Institutional Design and Elite Support for Climate Policies

Evidence from Latin American Countries

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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

Related Literature

The paper dialogues with three branches of the IR literature:

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

New theoretical links: authors show 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 long and short political networks and provide an intuitive measure of density of such connections
- 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)
  - Effects of trade vs effects of foreign aid
  - Maybe it explains the heterogeneity in the results for developing and developed countries?

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 agreements, federal policies
- 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

Example

Replication of Table 2, Column 1 (p. 25)

Treatment:	Est.	S.E.	t-value	$R^2_{Y\sim D\|\mathbf{X}}$	$RV_{q=1}$	$RV_{q=1,\alpha=0.05}$
Trade Networks	0.291	0.092	3.163	0.3%	5%	**1.9%**

df = 3730

Unobserved confounders need to explain 1.95% of the residual variance both of the treatment and of the outcome in order to the null hypothesis that the true treatment effect is equal to 0 is not rejected, considering the significance level of 0.05.

See: `https://carloscinelli.shinyapps.io/robustness_value`

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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