Protected Lands and Dependence Networks

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Context

Background:

- 2014: 209,000 state protected sites; 15% of the world's area

Research question:

- *What explains temporal and spatial variation in the extent and quality of state protected areas?*

Explanatory variable:

- *International dependence networks*: denser trade networks and a higher number of shared memberships in IOs lead to more protected areas

The paper dialogues with three branches of the IR literature:

- International organisations
- International trade and its domestic effects
- Environmental policy and regime complexes

New theoretical link: how environmental policy is affected by channels other than specific environmental regimes or climate agreements

Comment 1

Operationalisation of the dependent variables

- IO networks: number of shared memberships.
    - Different ideological positions: e.g.: USA and Russia vs USA and UK in the UNGA, UNSC.
    - Suggestion: voting similarity (Voeten et al. 2019)
    - Voting patterns capture provide an intuitive measure of the density of political networks
- Trade networks: "proportion of a given country's total trade (imports and exports) that occurs with each trade partner and then use that weight to calculate the weighted average of the percentage of land protected by each partner." (p. 18)
    - Are effects larger for exporters?
    - Are effect larger for developing countries (lower bargaining power)?
    - Maybe these factors explain the heterogeneity in the results?

Comment 2

Discussion of mechanisms

- How IO alignment cause more protection areas?
    - Environmental agreements
    - Aid conditionalities
    - Standards to access foreign markets
    - Direct political pressures
- Trade:
    - Bottom-up approach: civil society, exporters
    - Top-down: international sanctions, federal-level actions
- Case study, process tracing of a case where variation occurs

Comment 3

Quality of protected areas:

- Page 3: "variation in the extend *and quality* of state protected areas"
    - Satellite images
    - NGO reports

- Which domestic factors explain quality of protected areas (possible controls)
    - Presence of Green Parties in coalitions
    - Number of environmental NGOs
    - External funding

Comment 4

Robustness tests

- Longer discussion about controls: they might affect significance or effect size
- Variables flip signs or are not significant in some specifications:
    - Indicative that the result might not be robust
    - Suggestion: sensitivity tests (Hazlett and Cinelli 2019;Sala-i-Martin 1997).

Conclusion

- Interesting question, possibly large contribution to specialised literature

- New theoretical link between international and domestic politics

- Suggestions:
  - Definitions of independent variables
  - Discussion of mechanisms
  - Quality of state protected areas
  - Sensitivity tests

Let's Keep in Touch

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