimes outweigh economic growth issues. Thus, leaders of contractualist states are under more steady and intense pressure to produce economic growth than leaders of gift-intensive states, and participation in ROs is an obvious means for pursuing economic growth.

In addition, due to group competition among domestic groups, leaders of gift-intensive states must frequently voice solidarity with various ethnic, religious, and ideological identities. Since neighbors frequently share ethnic, religious, and ideological identities and differences, these kinds of claims can sometimes enter foreign policy platforms and inhibit RO participation with neighbors. Conversely, leaders of gift-intensive countries can sometimes seek to unite diverse factions by stoking conflict with neighbors—also inhibiting participation in ROs.

Like the democracy hypotheses, the literature suggests two hypotheses on economic type, monadic and dyadic. The monadic hypothesis tests if *countries with contract-intensive economies are more likely than those with gift-intensive economies to participate in regional organizations* (H5). *The dyadic expectation stems from the possibility that shared norms and interests may cause countries with contract-intensive economies to be more likely to cooperate only with each other (H6).*

3.5 Alliances

Another obvious incentive to form and join ROs is to ally against a common threat (Fawcett, 2004; Börzel, 2016; Kacowicz & Press-Barnathan, 2016). There are many examples that states see ROs as a source of protection against aggressors. Recently, as regards joining NATO, Ukrainian president Zelensky explicitly stated his wishes by calling for NATO protection and assistance to deal with the Russian threat[2]. Keohane also suggests that the International Energy Agency was "formed for the security of consumer governments' oil supplies and the solidity of U.S.-centered alliances" (1984: 81). These economic arrangements of liberal democracies might be nested in strategic alliances (Grieco, 1988).

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[2] "Why is Ukraine still not in NATO", Dymitro Kuleba, Feb 16, 2021. Atlantic Council. Retrieved from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-is-ukraine-still-not-in-nato/, accessed Aug 02, 2021.

In addition, states increasingly need to cooperate with their border countries on various issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, pandemics, and irregular migration (Kirchner and Domínguez, 2011). While continual cooperation agreements in these areas will increase the trust between the states, it will also reinforce the idea of coming together in the same regional organization. Accordingly, this will be examined if *allied states are more likely to join ROs than non-allied states* (H6).

3.6 Common Language and Religion

Constructivist approaches draw attention to intersubjective structures as ideational drivers of international cooperation, such as ideas, norms, identities, knowledge, culture, and discourses (Katzenstein et al., 1998; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1999). Indeed, states sometimes prefer a particular institutional structure with specific shared characteristics and values such as common language and religion. In Theologico-Political Treatise, Baruch Spinoza thinks that "a universal public religion could bolster civic solidarity, channeling religious passions into social benefits." (Steinberg, 2019; TTP 14: 182)[3] While Pan-Arabism movements which flourished at the beginning of the century, paved the way for the Arab League (Acharya, 2012), cooperation and the ever-increasing interdependence of European states form a unique collective identity (Wendt, 1992).

There are very few studies on common religion and international cooperation. Baccini & Dür (2012), in their dyadic analysis, found a correlation between common language and the diffusion of preferential trade agreements but did not find any association with a common religion. It is known that Abrahamic religions often invoke solidarity among those who have the same religion. Further, some states commission their religious affiliations to engage in transborder missionary activities. Altogether, these findings suggest that ideational drivers encourage regional states to establish regional institutional building. *Dyads with a joint language are more likely to establish regional cooperation* (H7), and *those with joint religion are more likely to establish regional cooperation* (H8).

4 Research Design

A central proposition in the literature is that cooperation can be achieved when two actors' expectations converge (Axelrod, 1984; Milner, 1992). It follows that analyses of dyads—pairings of countries—suit the research questions of this study. The dyads are aggregated annually in a panel structure in line with available data. The units are non-directional, meaning that there is just one observational unit for each dyad-year and not two observations for each direction in the dyad (e.g., India to Russia and another for Russia to India). Non-directional dyads are the appropriate unit of analysis, as all the hypotheses above are non-directional in form.

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[3] TTP = *Tractatus theologico-politicus/ Theological-Political Treatise*

For each dyad-year, I counted the number of ROs, drawing on Panke and Starkmann's (2019) Regional Organization and Cooperation (ROCO) III dataset. The dataset defines an RO as an institution with a set of primary rules, institutional bodies, and at least three active members. They identify 76 ROs to have existed from 1945 to 2012, which has seen the highest proliferation of ROs. I then leveraged these original data for the dependent variable *Joint RO membership*.

4.1 Dyadic clustering standard error estimators (DCRSEs)

Although much quantitative empirical research in IR has been carried out using dyadic data, an important critique of this approach concerns dyads' dependency on each other. In other words, when dyads are members of multilateral events such as an alliance, war, and intergovernmental organizations (IGO) membership, there might be other members that have causal relations to that event (Poast, 2010, 2016; Erikson et al., 2014; Cranmer & Desmarais, 2016). For example, errors for Russia-China trade may be correlated with those for any other country pair that includes either Russia or China (Cameron et al., 2014). Therefore, causality might not be unique for dyads and may be contingent upon another confounding member, affecting statistical inference.

Political scientists offer novel solutions to address this methodological concern, such as the K-adic unit of analysis[4] (Poast, 2010, 2016), network analysis[5] (Maoz, 2002; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009; and DCRSEs (Aronow et al., 2017; Carlson et al., 2021; Cameron et al., 2014). However, neither network analysis nor k-ads entirely solve the problem of multilateral events (Poast, 2016). One-way clustering-robust analysis (generalized linear models) is appropriate for heteroscedastic linear and state-level models; nevertheless, it fails to account for error correlation in dyads. When analyzing much dyadic research in the journal *International Organization*, Carlson et al. (2021) found that the dyadic clustering method provides more accurate, asymptotic, statistical significance tests and confidence intervals. DCRSEs eliminate the biases that stem from interdependence among observations. It does this by using a multi-way decomposition approach, which assumes that the members of each dyad have clusters, and these clusters intersect with other clusters. Cluster-robust variance estimators adjust these common clusters and eliminate the intervention of common errors (Aronow et al., 2017).

4.2 Independent variables

This paper examines the efficacy of six main potential correlates of RO participation: trade interdependence, regime type, power asymmetry, contractualist economy, alliance, and cultural variables. In addition, three control factors are included. They are exogenous by nature but may affect both the dependent and independent variables: geographic contiguity, geographic distance gauged with inter capital distance, and years since the last militarized interstate dispute. All the independent variables have been lagged one year behind the dependent variable in response to

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[4] K-ad is a unit of analysis containing more than two members (k>2).
[5] Network analysis investigates actors' relations that tie each other through certain connections.

endogeneity concerns in observational data. For trade interdependence and power asymmetry, the formula of inverse hyperbolic sine is applied to approximate the natural logarithm since both variables have skewed and zero-valued observations.

The formulation of inverse hyperbolic sine: $\text{arsinh } x = \ln (x + \sqrt{1+x^2})$

Trade interdependence is a continuous variable, and its data are obtained from Gleditsch (2002). For its measurement, I adopted Russett and Oneal's (2001) formulation by assessing country i's dependence on trade with j as the sum of trade ij divided by the GDP of i, and then assess dyadic interdependence by considering the level of dependence of the less dependent state for each dyad-year.

To gauge democracy, the V-dem dataset v11.1 Coppedge et al. (2021) is used. I draw upon Teorell et al.'s (2019) *Electoral Democracy index*, a continuous form of democracy. They conceptually take essential elements of representative democracy measurements; liberal, participatory, deliberative, egalitarian, or others. The index is created by taking the weighted average of freedom, fair elections, freedom of expression, elected officials, and suffrage indices. To test both dyadic and monadic hypotheses, I created two democracy variables that extant literature often applied: *Democracy Low* and *Democracy High*. To test the dyadic hypothesis (democracy-democracy), I use Oneal's and Russett (1997) suggested 'weak link' approach, which is to assign the democracy score of the less democratic state in the dyad (Democracy Low). In this measurement, higher values of dyads indicate that both countries in a dyad are democratic. *Democracy High* variable tests the monadic hypothesis (democracy-autocracy). It is operationalized in this manner: whichever state in the dyad has the higher democracy score, the dyad gets that value. With Democracy Low included and constant, higher values of Democracy High indicate the extent at which one state in the dyad is more democratic than the other.

For *Power Asymmetry,* the data are taken from the Composite Index of National Capabilities dataset (CINC) (Correlates of War Project 2008, Singer, 1987). The score aggregates the six components of national material capabilities, representing a state's demographic, economic, and military strength. Each country's score corresponds to its percentage share of the total world material capability. Following Zeev Maoz's suggestion, I gauge power asymmetry in the dyad as *CINCmax/ CINCmax + CINCmin*. While CINCmax is the maximum value in the dyad, the minimum is CINCmin. Maoz suggests that "this measures the extent to which the relative capabilities of dyad members deviate from parity" (Maoz et al. 2018: 823). Therefore, the score implies whether the higher or lower relative capability of dyads predicts regional cooperation or not.

Data for economic type is drawn from the Contract Intensity of National Economies (CINE) dataset (Mousseau, 2019). The data are aggregated annually with coverage from 1816 to 2017. The continuous form of *CIE Low* and *CIE High* variables tests both the monadic and dyadic hypotheses. While CIE Low is coded as the lower value in the dyad, CIE High is coded as the higher value in the dyad. It is expected that while lower CIE values (CIE Low) in a dyad are the

stronger determinant of regional cooperation, higher CIE values in a dyad (CIE High) suggest only one state has a contractualist economy.

The *Alliance* variable is taken from COW Alliance V4.1 (dyadic-yearly) dataset (Gibler, 2009). If dyads share a defense agreement in a year, it is coded as 1, otherwise, it equals zero. From the dataset, only defense agreements are operationalized to address the theoretical expectation that a common threat between states is the main motive for engaging in regional institutions.

Joint language and *religion* are dichotomous concepts. Drawing on data from the World Religion dataset, the countries are identified where majorities are associated with the following three major religious categories: Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and the others, with all other countries coded as zero (Maoz & Henderson, 2013). If both countries in the dyad share a common religion, *Joint Religion* is coded as 1. If not, it is coded as 0. Similarly, the World Factbook identifies the five most common languages: English, French, Arabic, Spanish, and Portuguese.[6] If majorities of both countries in the dyad speak the same language, *Joint Language* is coded as 1, and if not, it is coded as 0.

I also control for several other factors thought to affect regional cooperation. Any of the above factors might be affected by geographic proximity in a dyad, which offers an opportunity for cooperation. Knoben and Orleamans (2006) claim that short distances bring actors together because they can exchange a high level of information and knowledge, which may not be possible with faraway countries. Also, where shared borders foster economic, cultural, social, and political ties between states and non-state actors, kinship relations may promote immigration and trade (Brinks & Coppedge, 2006). To better understand the effect of geographic proximity, both *Contiguity* and *Capital Distance* are utilized. *Contiguity* is drawn from the Correlates of War Direct Contiguity Data (Stinnet et al., 2002). Although the original classification system for contiguity consists of five categories, which separate the water contiguity from 12 miles up to 200 miles, I assume the coding as 1, which covers both land border and all water distances. Coding 0 means no close border between dyads. For *Capital Distance*, the Gleditsch and Ward (2001) data on inter-capital distance are used, using the natural log for skewness. *Peace years* is intended to capture the idea that long periods of peace can promote closer regional states for cooperation. The data are taken from COW Militarized interstate disputes v4.01(Dyadic) (Maoz et al., 2018). *Peace years* are a discrete variable by suggesting maximum peace years in the dyads.

In presenting the results, I include the factors of RO memberships that must be exogenous from those that can be endogenous to other factors in all tests as precaution. *Capital distance,* geographic *Contiguity,* and *Peace years* are all exogenous, as none can be reasonably caused by the other investigated variables, at least in the short term.

5 Results

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[6] https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/.

Table 1 presents the outcomes of the regression analysis on the joint RO memberships of dyads using the DCRSEs method. Model 1 measures *Trade interdependence* and *Joint RO membership* relations with the exogenous control variables. A highly robust coefficient value (β=38.85) supports the argument that economic benefits may be a significant driver of regionalism. This finding accords with liberal theories of interdependence on a regional basis. It is also consistent with Panke's state-level analyses: "The stronger RO member states engage in trade, the more emphasis they place on tackling potential negative side-effects caused by past cooperation by cooperating even more in additional, neighboring policy areas" (2020: 493). This rational behavior of states can be seen in many organizations. For example, although historical antagonism has long existed between Turkey and Russia, growing interdependence driven by bilateral relations catalyzed the Black Sea Economic and Cooperation Organization and forced them to put aside their geopolitical strategies.

Model 2 reports the impact of democracy on RO membership. As can be seen, the dyadic hypotheses have empirical support (β=1.03). The positive and significant coefficient of *Democracy Low* implies that regional democratic dyads are more cooperative with each other. One plausible explanation is that democracies can make more credible commitments than other regimes (Lai & Reiter, 2000; Pevehouse, 2003). Therefore, they are likely to eliminate the fear of cheating better than other regimes. Although debated continuously, previous studies indicate many pacifist features of democracies. Democracies are more likely to be involved in economic arrangements with each other (Mansfield et al., 2002; Pevehouse & Russett, 2006), are keen to join international organizations because they help bolster their institutions (Russett & Oneal, 2001), and are said to reduce the frequency of violent conflict (Russett, 1993; Maoz & Russett, 1993; Russett and Oneal, 1997; Mousseau 2009, 2018, 2019). Democratic dyads are also more likely to share more institutionalized IGO membership (Boehmer & Nordstrom, 2008). Institutions in democracies are said to reduce collective action problems for cooperation by promoting trade and economic interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1973). On a regional scale, Mansfield et al. (2008) found that if a country's domestic institutions have pluralistic characteristics, such as the number of institutional veto players and the homogeneity of preferences among those veto players, then it is likely to choose to participate in regional integration arrangements.

Democracy High, which tests the monadic effect, is significant but has a negative coefficient (β= -0.30). The outcome suggests that regional states may not engage in regional cooperation when there are regime differences. It is difficult to interpret this finding based on cooperation theories alone as it points to non-cooperation stemming from uncertainty. Unlike democratic dyads, mixed dyads have always been controversial and complex. While comparative politics often underscore states' domestic politics and foreign policy preferences (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992; Fravel, 2005), variations among authoritarian regimes also blur their cooperative behaviors with democracies. Some researchers have even found that authoritarian dyads are more peaceful than mixed ones (Oneal & Russett, 1997; Gleditsch & Hegre, 1997; Peceny et al., 2002). The results can also be translated through democratic peace findings, indicating that while shared institutional and norm constraints among liberal democracies prevent conflict, neither the public nor citizens

offer the same provisions against other regimes (Russett, 1993; Levy, 1994; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1999). Overall, consistent with previous literature, this outcome has reinforced the conviction that like-minded democratic regional states look for regional cooperation more than others.

Perhaps the most surprising observation that emerged from the analyses is the relationship between power asymmetry and regional cooperation. While *Power asymmetry* is insignificant in Model 3, it is significant in Models 7 and 8. Contrary to expectations, its negative coefficient (β=-7.97) indicates that as states' relative capabilities converge or become equal, they are more likely to cooperate through ROs. In contrast, if the relative capabilities between dyads diverge, their gap widens, and they are less likely to join the same RO. The findings imply that weaker states are reluctant to cooperate with stronger states in the region, contrary to the hegemonic perspective that stronger states promote cooperation in regions. This result supports the hegemonic hypothesis and the contrary neorealist balance of power expectation that weaker states may be reluctant to cooperate with stronger ones for fear of being dominated.

Model 4 tests both the monadic and dyadic hypotheses of contract-intensive economies. The positive coefficient of *CIE Low* confirms that dyads, where both states have contract-intensive economies, are more likely than others to cooperate in ROs (β =1.06), as expected from economic norms theory (Mousseau, 2002, 2009, 2019). In contrast, a *CIE High* does not predict regional cooperation. ROs, like international regimes, have functions that monitor members' compliance, facilitate reciprocity, and have enforcement mechanisms (Young, 1982; Krasner, 1983; Keohane, 1984; Oye, 1986). Notably, this can be observed more strongly in institutionalized organizations such as the EU. In contractual economies, since the most salient feature is the welfare of everyone in the marketplace (Mousseau, 2019), they might not want to risk any benefits of ROs. As such, they tend to be more transparent and coherent with like-minded actors. Conversely, gift-intensive economies probably abstain from joining ROs because they do not have an interest in the global marketplace. Patrons who dominate domestic markets might not wish to be monitored by external actors and share benefits with ROs. In contrast, the democratic partner might hesitate to cooperate with gift-intensive economies due to the possibility of credible commitment concerns in economic transactions.

Model 5 reports that *Alliance* is significant and positive (β=1.30). The high coefficient shows that if dyads are in alliances, they tend to come together in the same regional organizations. This outcome supports alliance assumptions because the perception of a common threat and mutual strategic interest make regional cooperation more rational for regional states. As scholars suggest, states seek allies to respond against a common threat by either balancing or bandwagoning. (Kaplan, 1957; Morgenthau, 1960; Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1985). Analogous to the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), because of the communist threat after the Vietnam War, South Asian countries needed to act together with a common threat and establish the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Mansfield & Solingen, 2010).

For the culture variables, the findings were partly consistent with expectations. Dyads that speak the same language are more willing to cooperate at the regional level (β=.58). This also leads to statistical significance in Models 6 and 8. Baccini and Dür (2012) found a positive

correlation between preferential trade agreements and a shared language. The existence of special bonds between regional dyads makes normative convergence a plausible motive for cooperation, as evidenced by the emergence of the Arab League (Solingen & Malnight, 2016), South American, and francophone organizations.

Joint religion is significant only in the reduced form of Model 6 (β=.07). This implies that except for identity-based ROs, having the same faith might not motivate regional convergence in dyads. EU has been long criticized as being a Christian club since there is not any Muslim member and a hard-line attitude of some members against Turkey's EU accession negotiations. However, scholars point out convergence ideas about secularism perception between the EU and states that wish to become members (Hurd, 2008; Menchik, 2017). Today, the Arab League is a regional community that keeps regional states together through a distinct concept of the Islamic community known as the *ummah*. An exciting implication of this model is that sharing the same language, rather than religion, might be a more important factor in overcoming barriers among regional states.

Model 7 is a saturated model that covers all variables. Although there are slight decreases in the coefficients of *Trade interdependence, Democracy variables, CIEs, Alliance*, and *Joint language*, they are significant and have the same trends. The difference from other models is that while *Power asymmetry* is significant, *Joint religion, Contiguity*, and *Peace years* are insignificant.

As for the control variables, *Contiguity*, contrary to expectations, is not robust in all models. It is significant in models 1,2,4, and 5 but not in models 3, 6, and 7. This shows that geographical proximity is important for regional cooperation only when the factors of trade, democracy, economic norms, and cultural closeness are considered. *Capital distance* between dyads predicts regional cooperation with negative coefficients. This means that as capital distances increase in a dyad, RO joint membership decreases. Conversely, one can expect more cooperation if the capitals are close to each other.

Peace years are significant and positive in Models 1 to 6, but not in Model 7, indicating that prior models are underspecified that any effect of peace years is attributable to one or all of the significant other variables causing both ROS and longer periods of peace. Similarly, Russett et al. (1998) suggested that fewer military disputes lead to greater IGO membership. One reason is that credible commitment is essential for states when entering an agreement (Keohane, 1984). This result updates these views that even regional states may want to be sure whether the other side will keep its commitments. Thus, peaceful years can be a sign of the other's credibility. Longer peace times may provide a robust signal for states when they intend to cooperate at the regional level.

Figure 1 presents the coefficient estimates and shows the relative importance of all significant correlates of ROs in the best-specified Model 8. Since there are both binary and continuous scales, the relative strength of the predictors in the model cannot be directly compared. Thus, in Model 8, I standardized the coefficients by subtracting the variable's mean from each observed value and dividing by the standard deviation.

Table 1 Models of the Correlates of Regional Cooperation, 1945 – 2012 (Dyadic Clustering Standard Robust Estimation)

	(Model 1)	(Model 2)	(Model 3)	(Model 4)	(Model 5)	(Model 6)	(Model 7)	(Model 8) (Standardized coefficients)
Trade interdependence ($\sinh^{-1}$)	38.85***						31.72***	.07***
	(9.64)						(8.44)	(.02)
Democracy low		1.03***					.65***	.11***
		(.15)					(.10)	.02
Democracy high		-.30***					-.14	
		(.08)					(.07)	
Power asymmetry ($\sinh^{-1}$)			-7.97				-10.52*	-.02**
			(6.65)				(4.87)	(.01)
CIE low				1.06***			.32*	.05**
				(.22)			(.14)	(.02)
CIE high				-.09			-.04	
				(.06)			(.03)	
Alliance					1.30***		1.09***	.26***
					(.12)		(.11)	(.02)
Joint language						.58***	.26*	.06**
						(.12)	(.11)	(.02)
Joint Religion						.07***	.009	
						(.01)	(.01)	
Contiguity	.19*	.36***	.39	.43***	.27**	.41	.10	
	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)	(.10)	(.09)	(.09)	(.07)	
Capital distance (Ln)	-.44***	-.55***	-.56***	-.54***	-.43***	-.52***	-.30***	-.25***
	(.03)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.04)	(.05)	(.03)	(.02)
Peace years	.002***	.003***	.003***	.003***	.002***	.003***	.0005	
	(.0006)	(.0006)	(.0006)	(.0008)	(.0005)	(.0007)	(.0003)	
Constant	3.87***	4.65***	12.88***	4.68***	3.74***	4.37***	11.76***	.09***
	(.30)	(.34)	(6.66)	(.41)	(.38)	(.43)	(4.33)	(.01)
Observations	472.717	603.658	698.183	436.123	462.487	462.487	280.279	280.279

Standard errors are in parentheses
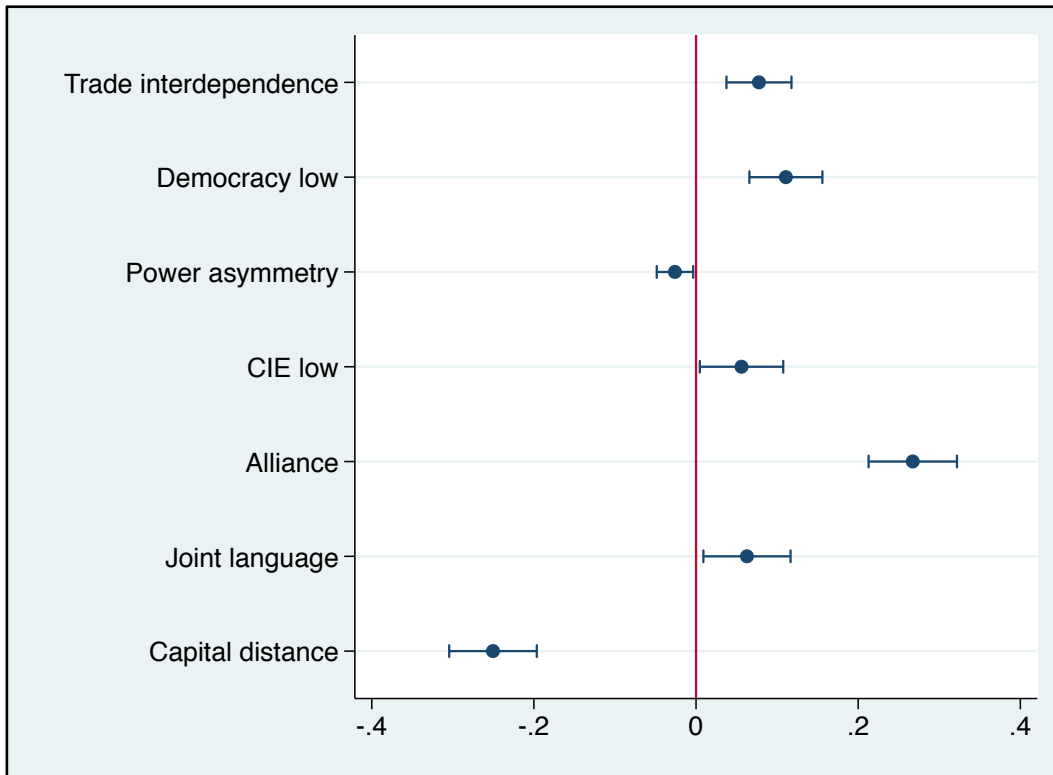*** $p<.005$, ** $p<.01$, * $p<.5$

Figure 1 The Coefficient Estimates of the Correlates of the Regional Cooperation, (Model 8).

As can be seen, *Alliance* has the most considerable impact on RO participation of all the significant correlates, and *Power asymmetry* the smallest. Hence, a 1-standard deviation increase in Alliance leads to a 0.26 standard deviation increase in predicted joint membership in an RO, with the other variables held constant. A 1-standard deviation increase in *Power asymmetry*, in turn, leads to a 0.02 standard deviation decrease in predicted joint membership in an RO, with the other variables in the model, held constant. Overall, the analysis indicates that the relative strength of the regional cooperation correlates is, in order of importance: being in the same alliance, geographic distance, joint democracy, trade interdependence, having the same language, joint contractualist economy, and equal material capability.

6 Conclusion

This investigation aimed to assess the conditions under which regional states promote cooperation through shared membership in ROs. Although a considerable amount of literature on regionalism has been published, no study has examined the inquiry of regional cooperation with a dyadic robust

quantitative approach. There can be many causal facts behind the increase in the trade volume of one state; however, a mutual increase in the trade volume between two states can only be attributable to the interactions between dyads. For this reason, I argue that international relations events like regional cooperation must be investigated through a dyadic unit of analysis in nature. This shortcoming in the previous research was the motivation of this study. Furthermore, I applied a novel DCRSEs method, eliminating the independence problems stemming from dyads that share a common member; consequently, I achieved more fine-grained results.

Comprehensive results show that in order of importance, being in the same alliance, geographic proximity, joint democracy, trade interdependence, common language, joint contractualist economy, more equal material capability prima facie make normative convergence a plausible motive for states' desire to cooperate on a regional scale. Apart from regionalism literature, which identified security, economic, and ideational factors are the drivers of regional institutional building, the findings of this study are promising. In line with democratic peace research, democratic dyads are more prone to regional cooperation, but mixed dyads are not.

I intended the test the hypothesis of hegemonic realism on the regional level. The idea that stronger power in the region promotes regionalism is not supported. In fact, in contrast with what was previously thought, I found that power asymmetry has a negative correlation with joint ROs. The picture is thus still incomplete. These results do not rule out the influence of regional hegemons in their regions. A likely explanation is that the measure of power asymmetry at the dyadic level might not really gauge regional hegemon. As theoretical underpinnings highlight, we need to have further insights concerning regional hegemons and cooperation. To what extent do they promote stability and peace in their region? Perhaps, Keohane (1984) might be right by claiming that a hegemon no longer matters in the new international political order, and cooperation can still happen without a hegemon. At least, the result confirmed this on a regional basis.

This study offers the application of a new variable for cooperation dynamics in contractualist economies. The results indicate that contractualist economies with reciprocal benefits are more inclined to cooperate with like-minded regional states. However, if regional dyads consist of contract-intensive and gift-intensive economies, they have no interest in regional cooperation, similar to mixed-regime dyads. These outcomes hint that the assumption of a capitalist peace is also convincing at the regional level.

In an international system where globalization is progressing rapidly, and multipolarity has been intensifying, the growing importance of regional governance has become even more salient. These findings will contribute substantially to our understanding of regional states' cooperation behaviors. Besides the correlates can also be used as a prescription to measure the regionalism level of sub-regions by investigating the reasons for the absence of regionalism. Overall, the results are empirically promising and can be validated using qualitative approaches.

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